



**The Role of Violence in the Construction of Black South African Masculinities in
Zukiswa Wanner's Texts**

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DECLARATION

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

I, Nontsikelelo Gabrielis Ndabeni, declare that

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary South Africa has attracted global attention because of the spate of violence perpetrated by men against women and children. Twenty-nine years into democracy, with a constitution that vouches for gender equality, the country still seems to be held captive by the traditional stereotypes which give authority and power to one dominant form of masculinity which has been given legitimacy as the benchmark for measuring successful manhood. This type of masculinity has proven to be unsustainable, given the prevailing shifts in the country's socio-economic climate. Because of this, failure to attain it usually culminates in violent incidents, and women and children are always victims. Through Wanner's texts, this work examines different versions of black South African masculinity, how they are constructed, as well as the role of violence in their construction. Since masculinity has proven to be a heterogenous concept, this work seeks to challenge the dominant and violent constructions, and to negotiate alternative forms which embrace gender equality.

Not only does this work concern itself with the different types of black South African masculinity and the role of violence in their construction, it also highlights the role of women in their construction, an aspect which is always taken for granted, yet it plays a crucial role in the way in which masculinities are constructed and enacted. This is accomplished by delving deeply into the family unit and examining the conventional gender roles of women, keeping in mind that the South African constitution grants them the freedom to either adhere to these roles or select from a variety of options presented to them. It is suggested that women's contributions to the building of masculinities ought to be acknowledged, since their decisions appear to have a substantial impact on either fostering or impeding the change of masculinities. It is further suggested that boys and young men are socialised into more egalitarian forms of masculinity.

Key words: Black South African masculinity, violence, femicide, hegemonic masculinity, "real man", contemporary South Africa, egalitarianism, constitution, emancipation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The discourse of masculinities has drawn academic interest in the contemporary world, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, whose constitution enshrines gender equality. Chapter 2 in the Bill of Rights clearly states that everyone is equal before the law, and that discrimination on the grounds of race; gender; sex; pregnancy; marital status; ethnic or social origin; colour; sexual orientation; age; disability; religion; conscience; belief; culture; language, and birth is regarded as unconstitutional, unless it is unequivocally proven that the discrimination is fair. However, due to the continuous violation of women's rights, despite our democracy which is drawing closer to three decades since its inception, South African feminists, and theorists like Gqola (2007) and Suttner (2009) concur that this equity exists only on paper, as the South African woman continues to live under the shackles of oppression; discrimination; subordination and objectification which are all perpetrated by men.

Throughout generations, men, masculinities, as well as the abilities and customs of men have received less attention than they deserve. Women and femininities have received increased attention. This is because men have traditionally been perceived as naturalised, ungendered, or natural (Shefer et al. 2007). Nevertheless, this is no longer the case as men are now recognised as gendered individuals who are similarly susceptible to the social transformation that impacts them (ibid). When navigating the worlds of academics and politics, men can be seen as a crucial political and social category; they frequently pose as an issue rather than just cultural representations of a straightforward, homogeneous, stable, and universal structure. This suggests that those social behaviours, powers, authority, and ways of being a man that privileged men and subjugated women and were formerly considered givens, can now receive proper attention because that is the source of most injustices committed against women and other marginalised groups.

Among the reasons postulated to explain the escalating levels of violence against women in contemporary South Africa, apartheid and its patriarchal legacy takes centre stage. Apartheid created a patriarchal and heteronormative ideology, which structurally positioned the white heterosexual man as the most superior being in the social hierarchy. Beneath him was the black heterosexual man and a white woman, who shared the middle position. The lowest rank was occupied by the black woman (Ndzwayiba & Steyn 2019). With the white people in the minority, the apartheid system operated on the principle that those in subordination were unstable, potentially very powerful and therefore dangerous, and needed to be maintained in place by frequent and severe displays of force (Ackerman 2019). The principle was meant to apply specifically to black people, against whom violence was the only means of control, since they were in the majority.

However, it is imperative to highlight the existence of indigenous gender systems which believed in hegemony in their own African ways in South Africa before the onset of colonialism and apartheid, as well as the impact of western ideologies of masculinity on these. As demonstrated by Hunter (2005), in pre-colonial South Africa, men's ownership of cattle defined hegemonic masculinity. A man could marry more wives and father more children who could be labourers in the fields if he owned more cattle. Such men were held in high regard, which enabled them to engage in hegemonic masculinity. These indigenous gender systems were severely impacted during the colonial era and supplanted by Western traditions that included patriarchal gender norms. Because colonisation, which was further endorsed by apartheid, imposed gender hierarchies based on race that privileged white masculinity, this indigenous hegemonic masculinity came to hold a marginal or disadvantaged position in South African society during the colonial and apartheid eras (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). Because they dominated many facets of life for South Africans of colour who were subject to racial oppression, white hegemonic masculinities enjoyed an exclusive position of power. One way this was accomplished was by introducing wage labour into South Africa's metropolitan cities, which gave some black South African men from the surrounding rural areas a salaried position. By working in these metropolitan areas and keeping in touch with their rural families, Black South African men practiced their own version of an idealised masculine gender identity inside their own communities.

These men practiced their own brand of idealised masculinity while not being able to attain white hegemonic masculinity like their white counterparts (Hunter, 2005).

This continuous use of force to control the subordinated, normalised the use of violence as a weapon of control. An intriguing question is why these violent measures of control did not spontaneously melt away when South Africa developed into a democratic country which is governed by the constitution. The prevalence of gender-based violence in a democratic South Africa makes it explicit that the narrative has shifted. It is gender rankings that need to be maintained, and it is black women that must be regulated. This is mainly because, just like the political activists of the apartheid era, contemporary black South African women display more agency and are more vocal about the issues affecting their well-being. In this way, they represent a significant risk to the patriarchal status of the country, which seems to favour men, therefore they need to be regulated. Moffett (2006) argues that violence against women in contemporary South Africa has been normalised to the extent that black men regard themselves as carrying out an important duty that is required for social stabilisation when enacting it. Men do not associate it with any criminal activity, instead, they regard it as a legitimate way of teaching women a lesson and correcting them (ibid).

It is important to note that violence against women (VAW) does not occur in isolation, it is inextricably intertwined with gender as well as the way in which masculinities are enacted (Stark & Hester 2019). To explain this subordination and victimisation of black women by black men, Gqola (2015) describes the experiences of the black South African woman as triple oppression, as race intersects with gender and class to produce laws and social norms that assign the black South African woman the lowest status in the social hierarchy. This clearly indicates that the struggle for liberation against white domination, which had wrecked the country, was aimed specifically at addressing racial oppression because the women's fight against gender oppression continues, despite 23 years of democracy.

To prove that the rhetoric of gender equity and rights exists only in paper just to mask and protect patriarchal power, the then South African president, Thabo Mbeki, did not show any remorse after he had openly attacked the anti-rape activist, Charlene Smith,

on the grounds that her speech was racist. The activist had come to educate South Africans about rape when the country celebrated the first 10 years of democracy (Moffett 2006).

Until the 1980s, women and feminist studies received an inordinate amount of attention, whereas men were seen as unproblematic (Connell 1995, 2000; Morrell et al. 1998, Morrell 2007). With the current situation, issues around men and masculinities have taken centre stage and are now seen as being more debatable. This work is being written at a time when black South African men and masculinities are under scrutiny, especially in light of the ongoing wave of violent offences against female victims in South Africa. Despite the policies and legislative changes which are intended to deal with the violation of women's rights, women and other marginalized groups continue to suffer the plight of violence in the hands of men, especially those who portray unequitable masculinities.

However, though South Africa might have recorded statistics which raises concern, this pandemic is a universal phenomenon. According to the report by the World Health Organisation (WHO), globally, one in three (i.e.30%) women experience either intimate partner violence or non-intimate partner violence or both in their lifetime. Against this backdrop, Shai et al. (2022) allege that among the 137 women around the world that are killed by perpetrators known to them on a daily basis, 52 of those killings take place in Africa. The gravity of this situation is attested to by Dlamini (2021) and Statistics South Africa (2020), who allege that every three hours, a woman is murdered by a man in South Africa, whose level of femicide is six times higher than the average for the world. Based on these figures, several academics have concurred that South Africa has a culture of violence; that this culture of violence transcends race, economic and educational status; and that South Africans, both men and women, largely consider violence to be a legitimate form of expression. This implies a deeply embedded mentality that men are entitled to and have power and control over women's lives as well as their bodies. Most violent incidents take place in homes, making them a prominent location for male aggression (Kamody et al. 2020). Here, known women and children are abused and violated by men. These transgressions

typically manifest as physical and sexual abuse and, in the most extreme cases, femicide.

Though numerous studies have looked at Wanner's texts and raised intriguing aspects of masculinity, their focus has been on the transformation of masculinities, thereby falling short in establishing the role of violence in the construction of Black South African masculinities. Among these are such scholars as Stobie (2011); Dlamini (2018); Andrews (2019) and Dlamini (2021). It is believed that investigating and understanding the manner in which masculinities are constructed can assist in establishing the source of violence and the role it plays. This can help to eradicate various kinds of interpersonal conflict and address the predicament that South Africa is currently facing.

1.2 Rationale for the study

Graaff & Heineken (2017) maintain that gender is a socially constructed entity, and that people are socialised to behave according to the prescribed gender roles, whether these are positive or negative. Successful enactment of gender, especially in men, will depend upon the mastery of these gender roles. Connell (2005) argues that different societies prefer and therefore promote certain identities over others, which may lead to power differentials, though most societies prefer men to display masculine identities than feminine. In a patriarchal country like South Africa, successful masculinity is often associated with the mastery of these norms, which usually manifests in high levels of power imbalance. In most cases, this power imbalance is characterised by different forms of gender-based violence, ranging from physical; sexual; emotional; symbolic to structural violence. Dobash & Dobash (2017); Mazibuko & Umejesi (2015) maintain that gender-based violence is an ongoing worldwide problem that transcends race, culture, socio-economic and education status, and it affects mainly women and other vulnerable groups. In South Africa, research indicates that the problem of domestic violence remains persistent, despite the 23-year-old constitution which emphasises human rights and gender equality, as well as current numerous strategies intended to deal with it (Jewkes & Morrell 2018). Gqola (2015:61) states that this highly contradictory circumstance is occasionally referred to as the "puzzling" South African

contradiction. Those who believe that this scenario is impossible to explain or account for frequently characterise it in this way.

The gravity of this situation is attested to by Brodie (2020), Statistics South Africa (2020) and Dlamini (2021), who allege that every three hours, a woman is murdered by a man in South Africa, whose level of femicide is six times higher than the average for the world. Similarly, the report by South African Demographic and Health Survey (2016) indicates that more than a quarter of women in South Africa reported encountering or having suffered abuse at the hands of their intimate partners. The report also underscored the likelihood of this statistics being higher, given that many cases go unreported.

Among the reasons that cause South African women to be reluctant to report incidents of abuse is the history of domination that is associated with the country. With its legacy of apartheid, patriarchal South Africa has accepted and normalised violence as a means of demonstrating dominance. These patriarchal social arrangements are founded on the anatomical difference between men and women, which creates a belief that men are stronger and have a greater right to power and authority than women (Sultana 2010). The resultant gendered discourses that men have a right to control their women and are entitled to sex at any time (Dobash & Dobash 2017); (Hamberger et al. 2017), encourage men to perpetrate violence against women and other vulnerable groups.

One of the most popular among these is the discourse of blame, denial, and minimisation, which takes place either at an individual or societal level (Cheeseborough & Overstreet 2020). Here, men justify their violence towards women by alleging that women ask for it when they refuse to submit to them as men. They also tend to minimise the violence meted out to women as a simple corrective measure, no matter how serious it is. It is under such circumstances that attention is deflected away from men who are mainly regarded as the perpetrators, and violence against women is often seen as a 'woman's problem', with women, being held responsible for change and restoration for order (ibid).

Coupled with a highly inflexible masculinity ideology which is influenced by the patriarchal cultural norms and attitudes that condone and reinforce male dominance, the socialisation process that both men and women are subjected to, contributes to the high levels of gender-based violence in South Africa. Though some women argue that violence is neither an appropriate nor a justifiable means to address problems that arise between couples, they nonetheless acknowledge the social normalisation of violence as one of the long-standing means to maintain stability in romantic relationships (Cheeseborough & Overstreet 2020).

It is evident that the concept of masculinity and associated problems have attracted considerable attention from numerous researchers across various disciplines. Existing literature has examined the concept and practice of masculinity mainly from a transformative worldview, suggesting a paradigm shift and a need to carve a more malleable trajectory in the perception and practice of gender roles. However, though this is a remarkable contribution in the conceptualisation of masculinity, insufficient attention has been given to the way in which masculinities are constructed, as well as the role played by violence in their construction. The relevance of this study in contemporary South Africa lies in identifying the source of violence in the construction of black South African masculinities, as an attempt to suggest egalitarian constructions of masculinity which might assist in alleviating the scourge of gender-based violence. It is hoped that this work will assist in providing guidance for public policies and intervention tactics targeting black heterosexual men, who are allegedly responsible for the high statistics of gender-based violence and femicide. In South Africa, NGOs like *Brothers for Life* (Sonke Gender Justice), *Father a Nation* and *Khuluma Ndoda* are working tirelessly to assist men and boys in promoting gender equity and prevent all forms of gender-based violence. They aim at addressing the forces that influence deeply entrenched cultural norms and practices of gender inequality, as well as underlying socio-economic as well as political pressures which perpetuate gender-based violence. As indicated in Ndlovu (2011), castrating circumstances such as job losses may encourage men's vulnerability to women, whose desire for virulent and socially acceptable machismo undermines cherished ideas of peaceful masculinity. This back-and-forth shift of power in heterosexual relationships beckons researchers to theorise power imbalances in heterosexual relationships further.

1.3 Objectives

Understanding the role of violence in the construction of black South African masculinities is central to this research. It is important to investigate how the problematic gender constructs are produced and procreated, and to establish possible links between the construction of masculinity and violence. The significance of studying the construction of masculinity in different settings is based on Connell's (1995) contention that masculinity should not be perceived as a single construct. The way it is expressed varies, depending on the context. Additionally, the decision to choose one form of masculinity over others is influenced by such factors as cultural, racial, as well as class issues. Based on the constructionist idea of a multifaceted, adaptable, and fluid masculinity (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman 2017), this thesis aims to evaluate the representation of different versions of black South African masculinity as evinced in the texts, and to establish what informs such representations.

Research indicates that women also play a crucial role in the construction of black South African masculinities. Despite this, women are rarely included in studies on masculinity, and when they are, their perspectives are frequently disregarded in the analysis (Talbot & Quayle 2010). In many instances, research on masculinities positions women as passive receivers of masculine norms, tending to reinforce the unequal power relations between men and women. Understanding the role of women in the construction of black South African masculinities forms an important part of this research. Messerschmidt (2012) posits that hegemonic masculinity has no meaning outside its relationship to emphasized femininity, which is the version of female identity that is sympathetic to and congruent with hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, Talbot & Quayle (ibid) highlight the fact that it is impossible for men to construct and maintain any masculinity on their own accord without the active or passive collusion of women. For hegemonic masculinity to achieve the subjugation and complete subordination of women, women need to (to some extent, at least) comply with this subordination of themselves by being accommodating and conforming to the interests and desires of men. This suggests that just like men, women are also victims of the socialisation process that subordinates them to men.

Both construct certain identities in their narratives of violence, which are influenced by culturally specific forms of masculinity and femininity.

However, Shefer & Foster (2009) argue that sexual violence related literature tends to depict sexuality as a domain in which men are dominant and women are subservient, without acknowledging resistances, alternative discourses, and contradictions in dominant discourses on heterosexual practices. It is imperative, therefore, to note that women can either condone or challenge gender norms that support men's use of violence in their relationships. Based on this argument, this study also aims to look at the different perceptions of black South African masculinity that female characters embrace in the texts and establish the source of such perceptions. It also seeks to establish whether these novels challenge or perpetuate gender norms.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study draws mainly from Connell's Masculinity theory. However, because of its focus on literary works, a synergy of frameworks which speak to the construction of black South African masculinities has been used. Through these theories, notions of masculinities have been extensively explored, depicting how Wanner constructs post-transitional black South African masculinities, and how she manages to weave the element of violence into her portrayal of some of her male heterosexual characters.

1.4.1 Masculinity Theory

In his theory, Connell (1995; 1998; 2000) maintains that masculinity is socially constructed and fluid, resulting in different forms across times and contexts. This multiplicity of masculinity recognises that men can be men in a variety of ways and that, depending on the circumstances, a man's definition of masculinity can change. As indicated in Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010), the three central male characters embrace different ideals of manhood. It is in light of this plurality of masculinities that Connell (2000) identified four categories of masculinity: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginal masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity, which is regarded as the prevailing type, presents a version of how real men behave as a cultural ideal (Morrell 1998). Because of different circumstances, men sometimes find it difficult to

perform according to the hegemonic expectations. For example, from a cultural perspective, the breadwinner role is associated with men, yet Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010) fails to fulfil this role which ends up being fulfilled by his wife, Slindile, affectionately known as Sli.

In response to the feminist movement's fight against men's oppression of women, the study of men and masculinities emerged in the West in the mid-1970s (Wedgwood 2009). The primary goal was to create a men's movement that would be anti-sexist and pro-feminist in reaction to the idea that men served as a basis of power that allowed women to be oppressed. This movement contested the ideas that all men followed repressive patriarchal systems and that men were uniform and monolithic. Masculinity studies contended and demonstrated that men existed on a hierarchical continuum of privilege and subjugation, even though they supported and profited from the patriarchal gender system that subjugated women and privileged them (ibid). Such assertions suggested that men also had unequal access to power.

Scholars studying masculinity were captivated by this diversity of men. As a result, Connell developed the idea of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (1995), the Gramscian concept of "hegemony," which was employed to analyse the stability of class relations during that period, served as the model for hegemonic masculinity. This theory emerged as one of the theories that would support the critique of Brannon and David's sex role theory (1975), as sex role was thought to be the origin of men's tyrannical attitude. Furthermore, as the gay liberation movement started to examine how men mistreated other men, it became apparent that the issue of power did not just affect women. Wedgwood (2009) establishes that homosexual men's experiences with violence and discrimination from heterosexual men served as the inspiration for the concept of the hierarchy of masculinities. In light of this social order, Connell (1995, 2000) proposed the idea of multiple masculinities as an alternative to a single, universal masculinity. He further asserted that masculinity is flexible rather than fixed and rigid, a stance that served as inspiration for the works of Itulua-Abumere (2013) and Morrell (1998).

This multiplicity of masculinity recognises that men can demonstrate their manhood in a variety of ways and that, depending on the circumstance, a man's definition of

masculinity can change. This occurs when men react differently to a given situation. For example, in Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010), Mzilikazi is gay; Mfundo is a househusband; Tinaye is a foreigner who suffers Afrophobic injustices and Sindiso embraces a more macho attitude. According to Koenane & Maphunye (2015) Afrophobia refers to black-on-black conflict and violence directed at other Africans.

Despite the differences between these young men, each considers himself as a man in his own right. For this reason, Itulua-Abumere (ibid) contends that performing masculinities rather than claiming one's masculinity is a more appropriate approach. Connell (1995) claims that masculinities are defined and constructed in relation to one other as well as femininity. That is why this study investigates how some of Wanner's male characters define their masculinity and self by either embracing or rejecting behaviours that are often associated with either gender in society.

Furthermore, Connell (1995) asserts that factors other than gender that affect men's experiences include colour, ethnicity, age, class, as well as geographical location, hence the deployment of intersectionality in this study. The ideal man is defined by Hegemonic masculinity, which is the presiding type in this hierarchy of masculinities. In contrast to other manifestations of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity is typically violent, powerful, and aggressive in most societies, particularly South Africa. It subjugates women and other men as it manifests itself through patriarchy, which is supported by several cultures and religions as well as other social structures (Connell 2001 and Morrell 1998; 2007; 2012).

According to Gennrich (2013) and Keletso (2022), a patriarchal social structure is one in which men have authority over both women and other men. It places men in a controlling position and structures society to uphold men's domination over women, even while it does not entail control of individual men over individual women (ibid). For example, in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), when Lerato's boyfriend loses his job, he becomes more abusive to assert his masculinity. Similarly, Vuyo, Nosizwe's boyfriend who is a former jailbird and does not have a stable job, uses infidelity to prove that he is still a man in *The Madams* (2006).

Being maintained by women undermines the hegemonic status of these men. Both Itulua-Abumere (2013) and Brown (2016) concur that for a South African man to be considered authentic, he must be the primary provider for his family. Because of South Africa's constitution, which equalises men and women through affirmative action, and because of constant fluctuations in the labour market, several men end up losing their jobs. The inability to embody a stereotypically manly role leads to men's disempowerment. By resorting to violence and promiscuity, these men want to assert that even though their hegemonic masculinity has been undermined, they are still men in their respective relationships.

Subordinate masculinity comprises of manly behaviours that fall short of the ideal man's expectations. Heteronormativity, for instance, is the idea that every man ought to be heterosexual; as a result, homosexual men do not fit into this stereotype and are at times perceived as a threat. In *Men of the South* (2010), Mzilikazi struggles to come out as a gay man because of the stereotypically homophobic attitude of those around him.

Complicit masculinities consist of men who benefit from hegemonic masculinity but do not necessarily back the patriarchal system that supports this type of masculinity. This type of masculinity passively accepts things as they are. This is typical of Mxolisi, Tsholo's boyfriend in *Behind Every Successful* (2008). Wanner portrays him as a man who does not seem to bother himself with things that do not concern him much, like Andile's symbolic violence which eventually leads to his breakup with Nobantu. However, towards the end of the narrative he demonstrates some growth, as he displays unwavering support when Lerato's misogynistic boyfriend abuses her. Gennrich (2013) postulates that certain men remain oblivious to oppressive systems and take them for granted, so long as these continue to be advantageous.

Marginal masculinities comprise groups that are oppressed and exploited. Many traits of hegemonic masculinity are shared by this group, but due to factors including socioeconomic status, race, class, and ethnicity, they do not have the privilege or authority to act in society. In *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), the protagonist, Martin O'Maley is unable to challenge the injustices directed to him in South Africa because he is regarded as a foreigner.

From a South African perspective, Morrell (1998, 2001) aligns himself with Connell's viewpoint and contends that it would be inaccurate to think of men as having a single, unchanging, essential masculine identity. Although men's masculinities can be examined equally, he contends that men's experiences of masculinity are deeply unique and intimate. He goes on to say that colonial and cultural forces have played a major part in the creation of masculinities throughout history. Black South African masculinities have been greatly influenced by the apartheid state, in particular. Having said all of this, the multiplicity of South African masculinity, which emanates from class, ethnicity, and racial diversity, makes it difficult to pinpoint and characterise a hegemonic or dominating form (Brown 2016). This means that because of these influences, a man can perform according to the prescribed norms of hegemonic masculinity in one context and fail in another. This brings this discussion to the gender performativity theory by Butler (1990).

1.4.2 Gender Performativity Theory

This study highlights the interconnectedness between Connell's masculinity theory (1995; 1998; 2000) and Butler's gender performativity theory. Connell's masculinity theory taps on the trope of gender performance as it emphasises that for one to be considered a "real man", he must perform according to the prescribed conventions of hegemonic masculinity. Likewise, Butler's gender performativity theory (1990) states that gender is a performance, and that public mastery of this performance is crucial to heterosexual men, since those who fail to perform are often humiliated, excluded, and ostracised. This becomes evident when Mfundo is ostracised by his family and friends for embracing a house husband role in *Men of the South* (2010).

As reiterated in Langa (2020), masculinity is socially constructed and gender roles, norms and stereotypes are imposed on young boys by society which subscribes to the same itself. This gendering of people necessitates that both men and women behave in a particular way which has been prescribed and pre-approved by society. Through enactment and re-enactment, these behaviours become naturalised and thoroughly ingrained in the social structure that they appear to be a fundamental component of reality as opposed to a contingent historical production.

Elaborating on Butler's (1990) performativity, Langa (2020) explains that performance involves close monitoring of the impression that individuals give and make on others. This necessitates the existence of the public identity alongside the private self. While the private self understands that public personas are a façade necessary to preserve respect and sometimes-false reputations, the public persona is played for the audience. This suggests that the self is split into two, the public self, which is displayed to the audience, as well as the private self which is hidden and more authentic.

This public mastery of the performance is evinced in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) as Andile detests Nobantu's venture of opening her own business independently, because it will make people think that he is not capable of taking care of her. We observe the same performance in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), where Martin pretends as if he is still a tycoon who commands respect from everybody around him, only to find that he has conned his own sons and emptied their bank accounts. This indicates that for heterosexual men, projecting competence to others in one's public persona is crucial. It serves as a key signifier of successful adherence to the prescribed script of masculinity which therefore qualifies them as real men. Langa (2020) states that failure to uphold one's public macho image causes embarrassment and anxiety. It is therefore important to closely monitor one's performance in order to avoid any stigma and humiliation.

By highlighting how gender identity is performative, regulated, and artificial, Butler seeks to destabilise the accepted definition of gender. She achieves this through challenging the status quo, by bringing the assumptions of normative heterosexuality under scrutiny and critique, in order to fight for the rights of marginalised identities (Jenkins & Finneman 2018). She argues that gender is not a natural entity and it does not exist, but it is artificial and performative, and it only exists as a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time within a highly rigid regulatory frame (ibid). This holds true for Connell's script of gender expectations which is determined within this regulatory frame, as Wanner's novels portray that some male characters are unsettled by failure to fulfil the expected gender roles.

Both Austin's explication of the performative as well as Derrida's argument that the performative's power derives from its iterability, had a significant impact on Butler

(Jenkins & Finneman 2018). The idea that each act is really a recitation was also suggested by the Derridean concept of iterability, which was developed in reaction to Searle and Austin's theory of speech acts. Something that is performative has several effects. The fact that the activities being performed are repetitive is a crucial component of performativity (Butler 2011). This resulted in Butler querying the notion that certain gendered behaviours are innate. To achieve this, she demonstrated how normative heterosexuality forces people to execute gendered behaviours in a certain way, making it an act of sorts. She maintained that social stigma and taboo forces compel people to believe in gender norms and stable identities, and that both covert and overt pressures lead people to believe in natural behaviour. She concluded by asserting that gender does not stay the same, over time it varies with race, class, and region.

1.4.3 Psychosocial Theory

Langa (2020) explains that in sociological studies, the psychoanalytic theory is not applied in its clinical sense which involves the interaction between the analyst and the patient. It is rather situated within the applied psychoanalysis tradition or psychosocial studies, where the focus is on the interaction between the social and the psychodynamic aspects. In applied psychoanalysis, the subject is seen as both psychological and social, with behaviour being influenced by the interplay between the external, which is mainly the social and cultural, and the internal or psychical processes.

Drawing from the psychosocial theory, Frosh & Baraister (2008) elaborate on Butler's gender performativity theory, as they argue that the individual and the social are inextricably intertwined. For an individual to function properly, these two entities cannot be divorced from each other. Basing their argument on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, these theorists argue that the construction of a masculine identity is centred around fear. The male subject lives under the perpetual threat of possible psychic disintegration.

Adding to this argument, Langa (2020) posits that this insecurity results in masculine anxiety, which is the fear of collapse in self-identity as a man, if he fails to perform.

This is because failure to fulfil the expectations of the ideal man may produce feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and self-doubt about one's sense of manhood. This explains the pressure boys and men face to constantly flaunt their manliness in front of other boys and men, demonstrating that they are still men despite having been castrated. As a result, men will engage in various defence mechanisms, including violence, to protect themselves against the collapse of their ideal masculine self (Langa 2020). It can get even worse when this perceived castration is associated with a woman, as observed in Wanner's texts. In *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) for example, Lerato's boyfriend beats her in the most brutal way for allegedly disrespecting him because he is dependent on her after losing his job. Langa (ibid) further alleges that hegemonic masculinity is an ideal that is not easily achieved, and because of this, the process of achieving it produces feelings of fear and anxiety.

Tapping on the Lacanian theory, Frosh & Baraister (2008) concur with Langa (ibid), as they maintain that as the symbol of power, having the phallus attached to men does not guarantee any stability, instead it brings performance pressure to the male subject, as he becomes obsessed to get things right. This implies that successful masculinity comes from mastering the phallus, and when the opposite happens, the man's world falls apart. In their threatened egoism theory, Baumeister et al. (2000) concur with these theorists, as they argue that because of the comfort and consistency of the self-image, an individual with high but stable self-esteem is unlikely to react aggressively when faced with an ego threat. On the other hand, when faced with an ego danger, a person with high but fragile self-esteem is more likely to fiercely deny the source and struggle to maintain the flimsy positive ideal image of themselves. Bringing this argument to a South African context, Langa (ibid) and Ratele (2016) concur that several factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, age, ability, and religion have intersected with race to create this masculine anxiety among black South African men. This suggests the intersectionality theory which was initially conceived by Crenshaw (1989).

1.4.4 Intersectionality Theory

Developed by Crenshaw (1989), the theory looks at how different social, cultural, and biological categories, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and other identity axes, interact on several and often concurrent levels to contribute to systemic social inequality (Mc Call 2005). According to the theory of intersectionality, the traditional conceptions of oppression that exist within a society do not operate in isolation from one another; rather, they cooperate to produce a system of oppression that represents the convergence of various discriminatory practices. For instance, if a man is concurrently gay, an immigrant, and is living with a physical disability, he faces three disadvantages that work in concert to discriminate against him. According to Gennrich's (2013) analysis of Zulu masculinities, a man is emasculated if he cannot provide for his family. If the same man is an immigrant, he might be put at a disadvantaged position due to the intersection of his race and socioeconomic ranking.

This is what is experienced by Tinaye, a Zimbabwean immigrant in Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010). Despite his strong credentials, he is paid less for a job he finds in South Africa since he is a foreign national. He becomes a marginalised masculinity as a result. Tinaye's qualifications would have made him eligible for hegemonic masculinity in Zimbabwe, but given that he is in another country, people ignore and marginalise him even though he meets the requirements. The idea of simultaneity, which holds, for example, that women's experiences are significantly affected by the simultaneous effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, is theoretically related to intersectionality (Mc Call 2005). Even though the notion of intersectionality was initially developed to examine how women are oppressed in society, it is now used to examine many various intersections of group membership and to apply to all individuals (ibid).

Due to its emphasis on the lives of women and its assertion that black men were racially subjugated and privileged by gender, the intersectionality theory faced criticism. It was also argued that black men experienced more profiling and appeared to be singled out for it due to their gender (Mutua 2012). These constraints gave way to the theory of multidimensionality, which, despite maintaining intersectionality theory as a component of its approach and continued to be informed by it, better represented the complexity of analysing men's lives as seen through the lens of

masculinity theory (Mutua 2012). Valdes (1995) subsequently observed the multidimensionality of subordination, having concentrated on the various systems that shaped identities. According to his argument, males can gain or lose from the patriarchal power bestowed upon them, depending on the various aspects with which this power interacts (ibid).

From a South African perspective, some men are disadvantaged by virtue of being men. Because of the South African constitution, which equalises men and women through affirmative action, some males lose their jobs due to frequent changes in the labour market. The resultant inability to embody a stereotypically masculine role leads to men's disempowerment. For example, when a man is gay and unemployed, his sexual orientation and financial situation combine to disempower him. Given this, one could argue that in addition to patriarchy, men are expected to fulfil a variety of tasks to be considered real men.

Tapping on Frosh & Baraister's (2008) psychosocial theory and tracing it from the apartheid era, Langa (2020) and Ratele (2016) argue that the racial humiliation of black people brought powerlessness and inferiority complexes which resulted in masculine anxiety. Black South African men had to resort to violence to restore their dignity. Instead of bringing hope, the transition to democracy, with the constitution that promulgated gender equity, confronted and unseated entrenched masculinities which were patriarchal and characterised by violence. With more power allegedly being given to women, men had to resort to violence once more to assert their masculinity and to restore the law, where women used to know their place (Ratele 2016). This is evident in Wanner's *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), where Lerato's boyfriend constantly uses violence to remind her of her place, despite the fact that she sustains him financially. According to Matebeni (2011), this violence is ubiquitous. To instil fear, it is meted out by men as a norm and is always expected by women. This speaks to Gqola's (2015) fear factor theory, where women live in constant fear of being violated by men.

1.4.5 Fear Factor Theory

One of the central concerns of feminism is the empowerment as well as the liberation of women from the shackles of patriarchy, which manifests itself through discrimination, objectification, stereotyping, subordination, exploitation as well as other forms of oppression. Premised on the argument by African feminists that African women should speak for themselves about their lived experiences, the study intends to disregard the allegedly hegemonic Western feminist theories which tend to trivialise the experiences of the African woman, as they homogenise the inequalities between men and women and treat them as a universal phenomenon. This highlights the significance of Afrocentric theories in solving African women's liberation issues.

In her feminist argument, Gqola (2015) clearly states that Black women experience more oppression as opposed to other races, and patriarchy is one of the most central phenomena. Borrowing from the words of renowned African feminist theorists, Ogunjipe-Leslie (1994) and Guy-Sheftall (2003), she claims that Black women's everyday experiences are centred around a simultaneity of oppressions as their struggle against gender discrimination has always been fused with liberation from other forms oppression related to slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, poverty, illiteracy and disease, hence the deployment of the intersectionality theory in this study. That is why Gqola (2007) and Suttner (2009) conclude that the gender equality that is enshrined in the South African constitution exists only on paper, otherwise the South African woman still remains the victim of patriarchy, misogyny and chauvinism. This gender oppression is evident in Wanner's texts, where patriarchy intersects with two or more of these aspects and results in some form of injustice towards women and other marginalized groups.

Taking it a step further, Gqola (2015) argues that patriarchy enjoys its position of power and would do anything to communicate this power to women and the marginalized groups, in an attempt to defend itself so that it is kept alive. One of the most essential tools of this communication is violence, which translates into what Gqola (2015) theorises as the female fear factory. This factory, which specializes in the manufacture of female fear will be kept alive through the production and reproduction of female fear, until both the reproduction and the fear become invisible

and normalized. Once the fear is normalized, the fear factory will be strengthened and those who view it with suspicion will be silenced and called into order (Gqola 2015). This is evident in Wanner's texts, where we see women and other vulnerable groups being subjected to different forms of patriarchal violence in an attempt to control them through fear.

Though some characters challenge these patriarchal practices, the behaviour of the people around them indicates that they have been indoctrinated by culture to be receptive to such conditions, as they constantly call these characters into order. This indicates the pervasiveness of this phenomenon in the South African culture. It is from this perspective that Gqola (ibid) laments that no matter how hard black South African women try to comply with the demands of men, they live in constant fear of being violated either physically, sexually, or otherwise, (as evinced in Wanner's texts).

1.5. The Concept of Masculinity

Citing Ratele (2002), Connell (1998) and Morrell (1998), Shefer et al. (2007) contend that it is more appropriate to refer to masculinities because masculinity is a malleable social construct, and it manifests itself in diverse forms over historical periods and contextual circumstances. These forms are mediated by socioeconomic position, race, ethnicity, age, religion, geographic location, and other local factors. According to Raj (2016), the notion also specifies what boys and men should be successful at, how they should behave and be treated, how they should dress, and what attributes they should possess. This explains why different societal and social groups have varied ideas on what it means to be a man.

Among the various expressions of masculinity in each given society, there is one predominant form that focuses on the relationships of male cultural dominance. This type of masculinity that is always used as a benchmark for what it means to be a man is called hegemonic masculinity. Apart from its oppressive nature towards women, hegemonic masculinity also mutes other masculinities by pitting them against it, thus devaluing and delegitimising the ideals represented by these alternative constructs of masculinity. As a result, hegemonic masculinity offers a societal ideal of how men ought to act and how "real men" actually behave. (Morrell 1998). This is evident in

Men of the South (2010), where Mzilikazi's father shows strong opposition to homosexuality, labelling it as un-African.

Despite the coexistence of multiple masculinities, hegemonic masculinity has legitimacy and supremacy in society. The way in which men conduct themselves in their households is powerfully impacted by expectations of what it means to be a "real man" from other men, their community, and society at large. Boys and men who do not measure up to these hegemonic ideals are therefore made fun of and given derogatory labels (Migdalek 2016). This is what we see in Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010), who is given derogatory labels by his family and friends when he adopts the status of a househusband. His friends, who are also Slindile's make sure they are within his hearing as they shout, "So, Sli, where is your wife...uhhm...man?" (2010:54). Virility, strength, authority, power and leadership abilities, the capacity to provide protection and sustenance, intelligence and wisdom, and the capacity to withstand both physical and emotional distress are among the attributes of men that are accepted or promoted.

It is significant to note that men now consider it as their duty to support their families in compliance with the dominant ideals of masculinity, thanks to the myths created by colonialism and the Victorian moral principle of the male breadwinner and overall head of the household (Connell 1998). However, upholding the standards of hegemonic masculinity is always compromised because of situations like unemployment, lack of education, poverty, and globalisation, which marginalise men in one way or another, according to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) report (2000).

Since men have not been appropriately inducted to handle such circumstances, Jasor (2016) contends that the tension and frustration men feel under these kinds of situations becomes unbearable and leads to violent outcomes as indicated in Langa's (2020) psychosocial theory. Women are typically the ones who suffer from these violent outbursts. In *Behind Every Successful Man*, Lerato's boyfriend feels emasculated when she maintains him and their newborn baby. Characterised as a villain who lacks morals and conventional nobility of mind, he uses outbursts of violence to assert his manhood and to compensate for his failure to provide. In this way, the fear that he has instilled in Lerato will always remind her that despite his

joblessness, he is still the man of the house. This speaks to Gqola's Fear Factor Theory (2015), which states that over a period of time, men manufacture fear in their female partners which they use to manipulate them to live by their rules. Sadly, investigations of GBV indicate that the domination and violation of women by men remains pervasive and accepted in much of Sub-Saharan Africa (Shefer et al. 2007).

In concert, Sikweyiya et al. (2020) contend that in addition to being widespread, violence against women also seems to be accepted by many women as inherent to intimate partner relationships. The same sentiment is shared by some South African women who consider violence to be a legitimate method of communication (Shefer et al. 2007). Because of these preconceptions, women may find it difficult to report the abuse, notwithstanding the severity of the situation, and men may get away with it. Wanner's characterisation of these stereotypes is evident in the way in which both Lerato in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) and Lauren in *The Madams* (2006) are reluctant to lay charges against their abusive partners. It is only through the help and insistence of Nobantu in Lerato's case and Vuyo in Lauren's that the two victims eventually summon up the courage to go to the police station to press charges.

Even though patriarchy, which promotes hegemonic masculinity, benefits men, they can also become victims when they fall short of the expectations of this type of masculinity. According to Connell (1999), most men are unlikely to achieve, represent, or live a hegemonic masculinity; as such, it is not so much a reality as it is an ideal. Men are marginalised more than women when they fall short of the dominant standards. The high incidence of drinking, mental diseases, and suicide suggests the frustration which men experience due to marginalisation (Sheffer et al. 2007).

Furthermore, men take part in behaviours and practices that endanger their lives in an attempt to live up to the hegemonic standards, making it harmful not just for women but also for them. As was previously mentioned, risky behaviours like fighting, repressing feminine feelings, and acting aggressively are how the hegemonic criteria define a "real man" (Van Doorn & March 2021). Mzilikazi's uncle in *Men of the South* takes it upon himself to teach the boy the skill of stick fighting. He asserts that a man who cannot stand up and protect himself and his family from the enemy is a disgrace and therefore cannot be regarded as a "real man". The harsh way in which he teaches

his nephew to be a man is captured by Mzilikazi as he recalls, "When he saw me about to run away, he came over and slapped me in the face and told me to be a man as I was letting down the family name. Then he gave me a stick and told me to fight away with Witness" (2010:91).

Sexual virility as well as success with women are also regarded as markers of successful masculinity (Van Doorn & March 2021). The number of women a man has, as well as the ability of older men to attract younger women both prove that one is a "real man". Such patriarchal practices are applauded and condoned in men whereas a woman who engages in the same behaviour is associated with low morals. In *Behind Every Successful Man*, Oupa prides in showing off his girlfriend Penny, soon to be wife, who is twenty years younger than him. He is envied by those around him yet Tsholo, his ex-wife, is viewed with disdain when she gets into a romantic relationship with a younger man. The overt nature of these relationships points to the performativity of masculinity as indicated in Butler (1990). Similarly, Vuyo, Nosizwe's househusband in *The Madams* compensates for his failure to fulfil a breadwinner role by cheating on Nosizwe with several women, including Petunia, their maid. Their friends are aware of this, yet they do not see the importance of letting Nosizwe know. The fact that both men and women share the same sentiments where such relationships are concerned indicates that just like men, women have been socialised to accept and normalise patriarchal practices that oppress them.

1.6. Literature Review

1.6.1 Introduction

As posited by Snyder (2019), one of the most pertinent tasks in any study is to conduct a thorough evaluation of applicable literature since it makes connections between previous and current research on a certain issue. It plays a crucial role in pointing out the gaps in the field of study as well. Having said that, this section examines the various perspectives held by critics regarding masculinity, which is often regarded as a crucial cultural construct that significantly influences the construction and functioning of society. It also looks at the way in which they scrutinise the lineage of

black South African masculinity, as well as the manner in which Wanner explores the intersectionality it has had with different social dynamics in the past as well as the present in its construction.

As different scholars have alluded to the malleability as well as the multiplicity of masculinities, the section will look at the current meanings of masculinity to different people in contemporary South Africa, particularly from a feminist perspective as opposed to that of a heterosexual male. A review of what the scholars have written indicates an element of porosity in literary narratives on black South African men and masculinity issues written by black South African authors, especially female. This can be attributed to the history of South Africa which, to a greater extent, has been influenced by colonialism and apartheid, which relegated the woman to the most inferior position. Additionally, during this time literary works focused more on issues of liberation, especially since men were regarded as an unproblematic entity. The absence of a female voice, especially since females are directly affected by masculinity issues in contemporary South Africa, has been noticed with concern by renowned critics such as Crous (2010) and Mahala (2007) who have applauded the courage shown by the few female authors who delved into the depths of masculinity issues, albeit in a light-hearted and humorous manner. It is worth noting that some South African communities still uphold cultural values that prohibit women from meddling in men's issues. Despite being labelled as superfluous, lacking depth, and dealing with women's views of the world, it is intriguing to note that Wanner's novels address pertinent masculinity issues which might be overwhelming to the reader when presented in a more serious form of writing.

1.6.2 Old South African Masculinities

While the literary analysis of South African men and masculinities is regarded as something new, studies on men have been going on for some time in other disciplines. Among the earliest scholars who traced the lineage of South African masculinities and the evolution they have undergone through the history of South Africa is Morrell (1998). In his ground-breaking research, Morrell opines that as much as men's identities are a social construction, they are equally a product of their own choice. This

attests to the malleability as well as the multiplicity of masculinities and highlights a stark contradistinction against the blanket approach which perceived men as a uniform entity in early feminist studies.

With the concept of gender having been internationally equated with women for a very long time, Connell (1983); Hearn & Morgan (1990); Seidler (1992) and Tolson (1977) are among the first scholars to challenge the confinement of gender studies to women, and to argue for the involvement of both men and women in gender analysis (Morrell 1998). Based on their agreement with feminists, that men oppressed women, these scholars vouched for the restatement of gender understandings and relations to include men. Morrell (ibid) indicates that this transitioning of gender analysis into a holistic enterprise saw the emergence of the new man, with more men embracing domestic responsibility and women assuming higher public profiles.

However, the new man did not last long because male writers such as Bly (1992); Farrell (1993) and Keen (1992) rejected the new man and what he stood for, blamed feminism for what they perceived as an aberration, and called for men to become real men again by being assertive, decisive, and taking charge (ibid). Though on a smaller scale, these international developments in gender relations began to infiltrate the South African academic and social sphere as the debates about the new man and the "real man" began to surface.

Morrell (2001) argues that in the South African context, this back-and-forth transformation of masculinities reflected traces of colonialism which were aggravated to a greater extent by apartheid, where whiteness was associated with wealth and power, and blackness with conquest and powerlessness. In an attempt to challenge emasculation, the black man embraced the white man's hegemony, which characterised him as a "real man" (ibid). The Victorian influence, coupled with apartheid, endorsed heteronormativity among all races and silenced anything in opposition to this. This implies that the transformation of gender relations within the framework of South Africa is greatly influenced by the intersectionality of race and class, and this will have different implications for gender justice to different people. The ultimate arrival of the long-awaited democracy, with the constitution that

committed to the promotion of gender equality, saw the emergence of other forms of masculinity alongside the culturally approved forms.

It is worth noting, however, that black Hegemonic masculinities did not enjoy the same elevated status during apartheid as their white counterparts. For one thing, just as it is the case with literature on queer masculinities in contemporary South Africa, there is a dearth in literature on culturally approved masculinities, especially novels, written during the apartheid era by black South African authors. This may be attributed to the brutality and harshness that the black man was exposed to, which left him feeling emasculated, humiliated, and infantilised. A bruised ego might have shifted the focus to the liberation struggle, as indicated earlier, since there was nothing positive to write about.

As indicated in Dlamini (2016), literature on black South African masculinity written during apartheid is mainly in the form of protest literature, with short stories derived from the white male authored novel, *Mine Boy* (1946), by Peter Abrahams. The short stories by such writers as Mbulelo Mzamane and Mthuthuzeli Matshoba reiterate Abrahams' *Jimmy comes to town* trope, providing insightful charting of the evolution of traditional African masculinities. These stories depict the way black South African men interpret their dislocation from the normalcy of rural life as well as the effects of urban life on African male and female migrants.

On the same vein, this trope also depicts the feeling of cultural shock as well as the ambivalence that ensues from the dislodgement in relation to gender and positions of power. Once in the city, under the harsh conditions of apartheid, the black man is forced to navigate and to forge a new sense of manliness that will allow him to adjust to the demands of the city life. Furthermore, this trope depicts the anxious state of the black man's mind after encountering the marginalising and subjugating white culture, as he helplessly watches the brutal dwindling of his traditional African masculinity.

An in-depth reading of *Mine Boy* (1946) traces the erosion and transformation of African forms of masculinity, as the black man adapts to the harsh realities of urban life. As much as the novel challenges the infantilisation, exploitation and objectification

of black men, it equally explores how the introduction of the colonial economy, the mining revolution and the apartheid policies affect and transform black African masculinities. In his novel, Abrahams manipulates his protagonist, Xuma, to highlight the destabilisation of conventional manifestations of black African masculinity as well as the shifting of power and gender roles. His experiences of apartheid policies in the city render Xuma invisible and less of a human being, as he finds himself forced to stand outside the city's pavements and yield to a white person whenever he bumps into one. The only safe space which affords him a sense of maleness and recognises him as human is the township, making him oscillate between power and powerlessness. Even in the township, his powerful status of manhood is temporary, as it is sometimes stripped off by black apartheid police as they conduct their raids.

The same trope of powerlessness, infantilisation, and emasculation is reiterated in Mthuthuzeli Matshoba's (1984) *To Kill a Man's Pride*. Told from the third person perspective, the story traces the dehumanising experiences of black men as they struggle to get registered so they can be legally accepted in the city. Somdali, the hostel resident paints a clear picture of the state of decay at the hostel which sharply contrasts with the offices of their white employers. This highlights the social inequality and the transient nature of black manhood and its fluctuating relationship with power. The terrible living arrangements at the hostel are meant to emasculate men, and to strip off the last trace of dignity in their lives. This results in black men developing deep seated anger and resentment, which manifests in outbursts of violence which, unfortunately, is directed towards one another. The conditions are the same at the firm, where Mthuthu works. The old and dangerous working equipment, free labour, lack of job security, infantilisation, and long working hours are meant to humiliate the black man and make him feel less of a man.

The trope of violence and oscillation between power and powerlessness is evident in other short stories written during the apartheid era as well. Both Mbulelo Mzamane's *My Other Cousin, Sitha* (1984) and Njabulo Ndebele's *The Music of the Violin's* (1984) centredness around violence reflects anger which emanates from the feeling of powerlessness among black South African masculinities. In both stories, Soweto townships are ruled with an iron fist by groups of vicious gangsters whose anger is

directed specifically to girls whom they coerce into sex without their consent. This reflects the power they have over these girls which they use to compensate for the power they have lost to the white man and the black apartheid police.

Adding to the list of protest literature of the apartheid regime is Athol Fugard's play, "Sizwe Banzi is dead" (1976) written collaboratively with John Kani and Winston Ntshona. Written during the apartheid regime and echoing the trope of powerlessness and emasculation mentioned earlier, the play outlines the socio-economic predicament of the black South African man, looking closely at how men working in the South African metropolitan cities had to find means of navigating around the pass laws in order to survive and provide for their families back in the Bantustans. Similarly, poems written during this era demonstrate protest as they often highlight the experiences of marginalized communities in the metropolitan cities and in South Africa at large, the brutality of the apartheid regime, and the resilience and hope of the black people. Such poems as Mongane Wally Serote's *City Johannesburg*, Dennis Brutus' *Sharpeville*, Oswald Mtshali's *An abandoned bundle*, Siphso Sepamla's *A ride on the whirlwind*, and many more, all focus on the harshness, the turmoil, and the unrest that characterised the life of the black person at the time.

Scholars like Morrell (1998) allege that the brutality that men were exposed to during the apartheid era has had a significant influence in the violent nature of contemporary South African masculinities. The callousness that characterises apartheid masculinities manifests in the way Mzilikazi's father in Wanner's *Men of the South* wields power over and oppresses his rural family, especially his wife, while he still works in the mines. Mzilikazi captures the hideousness of the situation as he explains, "That epitome of the emotionally abused rural housewife with a husband in town, that was my mother" (2010:89). Similarly, Mfundo's father is portrayed as a domestic despot who is not prepared to share his power with Sindiso, and neither is he ready to allow him to challenge his power. Just like the Soweto gangsters of the apartheid era mentioned earlier, both these characters reflect the temporariness of the apartheid black man's power, which is exaggerated while it lasts.

When Mzilikazi's father eventually gets educated, the power shifts, as he is challenged academically by his equally educated new wife. He is left with no choice but to share

power with her, unlike his uneducated and subservient rural wife who fears him more than she respects him. Mfundo's father's power is also short-lived, as he disappears without a trace. It is alleged that his political activism might have landed him in trouble with the apartheid police. With the death of a traditional father figure who is characterised as the epitome of hegemonic masculinity and demands demigod treatment in *Men of the South*, Wanner is trying to highlight the flexibility of masculinities and the shifting of the discourse from the dominant apartheid masculinities to more egalitarian forms that are compatible with the constitution of the democratic South Africa.

An intriguing question that Wanner insinuates in her texts is, "Has the violent and thwarted black South African masculinity died with apartheid?" This study believes that the allegedly biased promises of the constitution, the dwindling South African economy, and the alleged shifting of power to women to the detriment of men, have all resuscitated the violent black man who existed during the apartheid era. It is to this effect that this study calls for the resocialisation of black South African masculinities so they can be assisted to navigate through the status quo and encouraged to exist alongside other versions of masculinity and femininity for a more egalitarian society.

1.6.3 Contemporary South African Masculinities

As indicated earlier in this section, the transformation of masculinities is not a new phenomenon. With the South African constitution promoting gender equality, subordinated and marginalised versions of masculinity had hoped for an equal status of recognition as hegemonic masculinity. However, literary critics are sceptical about the credibility of gender equality, whether it exists only on paper or in reality. Basing their argument on the critical analysis of Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010), both Andrews (2019) and Stobie (2011) are challenging the extent to which the concerns and desires of queer masculinities are catered for in the South African literary text.

Tracing the history of queer people within South Africa's literary heritage, Andrews alleges that before the demise of apartheid, queer lives, both black and white, were essentially absent from South African popular literary works, and their role as part of

the fabric of the South African society was acknowledged only after the collapse of institutionalised apartheid. According to Andrews (2019), even though the voices that were silenced during apartheid have discovered a voice in contemporary South Africa, the racial dichotomy is still clearly visible, as very few black queer characters and authors are included in discussions of acknowledged post-apartheid literature. These include K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) and *Thirteen Cents* (2013); Fred Khumalo's *Seven Steps to Heaven* (2007); Zukiswa Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010); and Chwayita Ngamlana's *If I Stay Right Here* (2017).

The absence of black queer voices in South African literature reflects the rigid traditionalist cultural mores, as well as the heteronormativity borrowed from the white hegemony as indicated in Morrell (1998). It equally echoes the South African patriarchal standpoint and the social stigma that is attached to homosexuality as pronounced by Mzilikazi's father in *Men of the South* as he asks, "...are these people not infringing on our rights by bringing these un-African ideas to this country? And this in a Christian country, too. What next?" (2010:122).

To address this gap, Andrews explores the possible social dynamics that might have influenced the paucity of black queer characters in South African literature. Focusing on Wanner's *Men of the South*, he shows how Mzilikazi, a black queer character confronts the ideas of race, culture, and sexuality as he wrestles with his identity in an attempt to understand his Africanness and establish a sense of belonging and visibility. He achieves this by challenging and subverting the ideas of tradition and culture, resisting stifling boundaries to his sexual identity, and claiming the agency which has been promised by the constitution. Although the law begins to recognise a multiplicity of realities which run counter to established gender norms, a remarkable milestone in the evolution of South African masculinities, the fact that it is still met with resistance and disdain by Mzilikazi's father reflects social disapproval which muffles these queer voices, rendering the concept of gender equality close to non-existent.

In the same vein, while focusing mainly on the bisexual discourse, Stobie argues that South Africa, with her internationally acclaimed constitution, has failed dismally in advocating for the gay rights in some African sovereign states which still demonise

homosexuality. Quoting Malawi and Uganda as the popular antagonists of gay rights, Stobie scrutinises the institutionalised homophobia endured by bisexuals in these countries. She alleges that South Africa's reluctance to address the rights of homosexuals may be associated with South Africa's wish to maintain cordial relations with the AU (African Union) states. She also questions the authenticity of the South African Bill of Rights, as she observes the homophobic attitude of the then South African president, Jacob Zuma. Coupled with the homophobic speech that was made by the then South Africa's ambassador in Uganda, Jon Qwelane, when he made a public declaration that he would disown his children if they were homosexual, Stobie concurs with Andrews that the gender equity that is enshrined in the South African constitution exists only in paper, otherwise South Africa is still homophobic. Her brief analysis of Wanner's *Men of the South* highlights the back-and-forth transformation of black South African masculinities which reflects confusion whether to transform or not, as some of the characters embrace it while others reject it.

This dilemma is representative of the real-life situations, since some South Africans still embrace homophobic attitudes, twenty-nine years post 1994, while others have accepted homosexuality as equally deserving respect and acknowledgement as heterosexuality. Though Stobie addresses homosexuality, her focus is not mainly on black South African masculinities. Her argument takes the discourse of homosexuality outside the confines of South Africa while simultaneously highlighting the immaturity with which South Africa is handling the process of transformation. The fact that out of 53 African sovereign states, homosexuality is against the law in 38 indicates that most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are still suffering the aftermath of colonisation which endorsed the heteronormative values and refused to recognise sexuality-related issues as human rights issues.

Although both critics address one of the most pertinent issues of masculinity, their analysis falls short in acknowledging that queer masculinities exist alongside other versions of masculinity, some of which have proven violent, which this study discusses in detail. This study believes that it is imperative to analyse and understand the relationship between these different versions, their points of convergence and divergence, as well as the source where the differences emanate from. It needs to be

remembered that masculinity is a contested category which is socially constructed, malleable and contradictory. A clear understanding will assist in the attempts to harmonise the different masculinities and carve a way towards egalitarianism, which is what this study attempts to achieve.

Shifting the focus from a homosexual male and looking at the transformation of masculinities through a feminist lens, Dlamini (2018) scrutinises the way in which domesticity and contemporary cultures inhibit and frustrate the meaningful re-creation and negotiation of malleable masculine and feminine identities. Through an examination of *The Madams* (2006) and *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), Dlamini examines the different ways in which the contemporary middle-class man and woman use family to deconstruct the various forms of domesticity that exist in contemporary South African cultures. On the one hand, she looks at the way in which the modern and neo-traditional values infiltrate into the rigid and the patriarchal zone, allowing women to use their constitutional rights to challenge and destabilise the rigid gender role obligations. On the other hand, she examines the tight grip that patriarchy has on black masculinity and femininity performance, creating suffocating tensions that render the familial sphere a zone of tension where neither of the two parties is prepared to compromise.

In the Makana household, Andile, Nobantu's husband in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), blatantly refuses her to work because that will make people think that he is a failed man who is unable to support his family. The way in which Andile addresses and performs gender roles reflects certain configurations of masculinity that frustrate the meaningful transformation of contemporary South African masculinities. With the Makana household as her reference, Wanner argues that though democracy has covered a lot of ground since its inception in 1994, women's treatment and status in the public and domestic sphere has not changed. This echoes Gqola's (2015) and Tlhabi's (2017) statements that the liberation struggle against apartheid was only meant for the liberation of the black man from racial oppression, otherwise women remain under the shackles of gender oppression.

This bears testimony to Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, later modified by Gqola (2007;2015) to speak to the South African context, that race intersects with

various aspects to produce oppression. In her book, *Rape: a South African Nightmare* (2015), Gqola posits that a black South African female is at the bottom of the social hierarchy where she is subjected to the most despicable forms of oppression. If this is the case with the modern and more enlightened middle-class woman, as portrayed in Wanner's texts, it can be argued that the predicament suffered by the lower-class, poor and uneducated woman is indecipherable, something that future literary research needs to take a closer look at.

Still focusing on the transformation of masculinities and the injustices suffered by the vulnerable groups at the hands of the heterosexual male in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), Nyongesa (2020) and Dlamini (2021) explore the concepts of othering and otherness which, perpetrated by men, lead to fragmented states such as depression, confusion, and suicidal ideation. Zuko's reference to the way he looks in his suicide note insinuates a feeling of alienation as he associates the predicament which has just befallen him to the colour of his skin. Similarly, the way Martin Mtshali and Liam relate to Grace, Martin O'Malley's white wife, suggests a xenophobic rift in the familial setup, which is a microcosm of the bigger society. This suggests that families are not the safe havens they are always assumed to be. They are characterised by suffocating tensions which have a repulsive effect to its members that force them to flee.

The trope of flight that Wanner highlights in Zuko when he commits suicide, also becomes evident in *Men of the South* when Mzilikazi flees from his home twice. He suffers claustrophobia around his homophobic father and finds solace when he becomes an independent adult in Johannesburg. His freedom is short-lived as he is once again forced to run away from his wife, Siyanda in Johannesburg, who finds it hard to accept his homosexuality. He reclaims his independence in Cape Town where he prances around as an open gay. The same flight is evident in Mfundo, who eventually gets a recording deal in Johannesburg, affording him solace from his family which has manipulated his joblessness to label him as a failed man. This suggests that relationships between marginalised identities and their families are built more on tolerance than acceptance. Wanner manipulates all these incidents to highlight the complexity of familial tenets, which spirals out to the bigger society, defeating the

purpose of the constitution which advocates for intolerance towards any form of discrimination.

Dlamini (2021) takes the argument a step further by looking at othering and otherness from the perspective of rape and black racism. Tapping on the trope of violence, she argues that the unaccountability that follows the rape of Zuko by his uncle, Liam makes South Africa the ruthless world of the politically powerful and wealthy. She further argues that the foregrounding of vaginal discourses when discussing rape and other forms of violence in South Africa obscures the equal gravity of male rape and anal sex. Since rape is socially constructed as affecting women and girls, male rape, which is rarely talked about is not given the attention it deserves.

Javaid (2015) opines that the silences that surround male rape are steeped in the myths that perceive men only as perpetrators, not victims. These beliefs shape the societal perceptions of male victims and the types of responses these victims receive, which usually make them refrain from coming forward and receiving the support and the assistance that they need. The social prejudices and stereotypes that characterise these myths result in society not understanding the seriousness of male rape. On an equal footing, the fact that male rape has been made invisible results in the perpetuation of this scourge as well as further chances of marginalisation of the victim.

Still tapping on the trope of violence in his review of *London Cape Town Joburg*, Odhiambo concurs with Gqola (2015) and Brodie (2020), who allege that it is the absence of *Ubuntu*, a shared humanism, as well as the gravity of sexual violence that has earned South Africa the label of "the world's rape capital." He regards the rape of Zuko by his uncle, Liam, as a horrific and inerasable stain on a country that proclaims *Ubuntu* as its core values. The symbolic characterisation of Zuko and his emotional attachment to his newly found family, especially Uncle Liam, represents the gullibility that draws most of the South African victims of rape towards the perpetrators. Brodie (2020) maintains that in most rape cases, a perpetrator is someone the victim knows and trusts. This is clearly evinced in Jacob Zuma's rape case where his victim, Fezekile, related to him as a father (Tlhabi 2017). Odhiambo opines that by taking his own life, Zuko profoundly rejects the violence that men, the wealthy, and politicians in South

Africa inflict on the weak, including women, the elderly, the young, the impoverished, foreigners, members of racial minorities, and others.

With the assistance of Wanner's texts, this study suggests an introspection of the black South African heterosexual male as well as the redefinition of traditional gender roles. This will allow the attainment of equity across genders and thereby produce male subjectivities that are neither oppressive to women nor anxious about achieving successful masculinity.

1.6.4 Black South African Masculinities

It is commonly known that in most societies of Southern Africa, women and girls are exploited under a patriarchal gender system. However, it is imperative to note that patriarchy is not only detrimental to women, many boys and men suffer as well. In addition to the pain that women endure, men also subject other men to exploitation while boys, exposed to patriarchy, develop into men. As these boys observe such a situation, it encourages perpetuation of the patriarchal system. According to Shefer et al. (2007), numerous studies have shown that people living in Sub-Saharan Africa - both men and women - are victims of a dominant gender system that they are unable to live up to, due to factors including poverty, racism, HIV/AIDS, and low levels of education. Thus, a hegemonic standard is only an ideal that is unachievable and does not correspond with the lived experiences of most black South African men. Men who struggle with or are unable to uphold patriarchal norms because of the aforementioned factors are marginalised and lose their power. Then, as previously mentioned, they resort to violence to vent their displeasure at not being able to hold onto their privileged hierarchical position. (Pyke 2017).

Ramphela (2002) and Wood et al. (2008) contend that violence is a tool used to uphold self-imagined identities and build gender hierarchies. This suggests that even while some men may have been marginalised and lost their patriarchal standing as a result, they nevertheless fantasise about powerful identities that are ingrained in gender inequalities and devote their entire being to these identities, which are frequently denied. According to Morrell (2001), violence and masculinity have always been closely associated in South African history. According to him, the chieftaincy

system of rural life, which governed both the distribution of labour between sexes and access to the land, as well as mining have influenced South African masculinities.

As indicated in Matshoba's story *To Kill a Man's Pride* (1984), mineworkers resided in compounds and hostels where they bravely faced the risks and obstacles inherent in their job, exhibiting hegemonic masculinity. Their already terrible living conditions were worsened by the fact that women were deprived entry into these hostels and complexes, making it difficult for these men to find love and pleasure. The circumstances were brutal, violent, and dehumanising. According to Morrell (2001), it was a men's world that characterised itself by high incidents of risk-taking and violence. Given that black men were the ones who were recruited to labour in the mines in order to support their families, these traits have managed to impact and mould the patriarchal black South African system.

Lindegaard & Gear (2014), as well as Michalski (2017) contend that the prison is another institution that encourages and legitimises aggressive masculinities, especially when it comes to prison gang activity. According to Lindegaard & Gear (ibid), an inmate's experience is shaped by sex in incarceration in numerous ways, most notably in terms of his gender identity. He asserts that regardless of the inmate's sexual orientation, male convicts in prison are segregated into men and women, or "wyfies." The "wyfies" are coerced into adopting feminine sexual roles and taking on the role of the penetrated partner. In this sense, their sexual identity is still formed inside the boundaries of patriarchal heterosexuality, but their exterior male identity is disrupted and subverted (Shefer et al. 2007). One might argue that the jail preserves preexisting sexual identities while also fostering the development of new ones.

This subversion and rupturing of the original masculine identity can create deep seated anger and frustration which piles up, as the heterosexual inmate is continuously subjected to sexual penetration. Such anger manifests itself through violent outbursts, both inside and outside prison. It is this anger that results in Zuko violating his own life in *London Cape Town Joburg*, after being raped by his uncle, Liam. By bringing the reality of male rape to the familial context, Wanner is trying to highlight its gravity against the backdrop of myths which trivialise male rape and make it difficult for the victims to challenge it through legal measures.

Rape outside prison, both female and male, is one another way that violent South African masculinity manifests itself. Reid & Walker (2005a) claim that in a situation where there is a strikingly huge discrepancy between men's aspirations and the diminished expectations of their everyday lives, rape might be interpreted as an aggressive, cruel, and symbolic declaration of masculine dominance. This occurs when men's everyday realities, which are linked to significant shifts in both the political and socioeconomic domains of life, thwart their objectives and desires to hold a position of patriarchy and live up to the standards of hegemonic masculinity.

Reid & Walker (2005a) further argue that men who are socially marginalised and weak are frequently the ones who commit rape in an attempt to fulfil painfully unattainable ideals of heterosexual virility and masculine strength. In a similar vein, Jewkes & Abrahams (2002) and Mathews et al. (2015) regard rape as an expression of male power over women and disadvantaged males as well as an act of aggression. They contend that it happens in situations when masculinity is heavily shaped by male power over women and sexual entitlement. Rape is sometimes perceived as one of the ways men display their virility as a means of punishing and dehumanising financially successful women who castrate them as a result of their success (ibid).

Messerschmidt (2005) maintains that some men fall short of achieving numerous milestones associated with being a man, like getting married, having children, securing employment, and starting their own families. The performance of masculinity has great significance for these men who have fallen short of the hegemonic norm. This is evident in the way Marita's jobless boyfriend in *The Madams* (2006) violates her even though she sustains him. He prostitutes her and demands all the money and beats her when he is not satisfied with the amount she has managed to make. As a brutal performance, rape reinforces the physical strength and subjectivity of men whose standing could otherwise be questioned. In the process, the victim is objectified and humiliated.

Contrary to Meger's (2015) and Jewkes & Abrahams' (2002) claim, that it is marginalised men who rape, as well as those who feel sexually castrated by the success of women, Gqola (2015) argues that perpetrating rape transcends the socio-economic and political status as well as the level of education of the perpetrator. To

this, she gives us real life examples as she laments that in some cases, especially those that involve respectable members of the society, the social construction of rape makes it difficult to believe the victim's story, thereby exposing her to secondary trauma in the process.

In congruence with Brodie (2020), Gqola states that the credibility of the victim's story relies very heavily on the believability of who she says raped her. As far as these theorists are concerned, the accused has to fall into the category of a potential rapist, and the list includes strangers, poor men, black men, and socially incompetent men. Powerful, popular, affluent, and successful men are often excluded from the list. As a result, when women accuse men in this category of rape, many people refuse to believe their story, even if they are not connected in any way to the accused. In *London Cape Town Joburg*, Liam uses his socio-economic and political status to his advantage as he is convinced that nobody can associate him with the rape of young boys. Mxolisi, his first victim decides to flee with his mother rather than expose Liam, and Zuko decides to commit suicide.

To highlight the tendency of affluent men to use their status to mask rape, Gqola (2015) makes an example of the Jacob Zuma trial, where people who admired him, including women, refused to associate Zuma, the then president of the republic of South Africa, with what Khwezi was accusing him of. The fact that even women sometimes support the accused, highlights the significant role that women play in the construction of black South African masculinities. Another example that Gqola (2015) brings to the fore is that of the famous South African cricketer, Makhaya Ntini. When he was convicted of raping twenty-two-year-old Nomangezi Matokazi in 1999 and later freed on appeal, Matokazi was accused of participating in the plot to bring the successful Ntini down. As a young, handsome, and powerful cricket star, the social assumption was that women would throw themselves at him, and that the allegation that he had raped a student who worked as a domestic worker was far-fetched and was only meant to tarnish his image. Instead, it was the woman whom the society accused of making sexual advances on the cricketer (ibid).

Our society has been raised to perceive women as inherently guilty in rape cases. They are made to feel as though being born female is tantamount to sin. The examples

mentioned above indicate that as a social construction, rape is regarded as inappropriate sex as Gqola (2015) puts it, and that according to social stereotypes, powerful men cannot be associated with rape since their power can attract any type of woman they want, without them having to force themselves on women, especially those from humble backgrounds. Gqola (ibid) argues that the credibility of a rape survivor's account of rape depends on how closely it matches her society's conception of what constitutes a rape and who is capable of committing one, who can be raped, when and how. This implies that for the victim's story to sound convincing, it will depend upon how perfectly the story fits into the society's preconceived script of what rapes looks like, and under which circumstances rape qualifies as rape. People are more inclined to accept a woman's story as true if it closely aligns with the stereotypes of rape held by her society.

To Zuko in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), the fact that his own father does not do anything about the boy's rape insinuates that he does not believe him. If his father does not believe him, then nobody will, not even his mother. This stereotyping of rape can be regarded as one of the reasons why rape is underreported. As Brodie (2020) indicates, some rape victims feel reluctant to report rape, with the fear that instead of believing and helping them, people will judge them and traumatise them further in the process.

Gqola (2015) further argues that if ordinary heterosexual men, by virtue of being men in a patriarchal society, have been socialised to believe that they are entitled to women's bodies, because of their social standing, powerful men like Liam in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014) would feel even more entitled to women's and other vulnerable groups' bodies. If such groups refuse them access, they will then force it, knowing very well that the society will come to their defence against such allegations.

Rinehart et al. (2023) posit that the believability of a woman's story of rape depends on the relationship between plausibility and credibility. Plausibility is more about the hearer and his or her preconceived ideas of what rape looks like, and less about what the victim is saying. If the story closely resembles what the hearer's expectations of what rape looks like, then it is plausible. Credibility on the other hand, is more about the victim, the person who is telling the story. For the victim's story to be credible, the

victim has to fall convincingly under the category of people who are socially constructed as possible to rape. Rinehart et al. (2023) argue that there are people whom the society has labelled as impossible to rape. However, this does not imply that such people have never been raped. It is the way in which rape has been socially constructed to accommodate a certain category of people and exclude others. Those that have been excluded from the list include wives, sex workers, slave women and men. Rinehart et al. (ibid) posit that wives are excluded because religiously and socially, a woman's body belongs to her husband.

In Marita's case in *The Madams* (2006), her prostitution by her husband indicates both ownership and objectification. To him, she has lost value and because he owns her body, he can use it to generate him money. Sex workers also do not fall under the category of people who are possible to rape because the nature of their work insinuates a voracious appetite for sex, so they are socially constructed to be ready to receive it anytime from any man. This stereotyping of rape in South Africa perpetuates violence as it endorses men's entitlement to women's bodies, rendering women helpless, as they have to go through secondary trauma to have their rape stories believed and to get justice.

Another way of asserting masculinity among South African men is through undergoing circumcision. According to Maina et al. (2022), circumcision is the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. Circumcision, especially "*ulwaluko*" which is practised mainly by Xhosa boys, carries considerable risk. There are numerous documented instances of boys losing their penises entirely because of this process. In addition to the possibility of contracting HIV and other STIs, particularly if traditional surgical methods are employed, the boys could end up losing their manhood.

The irony intensifies when boys attend these schools with the intention of graduating into men, only to return home as "failed men" as Mqgolozana (2009) puts it in his novel "*A man who is not a man.*" The loss of a penis, which is regarded as one of the most significant markers of manhood (Shefer et al. 2007) can be regarded as tantamount to physical death, because traditionally, the penis qualifies one to function as a man. In a traditional setting, it allows a man to have a wife, father

children, and establish his family, a status which is associated with successful masculinity among others. *Ulwaluko* is one of the most revered and long-standing cultural practices among amaXhosa. Because of the status afforded to this practice, boys tend to overlook the risks involved. Some young boys even sneak out without the approval from their parents. It is in such cases that these young boys, because of their age, miss the significance and the depth of meaning associated with the ritual.

Ntombana (2011) points out that *ulwaluko* is not only about the cutting of the foreskin, rather, it is a symbolic cut, which has a deeper meaning related to *isiko*. According to Kepe et al. (2015); Ncaca (2014) and Ntombana (2011), *isiko* kwa Xhosa is one of those revered practices which cannot be easily removed or changed because of their cultural significance, and also because they have existed for a long time. Gqola (2007) and Ncaca (2014) describe the cut as symbolic, as its meaning extends beyond the physical to a religious and spiritual introduction of the initiate to *iminyanya* (the ancestors), connecting him to his clan and the broader community. The sanctity that is attached to the ritual is something that is taken very seriously, as MC- Squared in *A man who is not a man* states to Lumkile: "You must listen closely when you're being instructed. Pay attention to the language that is used. It is the manhood language that you will be expected to use later to explain yourself [...] So; observe, listen and act; that is your journey into manhood" (Mgqolozana 2009: 64). Going to the bush involves the inculcation of principles and values which will inform and shape up both the psyche as well as the persona of the initiate. This is the new identity that the initiate will take home as he embarks on a new life as a man.

As indicated in Mgqolozana (2009), among the teachings given to the initiates at the mountain, *Ulwaluko* perpetuates hegemonic masculinity. The guardians (*amakhankatha*) engrave heteropatriarchal ideologies on the young men's minds for the duration of their stay at the mountain. Among the characteristics that are encouraged to prove that one is a "real man" are bravery, promiscuity, controlling women, sensitivity to gender roles, and sexual narcissism (Gqola 2007; Magodyo et al. 2017). Because sexual entitlement is promoted at the mountain, *ulwaluko* produces men who perceive women as sexual objects. This is evinced through the practice commonly known as *ukosula* (wiping), or *ukukhupha ifutha*, which means to remove

fat from the new initiates (Ntombana 2011; Tshemese & Lusawana 2012). As indicated in Mggolozana (2009) *ukosula* or *ukukhupha ifutha* is usually performed by *amakrwala* (new initiates) in the house of the candle on the night of their homecoming celebration known as *umgidi*. Ideally, this practice requires new initiates to have sexual intercourse with any female that is not necessarily their girlfriend or long-standing partner (Ntombana 2011; Tshemese & Lusawana 2012; Hodes & Gittings 2019).

It is important to highlight that this is a customary procedure which, according to the shared belief of the amaXhosa community of men, is believed to erase any bad luck that an initiate might have picked up during the process of initiation (Ntombana 2011). This is tantamount to rape, especially since the initiate does not necessarily need the woman's approval. Also, it insinuates a culture that takes pride in engraving the binary that separates men from women and promote the objectification of women in the process. This explains why some men would resort to violence when women turn their sexual advances down, or when they exercise their autonomy as independent human beings.

In his speech at the funeral of the University of Fort Hare victim of femicide, Nosiselo Mtebeni in August 2021, the minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr Blade Nzimande left the country with a rhetorical question. He asked what the guardians as well as the custodians of this ritual say to these young men when they are not supposed to say it, and what is it that they do not say when they are supposed to say it. The implication of this question was that the teachings that the initiates are exposed to at the mountain are responsible for shaping up the type of masculinity that these young men embrace. If they are taught to embrace a positive masculinity, they will comply. Similarly, if they are made to believe that it is a toxic masculinity that makes a man a "real man", they will embrace that and incorporate it into the list of values that they will take home as men.

However, to show the fluidity of masculinity, Shefer et al. (2007) indicates that South African men react to gender and social change in different ways. While some masculinities have demonstrated strong identity crises, others have reacted positively to the pressures of political transformation. In one study, for instance, the boys who participated in the interviews expressed their distaste for certain hegemonic

traits, such as aggression directed towards women and children, males who have multiple partners, and binge drinking (Shefer 2007). Likewise, a new man that does not place much value on circumcision was made evident by the late Baby Jake Matlala, the late Lundi Tyamara, Selaelo Selota, Brian Baloyi, and DJ Glen Lewis. These are given recognition among the popular figures in South Africa. They dismissed circumcision as nothing more than the simple removal of the foreskin and said that it was outdated due to the demands of a modern, westernised lifestyle (ibid). This demonstrates the malleability of masculinities and that they can adjust to specific social and cultural shifts.

1.7. Who is Zukiswa Wanner?

Zukiswa Wanner describes herself as a writer; a feminist; an African; a mother and a lover. She was born in Lusaka, Zambia. Her mother is from Zimbabwe, and her father is from South Africa. After completing her elementary and secondary schooling in Zimbabwe, she went on to Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu to pursue a degree in journalism.

1.7.1 Wanner's introduction to the literary world

The publication of Wanner's debut book, *The Madams* (first edition), in 2006, was one of the turning points in her engagement with literary culture. A great piece of fiction, it gave readers a taste of her singularly engrossing style and provided a fresh and potent portrayal of the African woman in fiction. There is significance to the timing of the book's publication. It includes Wanner in a select group of authors who started presenting stories in novel ways in the 2000s in an effort to reach new readers around the continent and beyond.

These writers renegotiated the parameters of their visibility in the international literary landscape when African publishing dwindled during the economic hardships of the 1980s and 1990s. They demanded that publishers perceive them for the complex realities they gave about the continent and for who they are as individuals. Zukiswa was a part of this group of youthful literary pioneers which included the likes

of Wainaina Binyavanga, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Taiye Selasi, Chris Abani, Helon Habila, Brian Chikwava, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and many more.

In a sense, then, Zukiswa Wanner is a name that deserves mentioning when recounting the tale of the resurgence of African literary culture at the turn of the millennium. Her early involvement may account for her acute understanding of the demands of the African literary scene and her decades-long expansion of influence into more institutionalised sectors of culture outside the realm of creative writing.

1.7.2 Wanner's achievements and contributions to the literary sphere as an author.

Since the publication of her debut book in 2006, Wanner's novels have been shortlisted for multiple awards, including the Commonwealth Writer's Prize and the South African Literary awards. Her debut book, *The Madams* (2006), has been praised for tackling themes of black economic empowerment in Johannesburg with humour and verve. It was shortlisted in 2007 for the South African Literary Awards' K. Sello Duiker Award. She is the author of three other novels. The first two are *Men of the South* (2010) and *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). The latter was shortlisted for both the Herman Charles Bosman Award and the 2011 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region). In 2014 she wrote and published the third novel, *London Cape Town Joburg*, which was awarded the K. Sello Duiker Memorial Literature Award in 2015. In 2010, she co-authored and co-edited two non-fiction books with South African photographer Alf Kumalo: *L'Esprit du Sport* (2012), cowritten with French photographer Amelie Debray, and *A Prisoner's Home* (2014), a biography of the first Mandela home at 8115 Vilakazi Street.

She co-edited the African-Asian short story anthology *Behind the Shadows* (2012) with Rohini Chowdhury. She has also authored two children's novels, *Refilwe* (2014), an African adaptation of the fairy tale "Rapunzel," as well as *Jama loves bananas* (2013). She was also one of the sixty-six authors that contributed to the modern interpretation

of the Bible that was presented in October 2011 at Westminster Abbey's Bush Theatre. Wanner was also identified as one of the thirty-nine writers from Sub-Saharan Africa under the age of forty, possessing the ability and aptitude to identify patterns in African literature, on the Hay Festival's Africa 39 list in April 2014. Wanner is additionally one of the founders of the Read South Africa initiative, a campaign which promotes reading South African literature. She was also a member of the board of trustees for the Pan African Literary Initiative until September 2016.

Wanner has contributed significantly to a variety of newspapers and periodicals as a prolific and creative essayist, short story writer, and journalist. She employs satire in her novels to examine the enduring problems of modern-day South Africa, particularly the foolishness that underpins several highly esteemed identities in the country. Wanner's works tackle a variety of identity-related issues, including race, the differences between femininity and masculinity, culture, Afrophobia, romantic and interpersonal relationships, consumerism, and many more. Her passion for African literary culture stems from a profound awareness of the continent's diversity and its shared experiences. She was exposed to several African cultures because of her birth in Zambia to a South African father and a Zimbabwean mother. She has visited the continent, been recognised as an honorary Nigerian multiple times, resides in Nairobi, and continues to work out of Johannesburg. Her dedication to the culture is rooted in her pan-African perspective of the world.

In 2020 she received the Brittle Paper African Literary Person of the Year award. The recipient of the prize is someone who, during the given year, has distinguished themselves in the advancement of African literary culture and industry. Wanner keeps writers and artists visible through initiatives like the Goethe-sponsored Artistic Encounters and, more recently, Virtually Yours. She received the 2020 Goethe Medal for her long-standing partnership with the Goethe Institute. This award is given to people who have distinguished themselves through exceptional contributions to global cultural exchange.

1.7.3 Wanner, a selfless literarian

Wanner exemplifies what it means to be a writer's writer, a label given to a writer who, in addition to carving out a prosperous literary career, creates room for other authors to flourish. By making significant investments in the literary industry's infrastructure, they promote other writers at great personal expense. Numerous African writers have benefited from Wanner's institutional activities. She has led several writing seminars around the continent. She strengthened South Africa's reading culture through ReadSA. She was on the board of Writivism, an organisation that helped numerous African writers begin their prosperous careers. In addition to routinely attending international literary festivals, she has led writing workshops for aspiring authors in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Denmark, western Kenya, and Germany. Additionally, in 2015, she served as one of the three judges for the Etisalat Prize for Literature, the Pan African Literary Prize for long-form fiction. Finding new audiences for early career writers was made possible by her service on the judging panels for the Etisalat Prize for Literature and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize (Africa area) two years later. She was a co-founder of La Shamba in 2017, a multilingual platform that facilitates cross-cultural dialogue between writers from Latin America and Africa. She subsequently started the AfroYoungAdult mentorship and training programme for aspiring authors. Workshops were organised throughout several African cities, including Accra, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Kigali, Johannesburg, Lagos, and Lomé. The programme resulted in the publication of an anthology of short tales in 2022.

1.7.4 Wanner's engagement with the literary community

Wanner is also the community member that organises people to come up with solutions for problems as they arise. The COVID 19 pandemic had a disruptive impact on literary culture throughout the nation. Book launches, workshops, and festivals were cancelled. During the initial months of the virus's spread, the lockdown order nearly put an end to literary endeavours in many regions of the world. Wanner,

however, saw the lockdown as a chance to bring the literary community together in a novel way.

She launched the Afrolit Sans Frontieres Literary Festival. A live broadcast on Facebook and Instagram featured the works of sixteen writers who came together for a virtual festival. The festival was held in three additional editions, the most recent of which created history by being the first-ever literary festival conducted solely in African languages. The literary festival had been a great success. In spite of their isolation, readers might discover community and writers could interact with audiences.

1.7.5 What do critics say about Wanner's work?

Wanner's work has been labelled as "chic lit" by certain critics. Ferris & Young (2006) define this genre as the kind of fiction that tackles contemporary female themes in a playful and light-hearted way. Laden (2010) and Taylor (2010) in Dlamini (2015) contend that one potential drawback of classifying "chic lit" as women's literature is that it suggests that reading this genre of fiction is a waste of time and diminishes the value of women's literary works in comparison to other works of literature. In response, Ferris and Young (2006) in Dlamini (2015) contend that the commercial success of "chic lit" is linked to the disdain these critics feel for the genre. These two scholars draw the conclusion that this genre is an effective literary device that modern middle-class women utilise to depict their everyday encounters. However, they also contend that it is unquestionably not the genre that will best represent women writers in the future.

This can be regarded more as an assumption than a fact, because, as Wanner in Dlamini (2015) argues, writing about important issues in a chucklesome manner does not trivialise them, instead it highlights them in a less intimidating manner. This oppositionality that is characteristic of "chic lit" should be viewed as more appealing to the reader, because among the multiple purposes of reading, is its ability to alleviate

stress in the reader's mind. The absence of this element of light-heartedness could be regarded as a limitation to the more traditional forms of writing, since the solemnity with which they present their content might expose the reader to emotional distress. Other members of the African literary community see Wanner's contributions in a similar light. Omotoso, author of "*Bom Boy*" (2011) and "*Woman Next Door*" (2016), feels lucky to have worked with Zukiswa Wanner. What she commends the most about her is the cheerfulness that accompanies the enormous energy that she puts into her work, as well as her generosity of spirit. Omotoso states that it is that same generosity and ebullience that Wanner has applied to orchestrating a vibrant cultural integration on the continent, either through her own contributions or through her exertions as an advocate for African literature (Haarhoff & Lakhijia 2021). She also reiterates what many have said about Wanner, that her activities have built literal communities while raising up writers and other artists. In all of this, Omotoso emphasises that Wanner showed generosity, compassion and humour, qualities which she says are quite rare in the African literary community (Haarhoff & Lakhijia 2021).

In the same vein, Mqgqolozana, author of *A Man Who is Not a Man* (2009), and curator of *Abantu Festival*, declares that his encounter with Wanner opened doors for him early on in his writing career. He states that Wanner used to mention his work in every interview she attended, and she told them what an amazing writer Mqgqolozana was. He also testifies that Wanner did not do this for him only, but for every writer that she had an encounter with across the continent. He commends her for the enormous strides that African literature has taken, as she tirelessly and selflessly continues to open and nourish spaces for cultural advancement, elevating and inspiring African writers in the process.

From the perspective of this thesis, Zukiswa Wanner's work can be commended for its prominence in contemporary African literature, attracting the interest of critics and academics alike. Her narratives explore complex themes like identity, racism, gender, and the sociopolitical climate of post-apartheid South Africa. Academics commend her for skilfully incorporating humour and profound social commentary into her narratives,

which renders her work both thought-provoking and appealing. Wanner is celebrated for her novelistic depictions of African women and the multifaceted nature of their relationships within a rapidly changing society. Some of her most popular works include *The Madams* (2006), *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), *Men of the South* (2010), and *London, Cape Town, Joburg* (2014). While advancing the discourse around African literature, several literary critics have investigated how her narratives both uphold and subvert established social conventions in contemporary South Africa. Among others, these include Dlamini (2015); Scina (2018); Nyongesa (2020); and Milazzo (2024), who have offered their perspectives on her narrative approach, thematic concerns, and cultural impact.

With an emphasis on the nuances of black middle-class identities and the interactions between gender, class, and race in the setting of post-apartheid South Africa, Dlamini offers an insightful evaluation of *The Madams* (2006). According to Dlamini's perspective, Wanner's narrative deftly handles the challenges and conflicts that modern South African families encounter, particularly those pertaining to domesticity. She highlights that Wanner's *The Madams* utilises domestic environments as crucial sites for the formation of gender identities. In her critique, she argues that the home is a dynamic ideological arena that influences and controls the way men and women perform their feminine and masculine identities, rather than just serving as a backdrop. This viewpoint is consistent with the broader discourse on domesticity, that depicts the home as a place of both solace and conflict. Wanner's characters, as Dlamini notes, struggle with the expectations society places on them, which frequently results in a contradictory mess and incompleteness in their identities.

Through the prism of the masculinity theory, Dlamini points out how Wanner depicts male characters who often find themselves caught between conventional expectations and the realities of contemporary life. The relationships between the female protagonists and their partners, who grapple with their own identities in the setting of evolving gender dynamics, are especially notable examples of the interplay between domesticity and masculinity. Dlamini's investigation highlights the complexity of gender performance and the social forces that mould male and female identities in modern-day South Africa. She contends that Wanner's depiction of masculine

characters often mirrors men's concerns in a culture where conventional gender roles are being redefined, resulting in disputes within domestic spaces.

Another important aspect of Dlamini's analysis is the way social class and consumerism shape black masculinities and femininities. She contends that Wanner's depiction of the black middle class shows how consumer culture shapes relationships and identities. The tensions between conventional morals and contemporary consumerist impulses are frequently reflected in the way the characters in *The Madams* negotiate their aspirations and realities. According to Dlamini, this interplay emphasises how difficult it is to preserve cultural authenticity in a socioeconomic landscape that is evolving so rapidly. She contends that Wanner questions conventional ideas of gender and masculinity when viewed through a feminist viewpoint. Through the post-colonial lens, power dynamics in these interactions are examined through the protagonists' relationships with their domestic workers, especially after Thandi employs a white maid. The characters are forced to examine their preconceived notions about race and class because of this change, which also highlights the multifaceted complexity of identity in a country still dealing with the effects of apartheid. Wanner's complex portrayal enables the protagonists to negotiate their individual and collective identities while also critically examining the gender norms that are still in place in modern-day South Africa.

The narrative, according to Dlamini, becomes a forum for discussing how women can assert their agency in a patriarchal society through empowerment and education, yet it also emphasises the challenges they face in doing so. Thandi's hire of a white maid is a metaphor of the complicated nature of privilege and the lingering racial tensions in South Africa after apartheid. Dlamini contends that this dynamic, in which these women negotiate their newfound economic power while attempting to overcome the historical legacies of oppression, serves to expose the tensions among the black middle class. She argues that readers are prompted to consider the larger effects of race and class on the formation of identity and belonging by Wanner's nuanced depiction of these relationships. The text makes the argument that although economic empowerment has given black women new opportunities, it has also resulted in disputes and inequalities of a different kind, especially when it comes to domestic

work. By highlighting domesticity as a site of ideological struggle, analysing the effects of consumerism, and addressing the intricacies of masculinity, Dlamini's analysis enriches our understanding of Wanner's work. In addition to illuminating the experiences of the characters, her critique challenges the reader to reflect on the larger societal concerns that continue to influence contemporary South African identities. Through her observations, Dlamini presents *The Madams* as a significant addition to the debate of gender and identity in our rapidly evolving culture.

Critiquing Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010) through the intersectionality theoretical lens, Scina (2018) highlights the quest for identity as one of the central themes in *Men of the South*. She underlines how each of the protagonists struggles with issues of identity and belonging in the quickly evolving South African society. Wanner deftly balances the individual and societal facets of identity, showing how the individuals deal with racial, class, and gender-based social expectations. The male protagonists, Mfundo, Mzilikazi, and Tinaye, are forced to navigate their identities in a setting that frequently enforces strict conceptions of manhood as they individually face prejudices related to black masculinity. Through her characters, Wanner contributes to the gender conversation in modern South Africa by highlighting the changing power dynamics between men and women and challenging conventional ideas of masculinity via their experiences.

Scina has also examined the novel from a postcolonial and feminist perspective, looking at how apartheid and colonialism continue to shape South African identities. She examines how Wanner emphasises the intersectionality of race and gender through her portrayal of female characters who have to negotiate complicated relationships within a patriarchal environment. In line with the larger cultural shifts taking place in South Africa following the end of apartheid, these female characters challenge conventional gender norms while claiming their identities. Scina praises Wanner's ability to depict the struggles and triumphs of women. She argues that understanding Wanner's characters' confrontation and redefining of their roles in a nation still struggling with its colonial past and patriarchal systems requires a feminist perspective. She claims that Wanner's nuanced portrayal of women gives the story more depth and allows an in-depth investigation of identity and belonging.

From a different theoretical perspective, Dlamini (2015) further examines Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010) through the queer theory. She investigates how homosexuality is portrayed in African communities and the cultural taboos around it, especially in a nation like South Africa where sexual rights are protected by the constitution. This theoretical framework allows her to critically analyse Wanner's depiction of male characters and their interactions, as well as the larger societal ramifications of these dynamics. Her analysis focuses on how Wanner's novel subverts Eurocentric and heteronormative depictions of gender and sexuality in South Africa. In particular, Mzilikazi's role is believed to be responsible for the emergence of a new type of queer parent who unabashedly embraces his sexual identity in defiance of societal norms related to gender, ethnicity, and culture. Through the lens of queer theory, Dlamini advances a better understanding of how characters in *Men of the South* deal with identity issues, particularly those related to sexuality, and its intersection with race, class, and cultural norms in post-apartheid South Africa. Her nuanced depiction of characters and their quest for acceptance and identity resonates with the reader, establishing her as a significant voice in the discourse on contemporary African identities.

Behind Every Successful Man (2008) provides an in-depth investigation of issues pertaining to domesticity, class relations, and women's emancipation. By applying the feminist, postcolonial, and masculinity theories, Dlamini (2015) has shed light on the intricacies of gender roles and identity within the context of the narrative. Through the prism of the masculinity theory, Dlamini highlights Wanner's portrayal of male characters who often find themselves caught between conforming to traditional norms and embracing contemporary realities. For instance, Nobantu's husband demonstrates the fears of a man who perceives his wife's ambitions as a threat, which causes tension in their marriage. Dlamini argues that the examination of domesticity highlights the challenges that men face in a rapidly changing culture, where conventional ideas of masculinity are being redefined. Dlamini claims that Wanner's nuanced depiction of these dynamics encourages the reader to reflect on the evolving roles of both men and women in present-day South Africa.

From a feminist perspective, Dlamini further points out women's liberation and the struggle against traditional gender roles as a prominent theme in *Behind Every Successful Man*. She indicates that Wanner uses Nobantu's journey to illustrate the hardships that many modern South African women experience while juggling their own goals and societal expectations. Readers, especially women who might feel equally limited by conventional roles of motherhood and wifely responsibilities, can relate to Nobantu's realisation on her thirty-fifth birthday that she has given up her dreams for the sake of her family. Through a feminist lens, she contends that Wanner challenges the idea of women as homemakers and caregivers. Nobantu's determination to pursue her goals in spite of her husband's displeasure represents a rejection of the expectations imposed on her. This theme is further accentuated through her relationship with Ntsiki, who embodies a more liberated perspective on life and exhorts Nobantu to follow her heart. According to Dlamini, Wanner's narrative offers a potent reflection on the value of women's self-actualization, emphasising the necessity of individual autonomy and agency in a culture that frequently places a higher value on male achievement than on female fulfilment.

Another critical theme that Dlamini highlights in Wanner's work is the exploration of class and social expectations. She points out that the narrative addresses the intricacies of the black middle class in South Africa, especially in light of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) initiative. Nobantu's subsequent experiences in Soweto, where she aims to launch her clothing line, Soweto Uprising, are a stark contrast to her former life of affluence in Johannesburg. This shift highlights the ongoing socioeconomic inequality in South Africa and the challenges of negotiating class dynamics. Wanner's depiction of Nobantu's transition from a comfortable to a tough life highlights larger social themes, such as the stigma attached to failure and the pressure to live up to materialistic standards. Dlamini argues that the novel challenges the idea that success is defined solely by one's financial standing, and proposes that authentic fulfilment originates from following one's own interests and aspirations. From a post-colonial perspective, this examination of class is especially pertinent in the post-apartheid era, as the legacy of inequality continues to affect people's experiences and ambitions.

In his critique of *London Cape Town Joburg*, Nyongesa (2020) highlights the exploration of race and identity as one of the most prominent themes. The narrative features Germaine and Martin, a mixed-race couple, as they work through the challenges of their relationship and the shifting social climate in South Africa. Nyongesa points out that Wanner's depiction of the couple's circumstances mirrors the post-apartheid society's general perspective on interracial relationships. Through the postcolonial lens, he contends that the novel addresses the legacy of colonialism and apartheid on both individual and collective identities. Wanner's characters, he posits, grapple with questions of belonging and the challenges of asserting their identities in a society still marked by racial divisions. The novel's inquiry into race and identity resonates with the broader discourse on South African literature written after apartheid, where authors often address the effects of historical injustices. Nyongesa also examines the novel's exploration of alienation and cultural mixing in the backdrop of migration. He comments about the way Wanner accentuates the psychological issues that marginalised characters encounter while interacting with dominant groups, highlighting the division brought about by cultural othering and globalisation.

To underscore the multi-meaning nature of literary texts, Milazzo (2024) critiques *London Cape town Joburg* (2014) through the prism of Afropolitanism. Afropolitanism, as she defines it, highlights how African identities are intertwined in a globalised society. It offers a framework for understanding how identity and belonging are explored throughout the text, especially in light of African diaspora experiences. Milazzo positions Wanner as a prominent voice in the discussion of modern African literature and identity by arguing that her work advances the continuing debate on Afropolitanism. In her in-depth analysis of the concept, Milazzo presents a thought-provoking intertextual account on Wanner's *London Cape Town Joburg* and Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason* (2017). She maintains that both texts contain paradoxes that point to a desire to suppress racism in South Africa after apartheid. Discursively, however, she also argues that although Mbembe's writings on Afropolitanism focus on race, they ultimately obscure the structural racial realities that still shape the post-

apartheid world. Similarly, she argues, Wanner's novel uses racialized drama as a plot device but stigmatizes the denunciation of white supremacy.

Her criticism focuses on how Mbembe and Wanner cooperate to explain white supremacy in South Africa while selectively highlighting specific racial groups for investigation. Milazzo contends that these works exhibit contradictions that show a commitment to eradicating racism by making race a key theme while absolving white people of responsibility for the racist status quo. Although Afropolitanism's approach to race has received much acclaim, Milazzo's inquiry challenges this critical or uncritical consensus. She argues that though Wanner's text sharply critiques homophobia, sexism, and xenophobia, it ultimately falls short of offering a comprehensive analysis of antiblackness and white supremacy. By analysing Wanner's work, Milazzo advances our understanding of the racial politics of Afropolitanism and emphasises the necessity for a more critical dialogue about the continued existence of racism in post-apartheid South Africa.

1.8. Wanner's work and masculinity.

Through her novels, Zukiswa Wanner draws attention to hegemonic masculinity and its inherent challenges by presenting several interpretations of masculinity in the modern world. Hegemonic masculinity is defined by Connell (2001) and Morrell (1998, 2007, 2012) as the prominent type of masculinity in society. It promotes the dominance and subjugation of women and marginalised men by those who hold hegemonic beliefs, and it positions itself as the cultural standard of how real men ought to conduct themselves. It is mainly centred around patriarchy, which is upheld by some religions, cultures, and other social institutions. Hegemonic masculinity silences other forms of masculinity and sets them in opposition to itself in such a way that the ideals they represent are seen as invalid or inappropriate. Boys and men who do not measure up to the hegemonic masculine ideals are frequently ridiculed and, in some situations, ostracised.

Likewise, any version of masculinity that deviates from hetero-normative norms is denigrated and subjugated. It is worth noting that Hegemonic masculinity is hard to achieve and requires an ongoing struggle to achieve. In certain instances, it can be

violent and brutal, yet it can also be silent and implicit (Morrell 2012). Among other things, Wanner's work seems to imply that more egalitarian versions of masculinity could emerge from hegemonic masculinity, in which the distribution of power can be negotiated to accommodate both women and other masculinities.

Her interest in challenging hegemonic masculinity stems from the reality that, in modern-day South Africa, this type of masculinity threatens not only women but also marginalised and subjugated masculinities. This threat takes the form of abuse against women and children, homophobia, xenophobia, and what some academics refer to as Afrophobia. Men typically take the lead in these xenophobic attacks, even though some women also participate actively in them. Waiganjo (2018) defines Afrophobia as a type of discrimination where Africans, especially those who are in the diaspora, are the target of harsh treatment by fellow Africans.

Even though Wanner's work is undervalued and has been labelled as "chic lit" by some critics, which is often considered to be light fiction that lacks depth and gravity, it nevertheless merits close examination. Dlamini (2015) argues that just like authors such as Thando Mqgqolozana, Sello Duiker, Pumla Gqola and many others, Wanner's writings imply a mismatch between the South African constitution's goals and the public's understanding of how sexuality and masculinity are constructed. This is evident, for example, in *Men of the South* (2010), where Wanner specifically examines different black South African masculinities to highlight the negative aspects of hegemonic masculinity, especially its marginalisation and subjugation of masculinities that are seen as unmanly.

Responding to critics who claim that her writing is "chic lit", Wanner contends that, although this genre is sometimes light-hearted, writing about serious subjects in a humorous way is not always a fault (Dlamini 2015). *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), like *Men of the South* (2010), is hardly what one would call "chic lit." In this text Wanner addresses some of the social ills, including xenophobia, unemployment, corruption, and violation of women and children. Her work helps to open up meaningful conversations about significant challenges related to masculinity. Her work functions as a voice advocating for discussions leading to the consideration, cultivation, and application of more inclusive and egalitarian forms of masculinity.

Studies have demonstrated that hegemonic masculinity can transform into acceptable and accommodating types of masculinity without necessarily emasculating oneself.

Citing Connell & Messerschmitt (2005), Sithole (2013) argues that given the way in which masculinity is evolving, it seems likely that masculinities are frequently negotiated. This suggests that just as men can challenge a dominant masculinity (ibid), they can also attain a more egalitarian and compassionate masculinity. According to Morrell (1998), a conducive space for the dismantling of conventional masculinities and the creation of new norms can be established by the examination of various masculine points of view. Sithole (ibid) reiterates this, asserting that hegemonic masculinity is both a process and a product that is developed and perpetuated. Men can use their power over women more constructively by engaging in power negotiations. One could debate this in view of the South African constitution, which upholds the equality of men and women.

1.9. Chapter breakdown

Chapter 1 is the introduction to the study. It gives the background to this study as well as the objectives and rationale. It also highlights the different theories that underpin this study, and the way in which they synergise, foregrounding the crucial aspects of the study in the process. The chapter also reviews literature, in an attempt to examine what scholars have said, and are currently saying about the subject, as well as what has been left out, which is the gap that this study attempts to fill. It introduces the concept of masculinity, which is the core around which the study builds. It highlights the social constructedness of masculinity, which according to Connell (1995;1998;2000), results in the existence of different versions of masculinity. This chapter also introduces the concept of black South African masculinities and their historical background, and it also gives a brief background to the violent nature of these masculinities. It concludes by giving the background of Zukiswa Wanner as well as her standing in South African literature.

Chapter 2 explores the different types of masculinity as depicted in Wanner's texts. Building on the plurality of masculinity indicated in chapter 1, this chapter gives a detailed account of each version of masculinity. It closely examines how race

intersects with other factors to produce different types of masculinity. The chapter also delves deeper into hegemonic masculinity, and problematises it as an ideal that is difficult to achieve and the main contributor to gender-based violence. It examines the depictions of hegemonic masculinity in the texts, how it relates to female characters, and how it silences other versions of masculinity as a cultural ideal.

Chapter 3 discusses the violent behaviour exhibited by men in Wanner's texts, where this violence emanates from, as well as its perceived cultural significance. It highlights the different forms of violence that male characters engage in, but the main focus is the violence perpetrated against women and other vulnerable groups in the texts.

Chapter 4 discusses the role of female characters in the construction of black South African masculinities, as Talbot & Quayle (2010) argue that men cannot create and uphold any form of masculinity without the active or passive cooperation of women. Research also indicates that women are socialised to be subservient to men, and to accept violence perpetrated against them as normal. Despite these claims, Shefer & Foster (2009) argue that oftentimes, resistances, contradictions and alternative discourses on heterosexual practices go unacknowledged. This chapter therefore explores the stance of female characters, whether they embrace the traditional notions of masculinity or challenge gender norms that support and condone men's oppressive attitudes in their relationships.

Chapter 5 looks at the alternative masculine modes of being that are suggested for the black South African man in the texts. With the enormous and rapid changes that have occurred in the socioeconomic domains of life, certain cultural traditions and beliefs are being questioned on a daily basis. This implies that hegemonic masculinity, which is a social construction also needs to be revisited. The chapter explores alternatives that enable men figure out other ways to live as real men under the prevailing circumstances. It looks at the challenges they encounter in the process, the strategies they employ in manoeuvring their way through, as well as the way in which these alternatives are perceived by different characters in the texts.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

VERSIONS OF MASCULINITY IN ZUKISWA WANNER'S TEXTS

2.1. Introduction

One of the most significant points of focus in Wanner's writing is the concept of masculinity. By assigning the key role to her male characters, Wanner manages to dissect the concept of masculinity in an attempt to highlight both the oppressive, patriarchal, and problematic behaviours that are strongly criticised by feminist scholars, as well as the more egalitarian behaviours of men that the critics approve of and condone. Building on the plurality of masculinity as posited by Connell (1995; 1998; 2000), this chapter explores the different types of masculinity as depicted in Wanner's texts. It situates itself within the increasing debates on how globalisation, daily shifts in the socio-economic and political spheres, culture, and other factors intersect with race to create different types of masculinity in the South African context, thereby challenging the notion that masculinity is a uniform, standardised and stable construction.

The remarkable growth of literature on masculinities in contemporary South Africa, both fiction and non-fiction, substantiates Musariri & Moyer's (2021) claim, that there is a crisis facing South African masculinities, especially black masculinities. This is what Wanner's texts unpack. Starck & Luyt (2019) posit that certain aspects of black South African masculinities have come to represent a site where fears, doubts, and anxieties over South Africa's post-apartheid socio-political transition are expressed, debated, and upheld. This projection, negotiation, and defence manifests in several ways, both violent and non-violent. What has placed the black South African masculinities at the centre of the debate in contemporary South Africa is the recurrent spate of violence against women and children, especially girls.

The chapter provides a close textual analysis of four novels – *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), *Men of the South* (2010), *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), and *The Madams* (2006). First, it examines how the characters define a "real man", or valorised masculinity, which is often associated with hegemonic masculinity and has a big

impact on how each character defines himself in relation to the other characters. The chapter also examines how various male characters in the four novels under analysis try to live up to these concepts or ideals, and how the intersectionality of race and other aspects is one of the key elements that shapes the perceptions of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is built on the negative ideology of what it means to be a “real man”, and it is usually imposed upon boys during the socialisation process which starts as early as childhood. This is evident in *Men of the South* (2010) when Mfundo, earlier in the novel, juggles being a child and being the man of the house when his father disappears. This type of masculinity, as described by Ehrmann (2013), is characterised, among other aspects, by physical strength, familial responsibility, sexual prowess, and financial success.

These conditions give rise to the prevailing conception of the ideal man, which has shaped and affected society for many generations. They exclude men who do not measure up to the social norms and standards that men use to judge one another. The chapter examines how the male characters in Wanner’s novels interrogate these traditional notions of masculinity against the array of new choices presented by the post-transitional socio-economic as well as political realm.

Connell (1995; 1998; 2000) posits that the hierarchical social structures recognise patriarchal privilege as an organising principle that gives men more gender-based advantages in comparison with women. On the same vein, he acknowledges that in any context there are multiple constructions of masculinities, each of which might uniquely hold unequal relationships to control over women, unequal access to power, resources, and opportunities, as well as unequal regard by other men. The key concepts here, where the problem of gender-based violence emanates from, are power and control, which are always associated with entitlement. These are often manipulated by the broader patriarchal structures and institutions to create power imbalance between men and women, and this is achieved by reinforcing gender roles associated with gender-based violence, which comes in different forms. The argument is that valorised versions of masculinity seem to be oppressive and patriarchal and are

responsible for complicating the lives of characters that subscribe to such masculinities (Sheffer et al. 2007).

Furthermore, the chapter also examines vilified versions of masculinity such as the househusband, the homosexual male, the non-aggressive heterosexual male, and migrant man in Wanner's texts. It also takes a closer look at the way in which race intersects with different social, political, and economic factors to produce these masculinities, thereby putting them at risk of not receiving societal approval. It is imperative to note Connell's argument that the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and power does not exist only in relation to women, which is regarded as external hegemony. The concept extends to internal hegemony, which is the dominance over other masculinities.

Internal hegemony, as Connell further argues, makes it possible for men to achieve external hegemony. This is because it is the conquest of women that provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity (Park 2015). From this, it can be deduced that some masculinities are subjugated not because they are inherently inferior to others or because they lack specific attributes, but rather because the practices they represent are incompatible with the widely recognised method of subjugating women. This is evident in Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010), where Mzilikazi is characterised as gay and Mfundo as a househusband. Although these characters consider themselves to be real men in their own right, their positionality in the social hierarchy and the way in which they relate to women qualifies them as inferior to other men, thereby earning them the label of vilified masculinities. As a gay man, Mzilikazi is not interested in subordinating women. He perceives them more as equals, though at first, he fakes promiscuity to hide his sexual orientation. Mfundo, as a househusband on the other hand, is not perturbed by Slindile, who plays a provider role in their household.

Langa (2016) as well as Pasura & Christou (2017) concur that according to hegemonic standards, one's masculinity is determined by the number of women he has sex with. It is such societal pressures that force Mzilikazi to fake promiscuity in an attempt to hide his sexual orientation, get societal approval, and avoid being ostracised. However,

the narrative points out that he only targeted white girls and black girls from other African countries, carefully avoiding black girls from South Africa, whom he alleges they ended up resenting him (2010: 105). This eschewal might be explained as a strategic way of protecting himself from potential hurt, since he was aware of the fact that local black girls might embrace the culturally approved continuum of hegemonic masculinity, a mould which, unfortunately, he did not fit into. As he reminisces about his counterfeit promiscuity and lack of interest in heterosexual relationships, the narrative captures Mzilikazi as he muses, “[...] I am sure her father would have killed her and then had a heart attack afterwards if he had found out she was sleeping – though sleeping was the last thing we did – with a boy from Soweto” (2010:105). The fact that Mzilikazi admits to not having sex with these girls proves that he was only using these heterosexual relationships as a whitewash to conceal his homosexuality. To this effect, having accepted that there is nothing he can do to change his sexual orientation, the narrative captures him as he proclaims:

Ag, who am I kidding? I am gay, ungqingili, a fag, is’tabane, a queen. Hundred percent Zulu queer. I am as attracted to men as other men are attracted to women. Sure, I love men’s logical minds as I do Sli’s mind, but put a naked, logical Sli next to a naked, sexy gay guy, and no question about it – I will pick the gay guy (2010: 85 – 86).

However, even though he does not have any doubt about his sexual orientation, and he knows that there is nothing he can do to change it, he is equally aware of the gender script that is deeply engraved in the belief system of his society. Thus, he is not ready to subject himself to being treated like an outcast by his own society. This awareness becomes evident as he begins to ruminate over the derogatory labels that society has attached to homosexuals, “ungqingili; a fag; is’tabane; a queen” (2010:85). These labels suggest resentment which is accompanied by ostracism. Society has crafted these disparaging labels to indicate that homosexuals are not regarded as real men and are not socially acceptable. The mood that is generated in the pronunciation of these labels harps on the small lecture given by Mc Squared to Chris, as the latter is preparing to go for circumcision in Mqolozana’s *A Man who is Not a Man* (2009). Here, Mc Squared makes it clear that even though there are many

ways of being a man, there are socially approved ways, and for Chris to be regarded as a real man, he must only follow the socially approved route. The narrative captures the solemnity of this situation as Mzilikazi muses, “[...] But society has made it their business to talk about gay men’s sexuality. It has become an adjective bandied about by society in the same way as they would with a black guy in Orania or a white guy in Zola” (2010:86).

Conversely, Floretta Boonzaier & Taryn van Niekerk (2018) argue that when creating explanations for domestic violence in South Africa, intersectional understanding of the multiple realities of marginalised men who have little interest in the patriarchal dividend is sometimes necessary. Allyson Dean (2020) defines the patriarchal dividend as the list of privileges that men as a group enjoy from maintaining an unequal gender order. From an external hegemonic perspective, this holds true for the way in which Wanner portrays the character of Lerato’s abusive boyfriend in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). The chapter further introduces us to problematic masculinities as it demonstrates how men in this category view their own masculinity in relation to hegemonic masculinity, which is sometimes held up as a benchmark for what defines a “real man”. The overall idea is to challenge the notion of masculinity being a standardised, uniform, and stable construction.

2.2 Valorised masculinities as hegemonic masculinities

Numerous studies have used the concept of hegemonic masculinities to define different forms of male dominance over women. These include social, economic, and physical dominance as well as political, judicial, and cultural authority (Rachel Jewkes et al. 2015). Hegemonic masculinity has been redefined by Kiera Duckworth and Mary Nell Trautner (2019) as the standard masculine ideal in a society that upholds the dominant gender hierarchy and devalues marginal masculinities and men who do not comply with it. This type of masculinity is seen as a cultural prototype or ideal masculinity that is widely acknowledged and embraced by both men and women, even though they are unable to live up to the ideal (ibid). With reference to Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) differentiation between hegemony and dominance, and Connell’s (2000) elaboration of Gramsci’s ideas in masculinity studies, Kjerstin Gruys & Christian

Munsch (2020) argue that hegemonic masculinities are often linked to a privileged social class. This particular brand of masculinity primarily asserts its dominance through the use of materialistic privilege. In concert with Ben Barry & Nathaniel Weiner's (2019) idea of successful masculinity, these academics present an image of successful professional masculinity that is connected to a fancy car, a business suit, a cell phone, attractive and obedient women, and a big house or penthouse suite.

Similarly, Barry & Weiner (2019) identify a transnational masculinity marked by libertarian sexuality, egocentrism, very conditional loyalties, and a decreasing sense of obligation to care for others outside of the context of image creation. These masculinities include businessmen that frequent hotels with well-established prostitution industries or those that show pornographic videos to attract businesspeople from abroad (ibid). Since they too want to live up to a set standard in their own unique ways, exaggerated masculinities are not wholly distinct from hegemonic masculinity (ibid). All these qualify as valorised masculinities because more value is attached to them as most men aspire to fall under this category. This implies that just as there are numerous masculinities, there are numerous hegemonic masculinities as well.

2.2.1 Andile Makana, "the culturalist" in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

In its setting, *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) starts in medias res and transports the reader back to the female protagonist, Nobantu's adolescent years, when she fell pregnant while pursuing her Bachelor of Commerce degree. The story shifts to the present, when Nobantu's husband, Andile Makana, a prominent figure in the mining industry, supposedly hosts an elaborate 35th birthday celebration for her at their Johannesburg golf estate home. He buys Nobantu several gifts, including the newest Jaguar vehicle, a two-person trip to Atlanta Fashion Week, and pricey jewellery. Michael Kimmel (2013) posits that among other things, masculinity is a homo-social enactment that encourages men to push their limits, show off their achievements, and take big risks because they want other men to accept or validate their manhood or masculinity.

Andile's perception of the self is fraught with the big man syndrome, particularly in social contexts when he is surrounded by his friends. According to Innocent Chirisa et al. (2018), the term "big man syndrome" or "bigmanism" refers to a masculine human being who, despite knowing that his accomplishment is meaningless or unimportant, feels superior to others or extremely good about himself. He shows off his wealth to establish his dominance and masculinity and to leave his mark. Given his persona it becomes apparent that Andile is not hosting this huge party out of his affection for Nobantu. He does this to show off his financial power. In reality, the party is his, since the intention is to flex his financial muscle in his canvassing for business partners.

Sabine Sczesny et al. (2018) posits that according to sex-role stereotypes, men must exhibit dominance to demonstrate their manhood. The capacity to take on and maintain a dominant role in relationships with other men and women is considered an indication of success. The narrative proceeds to track the events that ensue after that eventful night of Nobantu's birthday celebration. By doing this, Wanner is tracing the protagonist's arduous journey towards self-actualization and freedom from Andile's masculinism. She also provides a brief sociological context of both Nobantu and Andile, preparing the reader to comprehend the cultural clash that shapes the behaviour of these characters, particularly that of the male protagonist, Andile.

Despite his educational background and university degree, Andile identifies as a traditionalist or culturalist. He acknowledges this when attempting to resolve his disagreement with Nobantu as he says, "...but calling me a chauvinist is a bit harsh [...] I would like to think that I am just a culturalist" (2008: 177). This becomes clear when he forbids Nobantu from running her own business and being financially independent. Because he thinks that men are superior to women and should be the family's breadwinner, he is a masculinist. The definition of a masculinist, according to Ndlovu (2011), is a prejudiced proponent of male supremacy or dominance. A man like that would try his hardest to insist on acting in a way that gives him authority and control as a man and avoid actions he perceives as effeminate.

Linking the provider role to masculinity, as far as Andile is concerned, implies that women should not be permitted to hold paid work since doing so will emasculate men. This attitude that Andile portrays aligns with Judith Butler's (1990) performance theory

as well as Frosh & Baraister's (2008) psychosocial theory, which maintain that masculinity is a performance and that anything that threatens the phallus is emasculating and should be avoided at all costs. As indicated in Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010) as well, when Mfundo loses the primary provider role, he becomes estranged from his family and the wider community as it labels him as a failed man as well as a disgrace to society. The disgrace that comes along with the label of a failed man is also evident in Thando Mqgolozana's *A Man Who Is Not A Man* (2009), when Mc Squared makes it very clear to his friend Lumkile, who is about to undergo circumcision, that there is no place for a failed man in a black South African society.

Conflict arises from Andile's concept of gender norms, and his cultural awareness of the social construction of male and female subjects, as these are very different from those of his wife, Nobantu's. While Andile fervently maintains repressive masculinist beliefs, Nobantu firmly supports gender equality and is willing to abandon her marriage in order to gain her independence. The poem at the beginning of the book titled, "*I have been a woman for too long*" by Criselda Kananda gets the reader ready for a mood of resistance from a wife who is sick of being viewed as a man's object. It is a poem about a woman who, after playing a submissive, self-effacing domestic role for far too long, realises that she has sacrificed her intelligence and other skills for a life of servitude, that is, being just a woman and nothing more. Kananda is a South African radio personality, who is also a television presenter, former-nurse, HIV/AIDS activist, counsellor, motivational speaker, and feminist (Dlamini 2018). The poem creates an air of melancholy as the woman learns of the oppression she has endured as a voiceless citizen, a submissive wife, and a mother. Wanner captures it thus:

*I have been a woman for too long
So mind my smile
It hides my pain
It hides my scars
It hides my memories
So tell me sister
Where does the breeze begin to blow?
I need to languish in its breath
To begin my renewal
As I renew my soul*

*I have learnt to love me unconditionally
Just as I am
I have learnt to be proud of this creation
That is me
I have learnt to let go of my past hurts
And live in the present
I have learnt that I can make all my dreams come true
I have learnt that I only have God to serve
That being a woman is okay*

Though there is no indication of the poem being read by any of the characters, Wanner strategically places it at the beginning of the novel, as a precursor of an attitude that Nobantu will embrace during the course of the narrative, when Andile undermines her potential and relegates her into subservience. Later, this mood is reinforced in the narrative when the reader comes across Simphiwe Dana's defiant song, "Zundiqondisise" (2008:49) which translates into "Understand me for what I am." As she drives away from her claustrophobic marriage and home to start afresh, pursue her dreams, and enjoy her independence, Nobantu plays this song and sings along. This song's message is a forceful rejection of feminine deference. The character in the song makes clear affirmations throughout, stating that she is not utterly dumb to a point of vacuity where she needs guidance and instruction from the man, among other things. She claims that she is intelligent, independent, and does not need a man to make decisions for her or determine what is in her best interests, treating her like a child in the process. This is exactly how Nobantu feels at the moment. The intertextuality that reflects between these two texts demonstrates thematic overlaps, in that both Dana's song and Kananda's poem explore women's lived experiences under patriarchy, their rebellion, the assertion of female independence, and the rejection of constrictive patriarchal gender expectations.

Andile's big man syndrome and masculinist mindset have long defined who he is. The narrative reveals that Nobantu had no intention of getting married when she becomes pregnant at the age of nineteen. Her desire was to carry on with her education. Andile made a significant decision for her, forcing her to get married despite her misgivings. He asserted that he wanted to be an involved father and that people would assume

he could not support his family if he had a child out of wedlock. Once again, Andile's dedication to Nobantu and the child is not about moral obligation and loving her. Rather, it is about putting up a performance to gain the status of a successful and powerful man who possesses a requisite wife and children to enhance or reinforce this image. This rehashes the notion that being a man is a performance. Numerous studies have indicated that a man must have a wife and children to be accepted as a "real man" and gain respect. (Gennrich 2013; Wright 2014).

Given his socioeconomic background, one may claim that Andile's desperation to establish himself as a "real man" stems from his family's poverty. His mother works as a domestic and his father is a contract worker. Contrarily, Nobantu hails from a distinguished royal family. Her father is an attorney and a Rharhabe chief, while her mother works as a teacher. Despite his best efforts to demonstrate his manhood, Andile's insecurities have always led him to believe that Nobantu's father does not think highly of him. He makes an immense effort to prove that his upbringing does not and will not diminish his manhood or masculinity. In other words, he is essentially vying with Nobantu's family for their acceptance as a deserving husband for their daughter.

Sczesny et al. (2018) argue that a competitive attitude encourages human exploitation as men pursue success. In his pursuit for success, man engages in an insatiable urge to amass wealth, material goods, status, and power. This objective becomes apparent in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), as Andile uses Nobantu as a tool to further his own agenda, acting in a way that makes it seem as though he possesses Nobantu, the children, and his company without distinction. With a little nudging from Nobantu's mother, Andile manages to convince Nobantu to marry him. The mother argues that if their daughter had an illegitimate child, it would be embarrassing for the royal family. This indicates that Nobantu's mother and Andile have similar cultural views, according to which a man of integrity provides for his family through marriage and leaves no other duty for the woman he marries other than to be a housewife and mother. Stated differently, the woman needs to accept that her husband is her primary provider and that she must be comfortable having him take care of everything.

In a similar vein, Slindile questions Mfundo's status as a househusband in *Men of the South* (2010), claiming that to be a "real man", he must generate income to provide for his family. This indicates that, in terms of how they interact with men, women also attach prestige to hegemonic notions of masculinity, such as the man as provider. Later, when Nobantu, having taken a sabbatical from her studies, joins Andile in Johannesburg, Andile refers to Johannesburg as "his Joburg," as he takes her on a tour. The narrative captures it thus:

At that time, doing articles with Ackerman & Patel, he had been happy to have the type of wallet he knew few university students had. He knew he could show her much more of his Johannesburg than any of those university kids could. His Joburg. He always thought of the city with a certain possessiveness. This indeed was HIS Joburg (2008:13-14).

When Andile claims ownership of Johannesburg, his attitude can be explicated from two perspectives. Firstly, as the narrative indicates that Nobantu was a newcomer in Johannesburg, having enrolled with Wits after matriculating, it is possible that she was thrilled by the beauty of the city. To Andile, who was already familiar with the city, having already established himself as a candidate attorney at Ackerman & Patel, it might have been a pleasure to introduce her to his world, a world of a higher calibre compared to eCumakala, the one Nobantu was accustomed to. Discursively, the abrupt and punchy sentence "His Joburg" in the quote, challenges the reader to pause and absorb the significance of what the statement implies. Knowing Andile's obsession with power and always trying to prove how much a man he is, this sentence, in conjunction with an emphasis on possessiveness, as well as "HIS," which has been written in capital letters, all emphasise that Wannier is trying to insinuate: Andile's avarice for power and his proprietary attitude towards everyone and everything in his vicinity, including humans. In addition to wishing his influence to be felt throughout Johannesburg, he wants to demonstrate that he is in charge of both his own life and Nobantu's.

After completing her degree, Nobantu works for a brief period at MAPAMO Holdings, a BEE company that bears the names of its founders, Andile Makana, Anant Patel, and Oupa Mokoena, and where Andile is a shareholder. As MAPAMO Holdings grows into

a significant business, Andile consigns Nobantu to her traditional position as a housewife and mother. This is due to his refusal to acknowledge Nobantu's role in the company's success since, in the eyes of hegemonic and masculinist norms, women belong in the kitchen or in the background.

Schildkrout (2019) maintains that man takes great satisfaction in turning woman into a symbol of his own reliance. He feels more in control of his own manly nature the more he distances himself from her. By creating a binary between femininity (passivity) and masculinity (virility or agency), he accentuates anatomical disparities and heightens the reliance of woman. The degree to which he succeeds in doing this will enable him to focus all the qualities connected with human power inside himself.

This is evinced in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) when Andile tries to trick Nobantu into believing that the workforce is only for men, which means she won't be able to succeed in it. However, the irony is that Nobantu is the driving force behind his company's success, which is why the book is titled *Behind Every Successful Man*. This suggests that Andile is still stuck in the archaic "man the hunter, woman the gatherer" mindset. In this worldview, Siminski & Yetsenga (2020) state that when it comes to the sexual division of labour, women are relegated to the private sphere of the home while men are supposed to go out and seek for a livelihood. Andile wants to claim all the glory in order to demonstrate the strength of his team of men.

Despite his extensive education, Andile's traditional nature resurfaces when he spills onto an exquisite carpet, as a libation and tribute to his late friend, some of the cognac he has been drinking in celebration of the success of the party he purportedly throws for his wife, while he actually secures investors for his company. He claims the maids should clean up after him, thus he is not concerned about getting the carpet soiled. Given that very few employers can afford, let alone even consider medical aid for their employees, Andile has placed them on it not only to flaunt his wealth but also to rule over and subjugate them, much like he does Nobantu. The narrative captures it thus, "There were two maids in the household and his wife to supervise them, he was sure that between the three of them, they could get the stains out. What was he paying the domestics for otherwise? How many maids had medical aid?" (2008:12 -

13). He does this so that they do not query his irresponsible behaviour which translates to abuse, but only look up to him as their hero.

To demonstrate that Andile enjoys authority and control, while he was doing articles with Ackerman & Patel and Nobantu was beginning her studies at the University of Witwatersrand, he had taken pleasure in flaunting her like a prize. Similarly, he felt honoured to have a woman of Nobantu's calibre to take care of, as the narrative indicates:

Slowly, the high school student had evolved into a charming and confident lass, someone he had been honoured to show his Johannesburg when she began her university studies at Wits. Sure, her mother may have initially requested that he take care of her when she got to Joburg, but the way Nobantu carried herself, he was certain he would have happily "taken care of her" with or without her mother's consent (2008:13).

Andile's exhibition of Nobantu as a trophy and his sense of honour at being able to share his world with her are not inherently at odds with one another. They probably represent the complex and occasionally contradictory ways that a patriarchal man may see and handle his partner. Andile perceives Nobantu as an extension of his own notoriety and accomplishments, on the one hand. On the other hand, it is possible that he genuinely loves her and wants her to be part of his life. Even though he attempts to honour her in his own way, in a patriarchal context a woman's value is linked to her male partner's position, as this nuanced representation exposes the gender dynamics at play. Here Wanner gives the reader a layered and multifaceted depiction of how men relate to their women within the patriarchal context of their marriage and society.

Because he could afford to care for Nobantu with more money in comparison with the university students, he realised that no male student would probably compete with him. As he grows, physically and economically, he does not outgrow his egomaniacal and narcissistic tendencies. He believes that his standing as a man is correlated with his financial muscle, something which is proven wrong when Nobantu ends up leaving him. The narrative captures the way Nobantu is flabbergasted as she sees an unexpected gift for her birthday thus:

Nobantu cringed, wondering how much all of it had cost, as the sight of the car drew sighs of envy from almost every corner of the crowd. And for what? So her husband could flaunt his wealth prior to MAPAMO being listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange? It certainly had not been to celebrate her birthday (2008:24).

Over time, tension builds in Andile and Nobantu's marriage. Andile's masculinist conceit makes them lose interest in one another, even in a sexual sense. Arguing from a masculinist perspective, he does not discuss general issues with his wife anymore. As the text illustrates, "Their talk now centred on how his day had been (him) and what money was needed for the children or some mundane domestic issue (her)" (2008:19). Schildkrout (2019) claims that man tends to view the brain and muscles as primarily masculine organs and equate power in humans with these attributes. Since these characteristics are shared by both sexes, to make them criteria of differentiating men from women, he will favour these in men and ignore them in women. Only he must project an image of strength and reason, while the woman comes across as weak and illogical. The only person who should be associated with the ability to think and exert influence on the world is him, while the woman can hardly cope. Logical thinking is not meant to be a skill associated with women. According to Andile, Nobantu's only strengths lie in managing the family and raising the children because he, as the provider, provides for all her needs.

Even when Nobantu suggests opening herself a little boutique, Andile brushes it off and threatens to file for divorce, believing that this will make him appear like a failed husband who is unable to support his wife. This underscores the idea that being a man is a performance, a part that one must execute flawlessly to be applauded by his audience. Rather than offering her support, Andile recommends that Nobantu volunteers at a charity organisation. He suggests this out of selfishness since he is aware that by being at the forefront of a charitable group, Nobantu will be advertising his company, MAPAMO Holdings.

Shefer et al. (2007) state that men are seen as legislators and decision makers in addition to being the primary breadwinners for their families. Andile seems to be concerned just about himself, his ego, and his business; neither Nobantu's desires nor

her happiness seems to be given any thought. Men's misinformed perception about their vision and acuity compared to women's shortsightedness, fragility, and lack of ambition enhances their potential to confront the world while diminishing that of women. As a gift for his wife, Andile purchases tickets to Atlanta Fashion Week and covers the cost of lodging for two. He then instructs Nobantu to organise a companion to go with her, since real men do not have time for leisure when they should be generating money.

Man will do whatever it takes to reject what he considers to be feminine, while nurturing all he deems to be virile (Schildkrout 2019). In this instance, it is evident that Andile believes that it is only women who should go on vacations, especially if such vacations involve attending such unchallenging events as fashion shows. His desperate attempt to establish his masculinity has confined him in the world of work and made him despise everything he views as "soft" or feminine, including travelling and fashion. Ford & Collison (2011) argue that because it is mandatory that men should work, according to traditional expectations, they are more like convicts of their jobs, to the extent that they are unable to enjoy life. They then transform their houses into cages for the women, who are expected to raise their children in isolation.

This idea is demonstrated when a female business client of Andile's enquires about Nobantu's occupation, to which Andile blithely answers as though Nobantu does not exist or is just an object that is incapable of responding on its own. This suggests that Andile genuinely wants to possess Nobantu rather than merely dominate her. In response he says, "Our Nobantu here does nothing, she is just a housewife" (2008:25). Here, Andile wants to make it abundantly clear that Nobantu is doing nothing since he, as a true man, can support and take care of her, a job that he does best. He is not even conscious of how cruel this behaviour is; he is only bragging at his wife's expense.

On the night of the party when Nobantu wakes him up so that they can discuss her business concept, Andile finds it difficult to believe that she is not showing him gratitude, after throwing her a lavish party. Apart from utilising it as a platform to expand his business, it seems that Andile is throwing this kind of party to purchase Nobantu's compliance and silence, even if she recognises the unfairness and injustice

of what he is doing. This incident makes apparent the expanding distance between these two. Rather than sharing love in an environment of compassion, their marriage has become a contract or a bargain, and as a result, there is mutual animosity. As far as Andile is concerned, as the man of the house he excels in this role as he provides for Nobantu above and beyond what is necessary. In exchange, he expects her to do her share and be the submissive housewife he envisions her to be. He seems to fear what people, especially her father, will say about him when Nobantu starts her business (2008:19), more than making Nobantu happy. This exacerbates Nobantu's resentment towards him. The narrative captures Nobantu's resentment thus:

God! She didn't care anymore. She had started shutting him out mentally long before he opened his mouth. Fifteen years of marriage will do that to you, she thought, and laughed cynically. [...] She needed to show him, remind him, that there was more to her, that she was a woman of substance. [...] She had stopped with the babes, darlings, and sweethearts long ago (2008:29).

Okin (2015) argues that a man's responsibility is to work and support his family. In return, the family is supposed to cherish and care for him. This happens to the point where it appears to be the natural order of things, while it is not. When Nobantu demonstrates her unwavering resolve to start a business of her own, Andile asserts himself as the head of the household and the ultimate patriarch, saying, "No wife of mine is going to work. What would people say when they hear that my wife is working? That I am incapable of taking care of you and the children? No Nobantu, forget it" (2008:31). His frustration with Nobantu's nagging and determination culminates in resentment which starts affecting their sexual relationship. As the narrative demonstrates, "He remembered how sexually passionate she had been, both of them had been, never too tired to make love. He wondered what had happened to them" (2008:18).

Andile's frustration aligns this study with Frosh & Baraister's (2008) psychosocial theory, which states that when a man fails to perform the provider role as prescribed by the hegemonic standards of masculinity, he feels emasculated. As stated by Ouzgane & Morrell (2005), men's ego and prestige are under jeopardy due to women's growing autonomy and independence. Andile places greater value on his perceived

masculinity, the way in which other people see him as a man in charge as well as a provider for his family. His fear of being emasculated and his desire to show his financial prowess to others are the real reasons he cannot allow Nobantu to work.

Andile's sexism does not only show out when it comes to controlling women. Despite his best efforts to hide it, he is also homophobic. Lewis (2018) maintains that sexism is any bias or discrimination based on a person's gender or sexual orientation. He further argues that, in contrast to popular assumption, sexism may impact anyone and is not limited to women and girls. It may involve the idea that one sex or gender is fundamentally better than the other since it is associated with gender norms and stereotypes. Research has shown that in addition to dominating women, some manifestations of hegemonic masculinity marginalise and subjugate other men, particularly those who identify as homosexual (Pasura & Christou 2017; White & Peretz 2010). When Andile's son, Xolani takes over the kitchen after Nobantu's unceremonious departure, it becomes evident how homophobic Andile is. While he is pleased that Xolani is a skilled chef, he hopes the youngster is not gay since he correlates the boy's culinary prowess with homosexuality.

The situation deteriorates further when Xolani talks boldly about his sister Nqobisa's menstruation, a topic that Andile deems repulsive and inappropriate for men to discuss. He says he has nothing against homosexuals, but if his own son was gay, he would not be happy. His denial of his homophobic attitude proves false when Ntsiki, Nobantu's lesbian friend tells Dave, Nobantu's gay brother, that Andile would not have appreciated his presence in the party because he is a "queen," yet Andile wanted only the company of real men, where he could flex his muscle and show them how much a man he is.

Both Langa (2016) and White & Peretz (2010) concur that relationships of any kind with homosexuals are frowned upon by homophobes in general as contaminating, and hence should be avoided at all costs. Andile believes that being gay is incredibly unmanly and un-African. In *Men of the South* (2010), Mzilikazi's father expresses a similar opinion, openly declaring that homosexuality is a repulsive Western construct that has contaminated and destroyed African culture.

When Nobantu moves out of their matrimonial residence, Andile finds it difficult to come up with an adequate justification for her departure. He starts to consider a variety of explanations but fails to realise that the situation he finds himself in is the outcome of the ultra-masculine power wall he established around himself. As his mind paces up and down, he thinks that maybe she is angry with him, or she is having an affair (2008:62). Since Nobantu has transgressed and undermined Andile's authority by starting her business against his will, just like a child, she must be disciplined.

Similar to Mfundo's father in *Men of the South* (2010), who punishes Mfundo's elder brother, Sindiso for a small infraction, simply because he feels his authority as the head of the household has been compromised, Andile is portrayed as the ultimate patriarch. Of Andile, Wanner writes, "He would make her suffer, He would make her beg to come home" (2008:65). The word "suffer" carries the connotations of punishment, and by using the term "beg," he is trying to make her feel helpless, to make her recognise that she needs him and that she cannot manage on her own without him. When Nobantu refuses to return, Andile calls her friend Ntsiki and accuses her of turning Nobantu against him by indoctrinating her with antiquated feminist beliefs. When Ntsiki refuses to back down and ultimately hangs up on him, Andile becomes furious. He believes that Ntsiki's decision to hang up on him indicates that she does not value his manhood or respect him as such.

As stated by Schildkrout (2019), a man would impose femininity on a woman and assert his virility to set himself apart from her and maintain his masculinity. This implies that Andile expects and demands respect from all women, not only his wife Nobantu. He believes that by virtue of being a powerful man, he is entitled to submission and respect from all women. He then concludes that her lack of respect for men is the reason why Ntsiki is a lesbian, because no man would tolerate being disrespected by a woman. He is convinced that women's identities are either shaped or defined by men. In accordance with this warped reasoning, women's relationships with men also influence their sexual orientation. They are classified as straight women if they are obedient and dependent; yet, if they exhibit independence and stand up for their convictions, they are called lesbians. Alternatively, lesbians may become lesbians out of what is thought to be frustration.

The same belief that a man is supposed to be a woman's provider is shared by Oupa, Andile's friend. Because they regard it as a traditional definition of masculinity for a man to provide for a woman, Oupa and Andile concur that it is acceptable for older men to be romantically involved with younger women. As previously stated, Andile perceives Nobantu more like a child than an equal. He is resolved not to plead with her to come back. When Nobantu calls and confronts him about revoked credit card privileges after her unceremonious departure, Andile's response is, "Don't ask me stupid questions... I worked for that money, and I can very well cancel what cards I want or freeze any account I want. Now... stop being silly and just come back home... Everything will be all right once you get these stupid ideas out of your head" (2008:89). His response is incredibly condescending, demeaning, and infantilising. Even though Andile is struggling without Nobantu around, that does not mean he can give up his power and manly ego. His intention is to manipulate her until she gives in, comes back and be the subservient wife he envisions her to be.

Nobantu, however, is also adamant about sticking up for her convictions. It is not that she does not want to return home; rather, she wants Andile to treat her like an adult, respectfully ask her to do so instead of giving her orders and assure her that he will support her in her business endeavour just as she has supported him. While attending Penny's baby shower, to which both Andile and Nobantu have been invited, they end up having amazing sex in the bathroom. This indicates the extent to which they have been missing each other. Andile makes the error of believing that satisfying sexual relations alone will persuade Nobantu to reconsider and return. He is still far too manly to grovel and beg, especially before a woman. At this point, Nobantu loses her temper since she realises that Andile is still unwilling to show her respect. Andile subscribes to the masculinist notion that a woman must accept his manhood and fall madly in love with him only via excellent sex and financial gain. Nobantu, on the other hand, is determined to persuade Andile to give her the respect she deserves.

With Nobantu gone, the Makana home is collapsing, but Andile keeps pretending he does not see due to his manly pride. Since he and his daughter Nqobisa appear to be at odds all the time, his son, Xolani starts smoking marijuana. Xolani alleges that it is the only coping mechanism that he can use, since he is the only one who is level-

headed and must put up with Andile and Nqobisa's stupid fights. The children begin to backchat, something they never did with their mother around. Andile is unaware that his children no longer respect him because of his masculinist tendencies. Since he is her father, Andile tells Nqobisa not to question him, as if fathers have unquestionable authority to manage their families based solely on the provider role they play, property ownership, and masculinity. This is in response to Nqobisa's simple request for him to support their mother so that she returns, and everything returns to normal.

Andile never stops reminding the children that as the husband and father, he owns the house, hence he is in charge of everything. This suggests that, in addition to controlling Nobantu's life for so long, he also possesses the lives of the children. He tries to capitalise on the dagga controversy as leverage to get Nobantu to return. Without making a sincere effort to convince her, he commands her in an email and tells her to return. The tone is arrogant and demanding, marked by a high degree of dictatorship. He believes that pleading and grovelling will give him a weaker or less formidable image as "a man." The email reads thus:

Subject: Zol

Nobantu,

Caught your son smoking marijuana. If you care about the children, if you care about this family, if you care about our marriage, you would do well to quit playing wannabe businesswoman and realise that you have a more important role.

Get back to me soon.

Andile (2008:109).

Andile's conception of motherhood stems from conventional, patriarchal ideas about what it means to be a man. These often emphasise women's duties as primary carers and household caretakers while downplaying men's contributions, placing a higher priority on men's roles as breadwinners. A male breadwinner and a female homemaker make up the idealised nuclear family, which is frequently promoted as an accepted

norm. This perpetuates gender norms and the belief that women should put family before other interests, particularly those related to personal growth and enrichment. The significance and acknowledgement of this unpaid labour differs from that of a salaried job. Women are under a lot of societal and cultural pressure to take on conventional duties as mothers and homemakers. If women fail to live up to these standards, this pressure can be internalised and result in feelings of guilt or inadequacy. That is the reason Andile used this tactic to guilt-trip Nobantu into returning home, instead of asking her politely to come back home.

Studies by Williams (2009), White & Peretz (2010), and Langa (2016) concur that real men are perceived as those who do not express their feelings about relationships, physical suffering, or health. Because such behaviour is regarded as effeminate, demonstrating it will have an emasculating effect on their manhood. It would be extremely tough for Andile to concede "defeat" to Nobantu and request her return given that he finds it difficult to disclose his situation, even to his male friends. He is afraid to expose his weakness and desperation to her. Shefer et al. (2007) argue that men always try to project confidence in front of others. The societal expectation is that they are always capable of handling challenging situations. Their inner lives, however, are frequently incredibly fragile and precarious.

This performance of a fake bravery becomes evident once again when Nqobisa sneaks out of the house to visit her mother at aunt Tsholo's without her father's knowledge and consent. When Andile learns about this in a drunken state, he quickly sobers up due to the fear that Nobantu might divorce him if she finds out that the child got lost out of his carelessness. When Nazli informs him that the child is safe, he feels like jumping up and down with joy, but he controls his excitement because Xolani is watching him, and he must not see this softer side of his.

After failing in all his endeavours, Andile ultimately discloses to his friend and coworker, Anant, that he is barely surviving without Nobantu. The narrative captures it thus, "Andile told him everything. The problems he had encountered with the children in the last couple of days, his wish that Nobantu would just come back home, and his desire not to be the one to back down over the conditions of her return"

(2008:137). He also acknowledges that he is afraid of coming out as weak if he begs her to return home. Instead of the independent wife whose actions undermine his masculinity, Andile claims that what he really wants is the dependent wife who made him feel like a "real man".

Additionally, he acknowledges his deepest concern, that if he allowed her to work, he would lose control of her, and she might not need him anymore. He muses, "If she does this thing and becomes her own woman, where do I fit in? My role has always been that of a provider. I was the guy in the driver's seat" (2008:139). Scina (2018) argues that when women demonstrate their dependence on men, it strokes their male egos, but if they show independence and autonomy, it threatens and challenges the phallus and it incites violence. By highlighting such an attitude, Wanner's text attempts to point out that with the drastic changes in the socio-economic sphere in post-transitional South Africa, men need to be re-socialised to accept this remarkable shift and try to adjust their mindset to the current situation.

Anant tells Andile that if he continues to let his connection with Nobantu continue in this manner, it could lead to a divorce, which makes Andile panic. This gets ironic because Nobantu has been receiving threats from Andile about getting a divorce if she starts her own company. He panics because he thinks he will lose the respect that comes with being a married man. Gennrich (2013) contends that according to some hegemonic ideals of masculinity, a man must have a career, a home, a wife and children (whom he can control), and a job in order to be regarded and treated with dignity.

It is evident that masculinities are malleable because Andile eventually acknowledges his weakness to Anant, approaches Nobantu and begs her to return home, does his best to assist Nobantu in her journey towards independence, and starts to see himself as a parent and a lover rather than a controlling Automated Teller Machine (ATM) that disburses money as payment for desirable behaviour. Ouzgane and Morrell (2005) maintain that masculinities are prone to change in tandem with socioeconomic and perceptual shifts. Men must negotiate with women on power sharing in light of the significant shifts in the labour market that appear to advantage women.

2.2.2 Mfundo's father, "an ultimate patriarch" in *Men of The South* (2010)

In *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), Andile demonstrates characteristics of the ideal patriarch, which, if unchecked, might produce ultimate patriarchs. In a sense, these men take pride in their manhood and fiercely guard against any notion that challenges their inflexible definition of what it means to be a man. According to Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010:12), his family was "respectable" when he was growing up. The dictatorial patriarch who ruled over him and the entire family is shown as his father, who, according to Mfundo, "put respect in respectable." This is an ironic statement from Mfundo since his father instils terror rather than respect. This explains why, when their older brother Sindiso challenges their father's values, Mfundo and his sister Buhle cringe on the couch. The reason for this is that Sindiso will face harsh consequences as he disobeyed the house rules by questioning his father's authority. Children in their home are taught their place through physical abuse and harsh language. Their father is an authoritarian who will not accept criticism or a back chat from his children. Being the only man in the house, he has authority over every aspect, including the lives of the children.

The children's perspectives on their lives are irrelevant to Sindiso's father. This is why he becomes so upset when Sindiso tells them, his parents, that he and his friends have discovered a quicker way to get money without having to spend so many years in college attempting to secure a career. He is the kind of father who does not believe that dialogue is appropriate and whose word is final. Regardless of Sindiso's feelings towards it, he tells him that he will complete his high school education and enrol in college. When Sindiso rebels, his father is shocked that Sindiso disregards his orders. His disenchantment is captured by Mfundo as he reflects:

My father stood up from his sofa - Daddy's sofa - in the left-hand corner of our council-house living room. He slowly took off his belt and said, "You are telling me? *You* are telling *me*? *Wena uyindoda laph'endlini...* You think you are a man in this house now that you have been circumcised, neh? Who do you think you are to talk to me like that? He raised his voice as he swiftly covered the distance between him and Sindiso (2010:13).

Gennrich (2013) claims that in a masculinist arrangement of the sort described here, a man has the authority to decide what the wife and children do. Mfundo's father feels that Sindiso is challenging his authority and masculinity because the young man has just been circumcised. According to the Xhosa culture, male circumcision signifies a rite of passage that introduces a young man to adulthood and by implication, entitles him to his own opinion, especially one that concerns his life. On the contrary, Mfundo's father makes it clear that although Sindiso has been circumcised, it does not change anything. As long as he still lives under his roof, he is still a child and will therefore behave accordingly. Patrick-Joseph & Patrick-Joseph (2013) maintain that even though the family, which is regarded as the primary institution of patriarchy, seems to have lost many of its former functions to the capitalist state, patriarchy is kept alive through force and language. It is through social language that the power of men is enshrined. As a patriarch, Mfundo's father strongly believes that as a "man" of the house, he calls the shots. By virtue of being the head of the house he is entitled to decide for his family members and will not brook any contradiction.

Befittingly, Mfundo goes on to say that his father was the "law" in the house as nobody would dare talk to him the way Sindiso had done. What Mfundo means by the "law" is that his father was a domestic despot – feared, more than respected. Everybody in the house, even their mother, is expected to comply. When the father tries to beat Sindiso, the young man holds the belt and his father's hand drops in what Mfundo calls an uncharacteristically resigned fashion; that of an ultimate patriarch who cannot believe that his authority can be challenged. This sends a message to the father that Sindiso is not a child anymore and will not accept punishment like a child. As a grown-up young man, Sindiso has developed his own masculinity which, just like his father, he would not like to be challenged. He presumably has all that marks one as a man – the penis, the beard and body hair which are regarded as symbols of strength and power. On top of these, he has been circumcised. This according to him, justifies his reaction towards his father as far as masculine standards are concerned. He is thus, a man in his own right and is reading back to his father, the very masculinist script that the older man is reading from.

When punishment fails, Mfundo's father refuses to back down as this would mean defeat, a dreadful prospect for the ultimate patriarch that he is. To restore power, he resorts to verbal abuse and begins to hurl the foulest insults at Sindiso in a way the family has never heard before. Rather than having his masculinity challenged in his own house, he declares Sindiso dead to him. As far as he is concerned, there cannot be two men sharing equal power and authority under the same roof. There can only be one ultimate patriarch, that is, only one alpha male whose power is derived from being a father. This power is marked through certain rituals and arrangements in the home. For example, Mfundo's father has a sofa which only belongs to him; it cannot be shared with any other family member, even his wife. This arrangement, alongside others, accentuates and mystifies his power as father.

2.2.3 Mzilikazi's father, "an illustrious embodiment of patriarchy" in *Men of the South* (2010)

Mzilikazi's father in *Men of the South* (2010) is another perfect example of an ultimate patriarch who is also a homophobe. Just like Mfundo's father, he wields power and authority, which makes his family members fear more than respect him. However, Moran (2009) argues that patriarchy does not necessarily carry bad and oppressive connotations. She claims that patriarchy is necessary to preserve the family as it gives fathers a necessary role in the family and encourages them to be actively involved, thereby counteracting cultural trends towards absent fathering. It can thus be argued that the positive aspect of patriarchy is to produce and protect the children by assigning different roles to men and women, something that binds the family as a solid social unit. Just how positive this role of fathers is, is debatable.

Wanner introduces the reader to Mzilikazi in his thirties and emphasises that even as an independent grown-up man, he still fears his father. This fear makes him keep his homosexuality a secret. Mzilikazi's father is a staunch Zulu traditionalist whose homophobic attitude makes him believe that homosexuality is a Western disease which has come to eradicate African values. One day while they are watching news, it is announced that the South African Constitutional Court has finally permitted same sex marriages. In disgust, he erupts, "Voetsek! Ngqingili! Do they realise that this is

Africa, coming to pollute this continent with their Eurocentric ideas?" (2010:122). If his father finds out that he is gay, it would mean an end to their relationship.

Judging by his reaction to the news as well as his deeply engraved traditional principles, it goes without saying that Mzilikazi's father has zero tolerance for homosexuals. It could be even worse if a homosexual would come out of his own household, having tried so hard to raise his sons in what he thought was a proper traditional and masculine way. Mzilikazi reflects, "I had to come to terms with my sexuality, but I was not ready for my father to know about it. Probably, I would never be ready for this in this lifetime" (ibid). The truthfulness of this becomes evident when the writer mentions that Mzilikazi feared his father to the end. When he performs the ritualistic act of sprinkling soil into his father's grave he says, "It felt as though I dropped some of the fear" (2010:149). This suggests that he even feared his father as a corpse, showing the long-lasting psychological damage that ultra-masculinism, control, emotional violence and authority have on the victims.

It is noteworthy though that in the end Mzilikazi admits that if it had not been for the fear, he would not have achieved so much in life. This implies that although regarded as pernicious, male control and authority might have some positive elements. Mzilikazi also introduces the reader to his father's oppressive brand of masculinity. He does not, for instance, treat his wife as an equal. Instead, he treats her more like a child, in ways reminiscent of how Andile treats Nobantu in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). This oppression and emotional abuse become more intense when Mzilikazi's father receives higher formal education. He begins to undermine his wife's status even more than before and gets married to an educated woman who works as a nurse. Because he is a Zulu man, his culture permits polygamy. Although it is generally believed that the more men become educated, the more egalitarian and open minded they become, this is not necessarily the case.

As stated earlier, Schildkrout (2019) argues that a man would always associate himself with strength and rationality, while he associates the woman with weakness and a limited potential of thinking. Mzilikazi's father is no exception. Wanner withholds his real name and introduces him to the reader as Mzilikazi's father or Mntungwa, the clan-name Mzilikazi's mother uses to address him. The reason why Wanner refers to

him as Mzilikazi's father throughout the narrative might be that she wants to assert his position as a traditional father, the head and the "law" of the household, as evinced in the way in which he relates to his wife and children. Additionally, Mzilikazi's mother might be addressing him as Mntungwa to show respect. Traditionally, it is regarded as disrespectful to address a black man by his name, especially when this is done by a woman. A newly wedded wife is always encouraged by the elders to use her husband's clan name when addressing him. It is only after the birth of their first child that she is allowed some flexibility to address him after the child's name. In this case Mzilikazi's mother would address her husband as Mzilikazi's father.

Looking into the question of strength, power, and rationality, it can be argued that because of her independence as well as her level of education, the younger wife threatens and challenges Mzilikazi's father's masculine ego and aspirations of being an ultimate patriarch. In order to compensate for this loss of patriarchal dividend and to assuage his masculine ego, Mzilikazi's father vents his frustrations on the older wife who is totally dependent on him. The problem is that he does not treat his wives equally. He begins to pick on Mzilikazi's mother over trivial things and when she complains about it, he feels as if his authority is being challenged. He says, "So you are questioning me now and you want to be the man of this house?" (2010:89). Being the "man of the house" becomes a badge for unbridled and incontestable male power, authority, and privilege as we saw with Sindiso's father in the section preceding this one. Mzilikazi's father even threatens to send his first wife back to her parents so that they can teach her how to respect her husband. This is what happens with Ofilwe's mother in Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007). The only thing she can do is cry to her mother over the phone when she catches her husband cheating with another woman. She cannot confront or leave him because she comes from a poor family. Similarly, Mzilikazi's father knows that sending Mzilikazi's mother back to her parents' home is the most dreaded threat for her and her parents because she also comes from a poor family, and she will not have anyone to take care of her there. These two men use their wives' poverty to blackmail them into staying in unhappy relationships where they will fully control their lives.

When Andile tries this strategy, threatening to divorce Nobantu in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), he does not succeed because unlike the two older women, Nobantu comes from a financially stable background, and she is better educated than the two women. Mzilikazi's parents arrange that Mzilikazi's father will send more money and Mzilikazi's mother is going to concentrate on what is going on in the rural home and stop questioning Mzilikazi's father about city life and his "town wife". In a way, he is buying her silence and subservience in what is clearly a system of patronage and in which the man acts as benefactor and government. Just like Mfundo's father, Mzilikazi's father has built an impenetrable wall of power around himself.

On their way to Johannesburg after the death of their mother, Mzilikazi once again mentions how aloof his father is. Mzilikazi and Vusi, his younger brother, cannot feel free in their father's presence. They even fear to ask him questions or initiate a conversation. However, when they finally arrive at their new home in Dube, the children cannot believe their father's sudden change of personality. From the autocratic ultimate patriarch, notorious for instilling fear and wielding power as well as authority in the rural areas, he suddenly changes into a flexible father who brings them water to wash their hands before eating. He even bathes Maria, their little sister, himself. He also encourages the boys to wash dishes, something he himself had labelled a woman's job in the rural areas.

Morrell (2007) maintains that by introducing children to sexual division of labour, parents socialise them into rigid and oppressive patriarchal norms. It can be argued that Mzilikazi's father performs "feminine" duties in town around an educated woman. He negotiates power with his new wife because he is threatened by her financial independence, unlike Mzilikazi's mother who entirely depends on him for everything. Gennrich (2013) states that this type of reaction to changes in gender relations can be categorised as an accommodating reaction. It comprises of men who accept changes and do not react violently to them. These men may still uphold traditional and patriarchal ideals of masculinity, but do not assert them in a violent way. Looking at this sudden change of character in Mzilikazi's father, it can be argued that masculinities are flexible and that they keep changing depending upon the context. One man may, just as Mzilikazi's father shows, embrace and express two or more

different versions of masculinity: in this case, as both an ultimate patriarch and a sensitive and egalitarian father and husband.

2.2.4 Martin Mtshali, “the power-monger” in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014)

Martin Mtshali, Martin O’Malley’s biological father, is a highly respected man in the business world around Johannesburg and beyond, the very epitome of an alpha male, at least from a distance. Owing to his success and power, he is a role model to many young men. He sets up a meeting with Martin O’Malley where it transpires that he is his biological father. The story is that he abused Martin O’Malley’s mother during Martin’s conception, accusing her of trying to trap him with pregnancy. In this case, it can be said that Mtshali portrays both a successful and violent masculinity at the same time. Mtshali is portrayed by Martin O’Malley as a businessman and an African National Congress stalwart who was among the first people to know about and benefit from Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). He has been a member of the National Executive Committee of the party since 1994 and he used his party connections to get into business rather than accepting ministerial positions. He is a role model who is admired and deified by many young businessmen.

Mtshali appears to be a down-to-earth man who donates to charity organisations and sits on the boards of many leading companies. He is the type of a man that everybody in the business fraternity would like to know better and be connected with. When Mtshali invites Martin O’Malley and his family to Mahlabathini to perform a traditional ritual for them, he does not give Germaine, Martin O’Malley’s white wife, the same warm welcome he gives Martin O’Malley and his son, Zuko. This shows that he is both a traditionalist and a racist.

Mahlabathini is a village in rural KwaZulu-Natal where Mtshali’s home is. Here, just like in the city, Mtshali has ensured that he makes a name for himself and asserts his power and masculinity through the accumulation of material possessions. His is the only homestead that has a double storey house amid poor rural houses, indicating wealth in endemic poverty. Like Andile in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), he takes pride in flaunting his wealth and achievements, especially in cases where nobody

can compete against him, just to assert how much of a man he is and to have everybody stroking his masculine ego. Germaine paints the picture of his homestead in rural Mahlabathini in KwaZulu Natal thus, "Mtshali had sent Martin directions via text, but we didn't need them. His house was difficult to miss, a sprawling two-storey mansion among the poverty and huts of the rest of the village" (2014:294). This indicates that just like Andile, Mtshali is suffering from a big man syndrome.

Shortly after the ceremony at Mahlabathini, Mtshali dies. After the funeral, both Martin O'Malley and Liam discover that they have been conned by Mtshali. He pocketed all the money that Martin O'Malley and Liam had invested in his company. They also discover that he owes the company huge amounts of money. This says a lot about Mtshali: his masculine ego, his racism, and his traditionalism. As one of the first people to benefit from BEE, there is a possibility that at some stage things were going well for him financially, that is how he managed to create a reputation for himself through success. This success inflated his ego to the extent that when things began to take a downward spiral, he could not afford to accommodate a thwarted masculinity. Wright (2014) states that the idea of thwarted masculinities is occasionally used to characterise the experiences of males who are unable to live up to the socially mandated definitions of manhood because they are unable to get employment, get married, or provide for their family. Rather than accepting his downfall, he wanted to remain a demigod worshipped by all those who aspired to be successful like him. He would rather be a con artist than lose his reputation and power and feel emasculated. Both Martin O'Malley and Liam find out that they have been conned by their father only after his burial. Martin shares their pain thus:

Turns out Gold Street was Mtshali's personal slush fund. He owes the company so much money that his assets have been attached by the High Court. And this is only coming out now? I think. I read all this while sitting in the car and I start sweating. Oh, fucking bloody stupid hell. I am one of the fools who has lost all his family's savings on Gold Street. Fuck fuck fuck! [...] "I shouldn't have introduced you to him, I am so sorry, lil bra," Liam says, tears streaming down his face. "And I should have done my homework. I am in the finance industry

for fuck's sake," I say. "So am I. Or I was before the government stuff. Fuuck! That stupid, idiotic old man fooled us," he says (2014:314).

Also, it can be argued that his resentment for white people emanates from the fact that O'Malley, Martin's white stepfather, undermined his masculinity when he raised his child into a progressive young man, something he failed to do as the biological father. By conning Martin O'Malley and by being indifferent to Germaine, he is probably trying to get even with O'Malley. Furthermore, the fact that Martin O'Malley's stepfather was white, in addition to having raised his son, might have compromised Mtshali's masculinity even further. In her argument, Hodes (2014) maintains that one argument used to differentiate whites from other races and suggest their superiority is the more obvious degree of difference between white men and women. As the white man occupies the top of the hierarchy, immediately below him is the white woman and the black man who occupy the same stratum. This implies that as far as the white man is concerned, a black man is equivalent to a white woman in every respect. Such perceptions are derogatory and amount to emasculation. It is obvious how closely racial and gender discourses have influenced western conceptions of manhood. Real men are defined by their whiteness as well as their distance from women and children. It is such perceptions that might have made Mtshali undermine his own masculinity as a black man. By trying to accumulate wealth, it is possible that he was trying to prove to himself as well as other black men that he too could be as wealthy and more of a man, just like a white man. The brutality with which Mtshali cons his own sons shows the extent to which he wants to retain the status of a powerful patriarch. In the end, he achieves the exact opposite as he is revealed for the fraud that he is.

2.3. When a man is not a man: Vilified versions of masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity recognises the existence of lesser forms of masculinity that are complicit, subordinate, and marginalised (Connell 1995; Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012; Pasura & Christou 2017). These include homosexuals, ethnic minorities, jobless men, bachelors, working class men on low income as well as uncircumcised Xhosa men, for example. These studies concur that hegemonic masculinity presents itself as a cultural ideal of how real men are expected to behave.

For most men, such an ideal is not always easy to achieve due to socio-economic, political, religious circumstances, as well as sexual orientation. Any form of masculinity that goes against heteronormative standards for example, is silenced, marginalised, and vilified, especially homosexuality. This is because homosexuality is seen as a powerful threat to hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, and patriarchy's institutions such as the heteronormative family. Any form of relationship with homosexuals is regarded as contaminating and must be avoided at all costs (Langa 2016). Consequently, most boys and men avoid any form of behaviour that may suggest homosexuality or vulnerability because anything that goes against heterosexuality tends to be stigmatised in most societies (White & Peretz 2010). For this reason, most homosexuals suppress and hide their sexual orientation and pretend to be straight in order to avoid being ostracised, physical harm or in extreme cases, death.

In *Men of the South* (2010), Wanner portrays three men with subordinated masculinities: a homosexual, a jobless man, and a foreigner. Dlamini (2016) argues that South African society, like others, has given more privilege to heterosexuality and this shows through homophobia, corrective rape, and brutal killing of homosexuals who identify as gays and lesbians. This theme is explored through the characterisation of Mzilikazi, one of the main characters in the novel. According to Reid & Walker (2005b), a bachelor who lives by himself without progeny is regarded as powerless and is often an object of ridicule. In one of the studies that they conducted in Ghana, Reid & Walker (ibid) were told by one of their informants that when a bachelor died without having fathered children, his kin would shove a burning log up the anus of his corpse to show their contempt of his status.

Similarly, a study of Zulu masculinities conducted by Hadebe (2010) revealed that to be regarded as a man, one must have a wife, a job, and children. This shows how seriously marriage is taken in some communities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. It is assumed to give a man status and dignity. Contrary to the traditional belief that it is only homosexual men who do not get married, heterosexuals also find themselves in this position by choice or circumstance, especially with the vast changes in the labour market which make it difficult to afford *lobola*. This means that marriage and having children cannot be used as a non-negotiable yardstick against which

masculinity can be measured, as illustrated through Mzilikazi in *Men of the South* (2010). Montle (2020) defines *lobola* as a black South African custom that requires a man to pay a specific sum of money or livestock to the family of the woman he loves in order to win her hand in marriage. Cultural representations portray *lobola* as a unifying factor between the bride and groom's family, as well as a gesture of gratitude for the soon-to-be wife (ibid).

Another subordinated masculinity which is deemed powerless is that of the jobless man. With the increase in globalisation, socio-economic changes as well as changes in the labour market, the role of men as breadwinners and providers has been undermined. This has had a damaging effect on their perception of themselves as well as their masculinities, since it has not only undermined their gendered social roles, but their social value as well. With men having lost their phallus, their patriarchal status is also challenged as women begin to provide for themselves. This results in women becoming more autonomous and taking decisions for themselves without consulting men. In such cases, harmony becomes harder to achieve. When men lose their breadwinning gendered role, they emphasise their status as the heads of the household and the authority they still have to correct women (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). Correcting women has implications of violence. This is attested to by Reid & Walker (2005a), who claim that when men cannot change their economic situation, they respond by developing macho attitudes and resorting to physical violence against women. This is evident in Wanner's works and will be explored in detail, particularly with reference to *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008).

As Ouzgane & Morrell (2005) point out, the increasing autonomy as well as economic independence of women threatens the ego and prestige of men. Men fear that when they fail to provide the material needs of women, women might feel attracted to other men who are financially stable. On the contrary, in *Men of the South* (2010) Wanner portrays the jobless man in a different way through the characterisation of Mfundo. Though Mfundo starts off by finding solace in drink after losing his job, after disappointing Slindile by not being there during the birth of their child, he decides to change his mind and strive for what he considers a more responsible masculinity, that of being a househusband. Demantas & Myers (2015) state that when men find

themselves in the position of housewives after losing a job, atomised, unorganised, and financially insecure, they get subjected to what is called “housewifisation”. The man who is supposed to be the hunter becomes a “parasite”.

However, Mfundo is not intimidated by this status quo. Contrary to the studies conducted by Williams (2009), Ndlovu (2011), and Pasura & Christou (2017), who claim that when men’s manhood and masculinity is compromised, they either resort to violence or find comfort in sex and drink, Mfundo does not succumb to any of these. Though his friends ridicule him and call him Slindile’s wife, he seems to be happy staying at home watching his daughter grow.

Another marginalised masculinity in Wanner’s *Men of the South* (2010) takes the form of foreign nationalities. This is portrayed through the character of Tinaye, a young Zimbabwean man who comes to South Africa in search of better job opportunities. According to Shefer et al. (2007), marginalisation occurs to men who are subjected to racism, who are members of minority ethnic groups, or who are migrants and have been forced by social, political, or economic circumstances to engage in transnational movements.

2.3.1 Mfundo: “the house husband and a kept man” in *Men of the South* (2010)

In her introduction of Mfundo as one of the main characters in the novel, Wanner outlines his childhood that is characterised by masculinity crisis. Told through the first-person narrative, Wanner presents Mfundo’s story in the form of a flashback. In fact, the entire novel is told from the point of view of three male characters – Mfundo, a househusband; Mzilikazi, a homosexual; and Tinaye, a Zimbabwean national living and working in South Africa. The intention of using the first-person narration is to capture each man’s subjectivity and to highlight that no two men are the same. In South Africa, and indeed Southern Africa, there are different types of men whose experiences have resulted in them enacting different types of masculinities, hence the title of the novel, “*Men of the South.*”

Subjectivity is a very powerful psychological term which emphasises the importance of each human subject as a way of fighting depersonalisation or dehumanisation. The

tone that obtains in Mfundo's section is nostalgic. The flashbacks indicate how much Mfundo reminisces about his childhood, how he was left in charge of the family after his father's and brother's disappearance as a child. Then, his family did not expect a lot from him as they do in the present when he is a grown-up man. It emerges that the young Mfundo actually took pride in being the man of the house contrary to the loathing he now has of being a man with responsibilities. The childhood crisis emanates from his confusion pertaining to the description of a "real man", after being left in charge, at thirteen, as the "man of the house" who is expected to provide for the family. This happens when both his elder brother and father leave home. Hunter (2005), Ouzgane & Morrell (2005), and Schildkrout (2019) point out that in most societies, there is the general and strong expectation that it is the responsibility of a man to protect and provide for his family. This crisis re-surfaces in Mfundo's adulthood when he is confronted with his own family and is required to prove himself a "real man".

As a boy, Mfundo starts off by selling coal in the township after school. He does this to augment his mother's salary as it has proved insufficient after the disappearance of his father. He also wants to prove himself a responsible man of the house in the absence of his father. Mfundo confides to the reader that playing the role of the man of the house was not easy, though his mother humoured and encouraged him. What made it difficult was the fact that in his neighbourhood, there were many and sometimes contradictory versions of masculinity and manhood. Morrell (2005) and Beasley (2012) concur that masculinity should not be treated as a homogenous entity. Instead, there are different versions of masculinity although there is only one which is regarded as a yardstick against which all masculinities are measured.

What further compounded Mfundo's problem is that he was surrounded by two types of men with whom he did not want to identify. First, he says there were the happy-go-lucky, lazy and irresponsible men who would send him to buy them loose skyfs (cigarettes) at the nearest spaza shop as they sat drinking all hours of the day. Also, there were the "salt-of-the-earth" type of men like his father and Mzilikazi's father who looked after their families and came home on time (2010:17). What Mfundo disliked about both types is that they were dictatorial, and that because of this, they were

feared by their wives and children. Rather than associating himself with these two types of men, Mfundo decides to establish a masculinity of his own, which is going to make him feel fulfilled as a man.

Magodyo et al. (2017) argue that boys and young men can construct their own conception of what it means to be a man based on personal experiences and observations. What makes Mfundo's choice of masculinity ironic is that in the end, it is a disparaged form of masculinity as it is a version which is not approved by both men and women around him. In his manhood, Mfundo chooses to settle with a woman he was attracted to when he was young. The woman, Slindile Maguga, comes from an upper middle-class family in the suburbs and is a medical doctor. From a township background, Mfundo manages to obtain a diploma in sound engineering and works as a sound technician at the South African Broadcasting Corporation. He is also a good trumpeter. As far as he is concerned, with these achievements, he is a man in his own right, even though as a grown-up man he still shares living space with his mother. This does not give him much privacy as his mother catches him and Slindile one day having sex. This suggests that Mfundo is old enough to have a place of his own. After this incident, he moves in with Slindile. They co-habit in Slindile's townhouse and he is comfortable with these living arrangements. The fact that Slindile comes from a higher class than he does, that it is her house that they share; that she has a better job than his and is better qualified than him, all seem not to intimidate Mfundo.

This attitude that Mfundo portrays is in stark contradistinction to what has been observed by Schildkrout (2019), that men view women as objects to be appropriated, and in order to appropriate them successfully, men need to put them in positions of desperation so that they can feel vulnerable and need men to rescue them, and in this way, the man becomes the provider and the protector. This is what Andile does with his wife, Nobantu, in Wanner's *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). When Nobantu leaves him to pursue her career, Andile freezes all her bank accounts so that in her desperation she can give up on her ambition to be independent and go back to play her housewife role in the Makana household. Mfundo's attitude, however, portrays what could be argued as an open-minded reaction to changes in gender relations. He seems to be responding positively to the South African Constitution which requires

men to find alternative ways of being a man as opposed to hegemonic forms which give more power and status to men. Gennrich (2013) states that a responsive reaction supports equality in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. It challenges the more extreme traditional notions of violent masculinity by not being afraid to show effeminate characteristics. The fact that Mfundo has accepted a lower economic status as compared to Slindile and is happy with the status quo suggests this.

The happiness that Mfundo has with Slindile is short-lived, though. He fights with an American rapper that flirts with Slindile in front of him. This violent reaction emanates from trying to assert and protect his masculinity from being undermined, especially in front of other people's eyes. Mfundo says that Johannesburg is his home, and he would never have been able to walk it with his head held high if he had let the American get away with disrespecting him as a man, in front of his woman. If he had, it would demean his manly pride. This is affirmed when he says, "... of course I know, a woman is not taken but a man does not disrespect another in a crowd" (2010:35). This means that as a man, one cannot blame his rival when his woman leaves him for the rival, the decision to leave a man for another solely depends on the woman as she does it out of her own discretion. Nonetheless, a man must fight for his woman as a way of proving his worth to her.

Itulua-Abumere (2013) argues that hegemonic masculinity is more about putting on a performance for the crowd, so that they can see how much of a man one is. It is clear that Mfundo attacked the American to defend his own masculinity in front of the crowd. This fight results in the end of Mfundo's career. The American rapper ensures that his contract at the radio station is not renewed, and his recording deals do not materialise. Mfundo tries to keep this bad news a secret, with the hope that he will soon get another job. When all his endeavours fail, he decides to disclose the bad news to Slindile, who initially surprises him with being supportive and understanding. Shortly after this, they discover that Slindile is pregnant. Mfundo suggests that they get married but Slindile refuses, citing unreadiness.

When they discuss the sex of the child, Mfundo hopes that it is a girl because if it is a boy, a lot would be expected from him as a father. The stereotypical reaction from most African men is to wish for a son, an heir. As far as Mfundo is concerned, being

a man in his era comes with a lot of socio-economic challenges and expectations. Men are expected to provide for their families even though there is a lot of competition in the job market between men and women, which gives women more socio-economic power. This is the prevailing situation in Mfundo's life. He is surrounded by successful women both from his and Slindile's family, rendering his, a thwarted masculinity because he is not as successful as they are. However, he does not seem to be bothered by this.

Slindile is a medical doctor, and her mother is a dermatologist. Buhle, Mfundo's sister, is an accountant and their mother is a retired teacher. Wanner's depiction of the Dlamini men focalises marginalised masculinities. Sindiso, Mfundo's brother, left school when young and joined a syndicate which sold stolen cars. When he was about to be arrested, he fled to exile, only to come back after 1994 when all the exiles were free to come home. At forty, he still lives with his mother and is not working. The only way in which Sindiso desperately proves his manhood or masculinity is by fathering five children from four different mothers. He embraces hyper-masculinity to compensate for his failure in life. Studies conducted by Ndlovu (2011), Gennrich (2013) and Pasura & Christou (2017) indicate that when a man's manhood is compromised and he feels insecure about gender equality, he usually engages in behaviours that overcompensate his sense of manhood. This is called hyper-masculinity. Such men either resort to violence or find comfort in sex and binge drinking in trying to re-assert or regain what they perceive as lost power.

Slindile's mother queries Mfundo's masculinity, arguing that he is not man enough for her daughter. She premises her conviction on the fact that Mfundo does not have a university degree, has never been abroad to get exposure, earns a meagre salary compared to Slindile, and he stays in Slindile's house. She tells him blatantly that he is a kept man who must work harder to deserve her daughter. Slindile's mother's perception of her daughter's lover contrasts sharply with Nobantu's mother's perception of her daughter's husband in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). According to Nobantu's mother, Andile, Nobantu's husband, is a typical example of a "real man". He can give her daughter whatever material thing she desires because he has money. This means that some women are complicit in the construction and

upholding of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Another example of this is that although initially Slindile does not mind Mfundo's stay-at-home status, this changes later when she starts thinking that he is shirking his responsibilities as a man.

Mfundo's masculinity is also queried by their friends who, when they come to visit, ask Slindile, loudly enough for Mfundo to hear, "Sli... where's your wife... uh.... man?" (2010:54). Another significant event is at a restaurant where a waiter looks disapprovingly at Mfundo after Slindile has settled the bill. Studies conducted by Itulua-Abumere (2013), and Gennrich (2013) indicate that the role of a man has always been imagined to be that of a provider. This explains why Slindile says to Mfundo in anger, "I want you to be the man of the house for once... I want you to take me out to eat like we used to do" (2010:57). With her salary, Slindile can eat out as much as she likes, she just wants Mfundo to play his "manly" role and spoil her. Just like her mother, Slindile gets to a point where she cannot tolerate a man who is, in their estimation, irresponsible.

The same sentiment is shared by Mfundo's mother and sister, Buhle. They also feel that Mfundo is not responsible enough and must get a job. Initially, as pointed out, Slindile does not have a problem with Mfundo's stay-at-home status. This does not last long, however. After a few months, when Mfundo tries to advise her on how to use money wisely since they now have only one source of income, Slindile reminds Mfundo that it is her money that she is spending not his, so she is free to use it whichever way she wants. The point that is being highlighted here is that the one who earns money is the one with power, and by implication, the "male" or head of the household.

After trying in vain to find a job, Mfundo begins to enjoy being a stay-at-home partner and is proud of his newly acquired domestic expertise, owing largely to watching daytime television. Most daytime television programmes are aimed at equipping housewives who spend most of the day watching repeats of handy hints, programmes and soaps. This suggests that Mfundo's status has been relegated to that of a housewife, which explains why even their friends regard him as a woman. However, he does not see anything wrong with being a stay-at-home partner, as long as he does all the household chores perfectly, spends quality time with his daughter, and

has time to write his music as well. As far as Mfundo is concerned, this new role is the same as that of a full-time housewife, who contributes meaningfully to the household by working as hard as those who hold formal jobs. The only difference is that he is a man. Mfundo's argument here underscores the role of housewives which is often taken for granted in a traditional context. The only person who is always taken seriously is the husband who plays the provider role. This is another aspect that researchers need to theorise further.

The fact that Mfundo seems to be comfortable with his stay-at-home status makes Slindile stop seeing him as a man. When Mfundo asks for money to prepare for their daughter, Nomazizi's party, Slindile insinuates that such a thing is done by and is accepted only from women, not men. She complains that she is the only one who is carrying all the financial burden of the whole household on her shoulders as if she were a man. She even says that it feels like having two children in the house. Thus, Slindile relegates Mfundo to an even lower level, that of a child. She also tells him that she is tired of feeding him while he sits the whole day watching soapies.

On the day of the party, after making all the necessary preparations, Mfundo deliberately leaves the house. He confides to the reader that he cannot stand all the looks from the husbands of Slindile's friends who will be bringing their children to the party. He knows that they, like Slindile, will query the masculinity of a man who is comfortable playing househusband. By being a stay-at-home partner, Mfundo has lost his patriarchal dividend. Not only Slindile, but everybody around Mfundo including his male friends have lost confidence in him, his masculine prestige has been ruined and people look down on him.

Slindile has even started denying Mfundo sex, further underlining that she does not see him as a man anymore. Instead, she sees a woman like herself or a child who needs to be taken care of. She starts lecturing him about getting a job, and about what other people are saying about him. When his own mother joins in and starts lecturing him about what it means to be a "real man", Mfundo begins to wonder if a man is judged by a pay cheque or his deeds. If he is judged by his deeds, does he necessarily need to be paid a cheque, because as far as he is concerned, he is doing more than a full-time job in the house.

Standing in stark contradistinction to this mentality that is espoused by Mfundo, Andile Makana in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) believes that in order to be respected as a “real man”, one needs to be economically stable and fulfil what is expected of him as a father, a husband and a lover in his family. As he ponders the question of allowing Nobantu to start her own business and how emasculating that would be, the narrative captures his fears thus, “Fifteen years after getting married to Nobantu, he still sometimes got the feeling that, in spite of all his success, her father didn’t think him good enough for his daughter. What then if she went to work and this became some sort of proof that he couldn’t look after her?” (2008:19).

Three women tell Mfundo the same thing. Slindile, Buhle and Mfundo’s mother, all persuade him to get a job. This means that for these women, the version of masculinity that Mfundo is embracing is unacceptable. Being a stay-at-home man who depends on his female partner is taboo according to the hegemonic standards of masculinity, whose ideology these women embrace. When these women appear to gang up against Mfundo, making disparaging remarks about his stay-at-home status with which he seems very comfortable, it indicates that women can play a very significant role in either perpetuating hegemonic forms of masculinity or transforming them.

When Mfundo calls his friend Mzilikazi to ask for advice, concerning the way things have become between Slindile and him, Mfundo is disappointed to learn that Mzilikazi is taking sides with Slindile. Just like the women, Mzilikazi is persuading Mfundo to get a job to regain Slindile’s affection. Mzilikazi tells him that a “real man” cannot financially depend on a woman. When Mfundo fails to be the provider that everybody around him expects him to be, after having tried so hard, he resorts to binge drinking. He does this to assert that although he might have failed to play the role of a provider, he is still a man. Pasura & Christou (2017) observe that when a man loses his breadwinner status, he can deal with the humiliation through binge drinking, violence, promiscuity, and crime. Conversely, Mfundo’s binge drinking might be associated with escapism. Since he has tried almost everything to play a provider role in vain, it is possible that he resorts to binge drinking either to forget about his problems or to avoid confronting them head on. If this is the case, Wanner is trying to underscore

the vulnerability of men as human beings, in contradistinction to the masculinity script which dictates that showing emotions is a sign of weakness which must be discouraged among real men. This concurs with Butler's (1990) claim, that masculinity is a performance, and that public mastery of this performance is important as it endorses one's masculinity. Slindile is very desperate to make a provider out of Mfundo. She tells him that instead of asking his friends to buy him liquor, he must ask them to give him the money so that he can buy necessities in the house. Though she might not be aware of it, Slindile is relegating Mfundo even further, to the level of a beggar.

In one of his drinking sprees, Mfundo accidentally dents Slindile's car. When he apologises and promises to fix the car, Slindile looks at him disdainfully, and asks if he can ever fix a car when he does not even have the money to buy his child a sweet. This shows how disappointed Slindile is in Mfundo's failed masculinity. A sweet is regarded as one of the cheapest things, yet Mfundo cannot afford it as far as Slindile is concerned, which makes Mfundo pathetic as a man.

The diatribe from Slindile does not end there. She also reminds him that he cannot afford to buy even his own underwear, so fixing her dented car is out of question. Underwear is regarded as the cheapest garment, yet it performs such a significant duty, that of covering and protecting a man's manhood. What Slindile is suggesting is that Mfundo cannot afford to protect even his manhood; he is therefore as good as naked.

In his analysis of Mungoshi's work, Ndlovu (2011) observes that men who get castrated through job loss become vulnerable to women who read back to them a masculinist and phallogocentric script. Slindile has lost so much confidence in Mfundo that she is even pessimistic about his prospects of going to Germany to pursue his career. She emphasises that what they need is money, not dreams. She would appreciate it even if Mfundo could sweep the streets, as long as he wakes up in the morning and goes to work like other men.

Despite all the pressure from Slindile, Mfundo refuses to lower himself to the level of a street cleaner. As far as he is concerned, he still has his dignity as a man. On an

equal footing, he also has an image to maintain. If he does not have a record deal, at least he still has his diploma, so he cannot risk being ridiculed by Slindile's friends any further. As Slindile snaps at Mfundo with the verbal insults cited above, she pokes him in the chest and ultimately slaps him in the face. This marks the climax of her anger against Mfundo's failed masculinity. Once again, she does not see a man anymore in Mfundo, but a mere child. When Mfundo fights back, he gets arrested, suggesting that the law protects women more than men, regardless of who the provoker is. When Mfundo gets out of jail and asks for Slindile's forgiveness, she kicks him out. She has already packed all his belongings in two suitcases and his trumpet into its trumpet case. She even gives him money for the cab to make sure he does not have any reason to stay. Mfundo confides to the reader that never in his life had he been humiliated and his sense of being, particularly as a man, undermined in this manner.

In a traditional setting, it is usually a woman who is kicked out in this fashion for having failed to fulfil her womanly roles in one way or the other. In this case, it is Mfundo who has failed to fulfil his role as a breadwinner or man of the house. Having assumed the role of the dominant partner or what could be equated to a man, Slindile uses her power to kick out Mfundo when the need to do so arises. This shows a significant shift in gender roles which comes with socio-economic changes. Chodorow (2014) emphasises that masculinities go beyond the biological divide. Women can assume positions, roles and traits which are usually associated with men. From an intertextual perspective, Slindile's assumption of a role that is traditionally associated with men compares with that of Lucia in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989). Here, Lucia is labelled a man because of her stubbornness and her refusal to play a woman's submissive role. Similarly, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2012), there is a patriarchal aunt who enjoys a "patriarchal dividend" in the family by virtue of being sister to the head of the family. This explains why Chodorow (ibid) maintains that masculinity is socially and historically, but not biologically constructed.

When Mfundo goes to his mother's house with all his belongings, she does not approve, nor does Thuli his township friend, when she sees him at Pule's tavern. She jokingly says that she had been wondering what Slindile saw in a man like Mfundo.

While they are sitting at the tavern chatting, two girls point at him and laugh. They tell him that his picture and profile are on the website: do-not-date-him.com because he allegedly hits women and spends their money and does not want to work. This castrates Mfundo even further. The gravity of this matter implies that it will not be easy for him to get another partner soon since it is not possible for a woman in her right frame of mind to date someone with these qualities.

Mfundo's stay-at-home status is controversial. Gennrich (2013) and Reid & Walker (2005a) argue that there are many conflicting definitions of what it means to be a "real man" in contemporary South Africa. Changes in the labour market have resulted in a remarkable shift in power balance and hegemonic forms of masculinity are gradually giving way to more egalitarian forms of masculinity, in this case, a stay-at-home husband, irrespective of women's and other male characters' refusal to see this identity as befitting a man.

2.3.2 Mzilikazi and homosexuality in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

Another form of vilified masculinity in Wanner's work is that of the homosexual male. Mzilikazi Khumalo introduces himself as one hundred percent Zulu boy and hundred percent gay. Told from the perspective of a first person, Wanner wants to give Mzilikazi's narrative the subjective view and hence gravitas it deserves as Mzilikazi is directly affected by the stigma that is attached to homosexuality. Mzilikazi's tone starts off as one of desperation and pleading, and eventually ends up as bold acceptance that he cannot escape his sexual orientation. In her exposition of Mzilikazi as one of the main characters in the novel, the way in which Wanner manipulates these two qualities - being gay and Zulu at the same time – which appear to be at odds with each other, shows that these can actually blend, though not in harmony, but still, in one person. As the narrative reveals, Mzilikazi struggles to make peace with the fact that he is gay. At some point he begins to wonder if he would have been attracted to men if he had met a perfect woman like Slindile. He then dismisses the idea and comes to terms with his sexual orientation as he says, "Ag man, who am I kidding?" (2010:85).

The reason why he emphasises his Zuluness is that the Zulu nation is known as a nation of warriors as epitomised by the famous Zulu king, Shaka. The image of a tough warrior quickly morphs into masculinist understandings of what it means to be Zulu, with propensity for violence seen as the quintessential characteristic of Zuluness (Ngcobo 2007). Under this militarised masculinism, a "real man" is measured according to the traditional hegemonic standards of masculinity, where there is, presumably, zero tolerance for homosexuality. To challenge the myth just mentioned above, Mzilikazi emphasises that he is as gay as he is Zulu when he says, "I am gay, ungqingili, a fag, istabane, a queen. Hundred percent Zulu queer" (2010:85). By repeating these words, especially as it is known that they are derogatory and associated with homophobia, Mzilikazi is emphasising that this is who he is; that there is nothing he or anybody can do to change it; that homosexuality is only human and being gay does not make him less of a Zulu or a human being. He must keep his sexuality a secret however, because if his father finds out, it will mean an end to their relationship.

By creating a character like Mzilikazi who embodies a dual identity, Wanner is disputing the idea of a monolithic, inherently hegemonic and heteronormative definition of Zulu masculinity. She is presenting a more nuanced and inclusive image of masculinity that acknowledges the diversity of identities and experiences that exist within the Zulu cultural setting. It is possible to interpret Wanner's depiction of Mzilikazi as an intertextual allusion to the Jacob Zuma trial and the discussions it generated about Zulu manhood. Wanner challenges the patriarchal and heteronormative elements of conventional Zulu manhood by developing a figure who represents a queer Zulu masculinity.

Zulu masculinity and the Jacob Zuma trial are closely interlinked, as the trial became a major site for discussing, investigating, and critiquing Zulu culture and masculinity (with Zuma symbolising traditional masculinity), gender politics, and the state of South Africa's democracy. It was believed that Zuma used the trial as a platform to propagate his patriarchal views. Speaking out against homosexuality, he emphasised his status as a "real man" and a supporter of traditional Zulu masculinity. The trial brought to light the idea of an engraved hegemonic masculinity in the Zulu culture, which is the

application of dominant cultural norms and values, aimed at preserving patriarchal power and control over the subordinated and marginalised groups. Significant cultural and social ramifications of the trial included influencing public opinion and changing views about gender roles and cultural standards. It played a part in the retaliation against what was thought to be South African marginalised groups' advancement following the 1996 Constitution. The Jacob Zuma trial demonstrated the convergence of gender, political, and cultural issues in modern South Africa and was a turning point in the inquiry and contestation of Zulu masculinity. This broader context, centred around a political icon, may have influenced the broader literary landscape and the type of narratives that emerged around this time, like Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010), Mgqolozana's *Unimportance* (2014) and Mavuso's *Piggy Boy's Blues* (2016), whose themes highlight the multiplicity of sexual orientations.

Mzilikazi's father is a staunch Zulu traditionalist who is homophobic and who associates homosexuality with Western culture, effeminateness, and all that is taboo. As a Zulu traditionalist, Mzilikazi's father's attitude towards homosexuality confirms what has been observed by Diptee & Klein (2010) that any society uses children, both biologically and culturally to reproduce itself. Mzilikazi also mentions that what makes life so difficult for homosexuals is that society does not approve of anything that is not heterosexual given heterosexuality's association with reproduction. Mzilikazi further demonstrates that he is not the stereotype of a gay man. From his external appearance it is difficult to tell that he is gay. His taste of music, clothing, and friends would make one think he is straight.

Wanner draws the attention of the reader to the fact that not all gay men can be seen through their external appearance, clothing, or mannerisms. Mzilikazi's narrative, just like Mfundo's is characterised by flashbacks in what are essentially cause-and-effect plots. Wanner has employed this strategy to trace the life of Mzilikazi, and to highlight his futile endeavours to run away from the reality of his homosexuality. Mzilikazi goes on to assert his manhood by saying, "I am a father and a divorcee" (2010:87). Like any other man, he is capable of making children.

Ellis (2017) posits that the worst thing a man can be is impotent. It is feared by men to the extent that there is not even a word available to describe an impotent man

(ibid). By declaring his fatherhood, Mzilikazi is trying to assert that he is as much of a man as anybody else, the only difference is that he is gay. At some stage of his life, he was once married. Gennrich (2013) and Shefer et al. (2007) state that for one to be regarded as a man he is expected to have a wife and children; a condition that Mzilikazi fulfils. Also, like a rural-born Zulu man, Mzilikazi can stick-fight and slaughter beasts. All these macho characteristics are regarded as markers of manhood in the Zulu culture. By mentioning these, Mzilikazi is asserting that he is everything that a man is expected to be except that he is gay. He even compares his masculinity to that of Shaka Zulu, as he says, "reincarnate him and I could probably out-Zulu Shaka Zulu" (2010:87).

There have been speculations on various media platforms that Shaka Zulu himself was gay. This is not lost to Wanner (2010) who deliberately names Mzilikazi after the founder of the Ndebele nation, Mzilikazi Khumalo, who was once Shaka's general. The deliberate irreverence is a literary technique aimed at shocking and confounding homophobes. Mzilikazi also talks about how he learnt to stick-fight the hard way. He mastered the skill to the extent that no boy would dare start a fight with him. This emphasis on physical prowess and winning is one of his attempts to emphasise in a convincing manner, that he is also a man, and that he out-performs most men in skills that are regarded as markers of successful manhood or masculinity.

Shefer et al. (2007) remind us of the importance of competitive sport in marking one's masculinity. When other Tsonga boys decided to go to the mountain to be initiated into manhood, Brian Baloyi decided to delay the ritual and emphasised his own masculinity through soccer. Brian Baloyi is a retired South African football goalkeeper whose prowess in the game earned him fame and respect among soccer lovers throughout the country. To Baloyi, soccer is another marker of masculinity as stick-fighting was to Mzilikazi. Mzilikazi also explains how difficult it is to act straight when you are gay. He says that as part of trying to hide his homosexuality, he was the most vociferous critic of what he called "gay shit" (2010:87), yet he was feeling attracted to men and secretly admiring their physique. Some homosexuals hide their sexual orientation in fear of being ostracised, not only by other men but by society at large.

Gennrich (2013) argues that being a man is usually associated with being a heterosexual male. The heteronormative world view only accommodates heterosexual experiences, constructions, and realities. Any other alternative is criminalised, discriminated against, and the rights of people who do not fit the norm are consequently undermined and violated (ibid). This explains why heterosexual men usually distance themselves from gay men in fear of being labelled gay. Acting straight did not work for Mzilikazi, however. He admits, "I tried, and I failed dismally" (2010:88). To show that homosexuality has always been part of his life, Mzilikazi confides to the reader that during their childhood he was sexually attracted to Mfundo, although he did not have his first sexual encounter with him. He says that when they were involved in tripartite sex, involving sharing a girl in heterosexual sex, what turned him on was watching Mfundo do it, more than the girl herself. He says, "I looked at Mfundo as I began losing myself. I had never loved him more than I did then.... Watching Mfundo was the best part of the experience" (2010:103).

As it is indicated in the narrative, both Mzilikazi and Mfundo were still young and this was going to be their first sexual encounter, as Mzilikazi says, "This was the day we DID IT" (2010:102). Mzilikazi explains how he discovered his sexuality as a young man. He had been drinking with one of his friends, Tshepo, who had always displayed his machismo by openly pretending, like Mzilikazi himself, to loathe homosexuality and by fathering many children in the neighbourhood. When they were drunk, Mzilikazi had sex with Tshepo. Although they both enjoyed it, they agreed to keep it a secret as it would taint their images as men if it was discovered.

In his study of adolescent boys in Alexandra, Langa (2016) discovered that gay boys were ostracised by other boys because they were not "real boys." It was alleged that they would contaminate the group with their gayness. This is the fear that Mzilikazi and Tshepo have. They fear that they might find themselves being treated as the "other." Kyarimpa et al. (2023) claim that men take pride in their sexual virility to prove their masculinity, as long as it is in a heterosexual setting. After this sexual encounter with Tshepo, Mzilikazi confides to the reader, "I was so ashamed of myself, I felt so unclean... Surely, real men were not supposed to do stuff like this" (2010:108). Homosexuality has historically been decried as unnatural, immoral, or evil by a wide

range of cultural, religious, and moral systems. Metaphors of impurity or dirtiness are frequently used in this moral censure to highlight the alleged deviation of gay behaviour. Mzilikazi also mentions that he started cursing himself for these feelings towards other men, but they would not stop. Instead of stopping, Mzilikazi gets even more attracted to other men. He starts to secretly admire other men, and he and Tshepo keep seeing each other privately. This overwhelming feeling of guilt means that Mzilikazi has to overcome the homophobia that exists in his society. In the presence of other men, Mzilikazi and Tshepo would continue talking about women. To hide it further, Mzilikazi decides to get married and Tshepo encourages him so that nobody would suspect anything about their homosexuality. That is why Mfundo gets so surprised when he discovers that his closest friend of many years, Mzilikazi, is gay.

Mzilikazi lives a life of deception, cheating and lies. When he wanted to spend time with Tshepo, he would fool his wife into believing that he had gone out of the country on some work-related business. He lives a lie because the society he lives in is overly heteronormative, which makes it hard for him to come out as a homosexual. Heteronormativity believes that anything that is not heterosexual is not normal (Pasura & Christou 2017; Williams 2009). That is why any form of masculinity that goes against heteronormative standards is marginalised, vilified, and silenced. The fact that Mfundo is dumbstruck with disbelief when he accidentally catches Mzilikazi and Tshepo having sex means that all along Mzilikazi had managed to hide his sexuality successfully. In addition, some people find it easier to acknowledge that homosexuality exists, but they cannot associate it with someone close to them. It is even worse with Mzilikazi because Mfundo knows him as a macho man. Machismo is described by White & Peretz (2016) as a strong or exaggerated display of manly pride. Some of the things that Mzilikazi did like slaughtering beasts, stick fighting, having many girlfriends, made him look more of a "man" than Mfundo himself. Embarrassing as it is when Mfundo catches him, Mzilikazi says, "in some way it felt like a load off my shoulders" (2010:113). Though Mzilikazi resents the fact that Mfundo knows and is very hurt about his homosexuality, Mzilikazi has decided to be true, at least to himself, despite all the risks involved as he is tired of pretending.

Mzilikazi is surprised when he learns that Slindile knew about his sexual orientation. She tells him that his excessive homophobia and the way he drooled over other men's

physique had made her query his sexual orientation. Slindile also knew that Mzilikazi's marriage with Siyanda was just a cover up as it had no significance at all. It emerges that even the ring that Mzilikazi gave his wife was given to him by Tshepo. When all these truths come out, Mzilikazi breaks down and cries despite his strong belief that real men do not cry. This is because he realises the pain that his sexuality has caused to the people who care about him. The only thing that he hopes for is for his father not to find out. He knows how strongly he feels against homosexuality.

Mzilikazi also explains how difficult married life was for him. When Siyanda wanted them to make love, which she often did, Mzilikazi would imagine himself having sex with Tshepo. This would help him do it to her satisfaction, yet it meant nothing to him. When Mzilikazi finally summons up the courage to tell her, she is in deep denial. Like Mfundo, she has been convinced by his external appearance that Mzilikazi is straight, and also by the fact that he is so much of a Zulu man. Her response is, "Hhayi Mntungwa, if you are feeling tired why don't you just say so? You don't need to go as far as claiming to be one of those people" (2010:119). When Siyanda refers to homosexuals as "those people," the implication is that homosexuals are social outcasts, they do not belong with other people. It is as if they are a different and strange species. When Mzilikazi insists that he is gay and cannot do anything to make it go away, Siyanda suggests that they go and consult their pastor so that he can pray it away. As far as she is concerned, Mzilikazi's homosexuality is just a demon which has come to destroy their marriage.

When all her attempts to convince Mzilikazi against homosexuality fail, Siyanda is so disgusted that she does not want any record that will ever associate her with Mzilikazi in her entire life. She cannot believe that she has invested so much of her time in an empty relationship. As they discuss their marriage, the narrative captures her disgruntlement thus, "But I do not want a divorce. I want an annulment" (2010:123).

People who hide their homosexuality in fear of being ostracised deny themselves freedom as they live a lie. When Mzilikazi moves to Cape Town he feels free. This is because he is going to live a life free of pretence. For the past many years, he had been living a lie because his society had prescribed twisted expectations of what an African man should be like, with heteronormativity as the top priority. His relief is

evident when he says, "In this city, without my father and all those relatives from emakhaya I could now become an individual, and not a person who conforms to the expectations of society no matter how unreasonable those expectations are" (2010:127). He points out that the sexual stints he used to have with Tshepo were not enough. He wants more, which translates to a loving relationship.

Despite the fact that Mzilikazi is free in Cape Town and enjoys his homosexual life, he proves his masculinity by continuing to be a responsible and caring father to his children. He is still that man who knows that he must provide for his family. He deserves credit for this because there are men who claim to be straight and manly, yet they fail or choose not to provide for their families. He outperforms men like Sindiso, Mfundo's brother, who prove their masculinity by having many children with different women and then failing to take care of those children. Not only does Mzilikazi take care of the children, he also cares for his ex-wife despite their estranged relationship. For example, he buys her an aeroplane ticket to Cape Town when she fetches the children who have been visiting him for the holidays.

When Mzilikazi ultimately meets Thulani after struggling to find true love with the young gay hustlers who are more interested in money, they give each other true love. The fact that their love is genuine proves that just like heterosexual relationships, homosexual relationships are not only about sex; they are about love, commitment, and emotional attachment. This becomes evident when Mzilikazi says, "Somehow, it felt like this was the person I had spent all my life looking for, and it felt very very mutual" (2010:138).

However, when Mzilikazi's father dies and Thulani offers to accompany him, Mzilikazi refuses. His argument is that although his mother does not have a problem with his sexual orientation, there would be a lot of other relatives who would not be as understanding as his mother. He reminds him that being gay is hard, but being gay in rural areas is even worse. After the funeral, Mzilikazi's family will organise *umcimbi*, whereby as the oldest son of the family he will be given his father's traditional weapons to remind him that he is now head of the family and must play the role of the protector. He wonders if his traditional uncles would still be so willing to hand the reins over if they get to know of his sexual orientation. He also wonders if his father would turn in

his grave if, looking from above, he got to know his sexual orientation, being a Zulu man.

2.3.3 Tinaye Musonza: a victim of xenophobia in *Men of the South* (2010)

Connell (1995; 2000; 2001) observes that subordinate masculinities are harboured in material practices of exclusion which might extend among other things to economic discrimination, which in Tinaye's case, involves migrancy. It can be argued that being a migrant worker does not necessarily take away the fabric of manhood. What it does, however, is that it alters the notion of hegemonic and subordinated masculinity as migrant male workers learn to negotiate new forms of masculinity in a foreign and xenophobic country. Xenophobia has been defined by Sundstrom (2013) as the culturally based fear of outsiders. High levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment encourage xenophobia as people compete for scarce resources, especially in the urban areas (ibid). This resentment emanates from the belief that immigrants steal locals' jobs which are already scarce, as well as women. Another contributing factor is the belief that immigrants bring crime, corruption, and disease.

Tinaye Musonza, the last male voice focalised in *Men of the South* (2010) is a migrant worker from Zimbabwe. He has been given a good education by his parents. He has obtained very good qualifications and Afri-AID has offered him a position as regional manager in the poverty alleviation sector. Afri-AID is an alliance of the United States of America that has partnered with African countries and its aim is to empower children, families, and communities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite his qualifications, Tinaye is continuously overlooked for the raise he has been promised in his contract by the former secretary-general. When he complains about this and asks for permission to take his skills somewhere else where he would at least get a better remuneration, the secretary-general, James Congwayo fakes disappointment and blackmails him. He says:

After all the resources we put forward so you could come here, you want us to transfer your work permit so you can work elsewhere? [...] Are you aware, young man, just how many young people in this very country are looking for jobs? Do you have any idea how many of your fellow Zimbabweans with

degrees are sleeping at the Cathedral Methodist Church because they have no work permits? (2010:164-165).

Congwayo does this because he knows that Tinaye is a foreigner and is desperate for a job, and that his can be regarded as a better job than those of his fellow Zimbabweans. Landau (2011) concurs with Gqola (2009) in their claim that the migrants attempt to insert themselves in a competitive environment of high unemployment where employable South Africans are equally desperate for jobs. A study conducted by Mangezvo (2015) indicated that some Zimbabwean professionals who come to South Africa looking for jobs would take any kind of a job out of desperation. They would settle for such menial jobs as security guards, shop assistants, cleaners, bar tenders and petrol attendants to mention but a few. Males, in particular, would find this demeaning, a kind of assault on their masculinity but preferable to the desperation of home which had virtually emasculated them (ibid). In a way, Tinaye is being exploited as cheap labour by the secretary-general. This is confirmed by Gqola (2009) who points out that employers exploit migrant workers through underpayment, long working hours and engaging their services without work contracts. The fact that Tinaye is being underpaid makes it difficult for him to live according to the standards he feels suit him as a man.

The experience of downward social mobility that migrant men often encounter during their migration can have a profound effect on their sense of masculinity. Many come with higher educational qualifications and professional experience, like Tinaye, but because there are fewer jobs available in their new settings, or because of xenophobic circumstances, they are compelled to take low-wage, frequently feminine occupations. Given that traditional masculine identities are frequently associated with success in the workplace and the financial markets, this change may cause a crisis of masculinity. Men who are immigrants may be forced to put aspects of their gender identity on hold, as they adjust to their new circumstances.

Mangezvo (2015) points out that for the Zimbabwean professionals, being migrant labourers who are forced to accept low-level jobs involves distress which is marked by perceived reduction in social standing because of the work they do. In a way, their

notions of enacting manhood have been shattered. Bonvillain (2020) argues that male power is circumstantial and shifts according to material conditions in which men find themselves. Tinaye's case can be regarded as an added layer to being a man, hence the title of the book *Men of the South*, which also suggests men who hail from outside the South African border and their experiences. By all standards, Tinaye should be doing well because of his qualifications but he is not, because of his citizenship.

On top of having to look after himself, Tinaye has an additional burden of having to provide for his family because his father loses his livelihood when the Zimbabwean economy collapses. This means that with his meagre salary, Tinaye must take over more responsibilities. This leaves him no choice and it makes him do things that he disapproves of as a man. Although he hates compromising his ethics and principles for money, the important thing is that he must survive. He decides to marry a South African woman, get residency and citizenship, then leave Afri-AID and look for a better-paying job. The fact that Tinaye must abandon his principles in order to survive indicates that migration has the potential to deform and destabilise popular conceptions of masculinity as immigrant men reinvent themselves in a different country, spurred mostly, by survival.

de la Tierra (2016) posits that a new cultural context presents migrant men with different, multiple, and sometimes conflicting ways of enacting manhood. Out of sheer desperation Tinaye decides to use Grace, a former colleague at AfriAID. He does not love her. They date for about five months and then Tinaye meets Slindile, a woman he really loves. The way Tinaye loves Slindile makes him do things that he had sworn never to do, like changing Nomazizi's diaper. Nomazizi is Slindile and Mfundo's daughter. The fact that love makes Tinaye change Nomazizi's diaper, given that Nomazizi is not his biological daughter, proves that under certain circumstances masculinities change. This resonates with Mzilikazi's father's abrupt change of character when they relocate to Johannesburg after their mother's death. He acts in a totally different manner around his new salaried wife which leaves Mzilikazi and his siblings dumbfounded.

With Slindile now in his life, Tinaye must find a way of jilting Grace. This would be against his principles though, as he believes that a "real man" does not deliberately

hurt a woman. Tinaye and Slindile's happiness however does not last long as Tinaye discovers that Grace is pregnant with his child, which means he must marry her. One of the things that forces Tinaye into a loveless marriage is that Grace's uncle, Vusi, happens to be the director-general of Home Affairs. As a foreigner, whose livelihood is in South Africa, Tinaye would not risk being in the bad books of someone like Vusi, unless he wants to be deported back to Zimbabwe. Furthermore, both Tinaye and his father share a cultural belief that a "real man" does not leave the mother of his child and marry a woman who has another man's child. When Grace's child dies, leaving Tinaye trapped in a loveless marriage, it shows the extent to which masculinities and man's choices can be dependent on nationality and the migration regime.

2.4 Problematic masculinities

Studies have revealed that although hegemonic masculinity is regarded as the dominant version as well as a yardstick against which manhood is measured, violent and sexist masculine values and practices may be, but are not necessarily, hegemonic in a given culture (Hearn 2012; Messerschmidt 2012). This means that the use of violence is not central in defining hegemonic masculinity. Such anti-social behaviour can therefore be attributed to hyper-masculinity because as Hearn (2012) points out, hyper-masculinity dominates men who use violence and brutality. However, some men have a misconception that these two antisocial aspects are among the essential characteristics one needs to perform in order to be regarded a man. This study believes that men are facing a challenge of having to constantly prove their manhood to their own selves, to other fellow men and to the society at large to keep up the standard and fit into the continuum of hegemonic masculinity. This results in men ending up being both victims and beneficiaries of the hierarchical gendered system.

Hyper-masculinity often expresses itself through dominance and violence or sexuality in relation to female partners. This usually happens as an attempt to mimic hegemonic masculinity in circumstances where socio-economic conditions subject a man to a position of inferiority. To elaborate on his argument, Groes-Green (2009b) further argues that some poor and working-class young men's violent relationships with their female partners should be understood in the light of what Gramsci (1971) defined as

dominance, seen as a form of power which tends to substitute hegemony when a relationship is challenged. This is because these masculinities which are structurally subordinated in society do not perceive themselves to be in power, so they cannot be regarded as hegemonic. These are what Connell (1995) calls protest masculinities, which he defines as marginalised masculinities that cannot be based on the privileges of hegemonic masculinity but need to rework the themes of male superiority in a context of poverty, for example.

Sexualised masculinity also belongs in this category as it is based on the man's ability to perform sexually and give erotic satisfaction to a female partner and claim respect in the process. Such men might have felt castrated by their inability to fulfil one or more expectations of manhood (ibid). Another type of masculinity which deserves scrutiny because of its problematic nature is a thwarted masculinity. Wright (2014), states that the concept of thwarted masculinities is sometimes used to describe the experiences of men who are unable to conform to the standards of manhood that are prescribed by their societies because they are unable to find work, get married or support their families. It has been argued that men who find it difficult to achieve the standard of masculinity expected of them may be more likely to commit violence (ibid). With the significant changes in the labour market that favour the employment of women more than men, thwarted masculinities are on the rise. In South Africa for example, the concentration of development programming on women's empowerment has left men feeling excluded and their masculinity threatened. This has created tensions in families and communities and has given rise to the escalation of violence against women. In such cases, violence can either provide a way of attaining the things that are regarded as necessary for one to be regarded as a man, such as material possessions or access to women, or it can be used as a means of reasserting one's masculinity.

Wanner's work explores the quest for a successful or hegemonic masculinity, which when not attained, creates problems. Reynaud (2004) maintains that according to the hegemonic standards of masculinity, one of the prescribed gender roles of a "real man" is to protect and to provide for his family. He plays this "daddy" role so that he can appropriate the woman easily. He emphasises his power through discouraging her

from working, and if she happens to work, her salary should be regarded as a secondary income. This nourishes the reassuring “daddy” side of the phallus, which appropriates through protection and provision (Hunter 2005; Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). Once the “daddy” role feels threatened, and a man finds himself being forced to share equal power with a woman or to be financially dependent on her, he begins to feel emasculated (Shefer 2007).

Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger (2012) concur with this finding when they argue that according to the hegemonic standards of masculinity, a “real man” is associated with success, especially financial success. They claim that boys and men are capable of positioning one another in a gendered hierarchy, rendering them powerful, successful, envied, and desirable or marginalised, stigmatised and lacking social status according to various categories of “success”. As found in this current study’s preliminary review, even women categorise men according to their level of success, thus further entrenching hegemonic masculinity.

2.4.1 Lerato’s boyfriend: a thwarted masculinity in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

In her characterisation of Lerato’s abusive boyfriend, Wanner once again draws on Frosh & Baraister’s (2008) psychosocial theory. To compensate for the threat to his phallus and to reclaim his position as the man of the house after quitting his job, Lerato’s boyfriend resorts to violence. Portrayed as a flat villain, he has a misconception that to fit into the continuum of hegemonic masculinity and be regarded as a “real man”, one has to be violent, especially to his partner. He takes it as his cultural obligation to discipline “his” woman. Losing a job has relegated him to an inferior position, especially since he is sustained by the mother of his child, Lerato.

Lerato, together with two young women, Thando and Tshepiso, join Nobantu’s fashion designing company as seamstresses. It takes Nobantu a few days to discover that something is wrong with Lerato. Unlike the other girls she is reserved and keeps her private life to herself. Neither does she ever bring herself lunch nor buy herself something nice. This unusual behaviour makes Nobantu wonder if there is an abusive man hovering in the background, who drinks away all her money, or perhaps there is

a sick parent or siblings that the girl must support. Out of pity, Nobantu tells the girls not to bother about bringing themselves lunch, as she decides to keep some in the fridge. To her surprise, all the girls happen to have a voracious appetite, which proves that Lerato's problem is deeper than meets the eye. She does have a healthy appetite, the only thing she does not have is money to buy food, yet she gets paid like other employees.

One morning, when the girls show up for work without Lerato, Nobantu learns that she is in hospital. Hailing from a child-headed household as the oldest orphan, as Tshepiso narrates, Lerato had decided to allow her irresponsible boyfriend to stay with them. Soon after moving in, he started complaining that his employer was exploiting his skills as a boilermaker, in exchange for a meagre salary, and he quit his job. Instead of looking for another job, he was comfortable in knowing that Lerato and her younger sister who worked at a call centre would have enough money to put food on the table. When Lerato got pregnant, he accused her of trying to trap him with the baby, yet he continued staying and having Lerato and her sister take care of his needs. When Lerato got a new job as a baggage packer at Bara supermarket, her boyfriend thought that she was making more money. It was at this stage that he started demanding money from her to drink with his friends whenever Lerato got paid.

Through the characterisation of Lerato's boyfriend, Wanner depicts a troubled masculinity that is not prepared to share power with a woman. He does this to prove that even if he is not working, he is still the man of the house and he is in control. He also wants to boost his bruised ego among his friends, and show them that despite his joblessness, he is still a man and can spoil them to drinks. Traditional hegemonic masculinity often emphasizes control, especially financial domination. A man who demands money from his partner may be trying to establish or hang onto financial authority within the household. Typically, hegemonic masculinity dictates that men should be the main breadwinners. A man who demands money from his wife may be expressing a contradiction or challenge to this conventional role, bringing to light any hidden fears or changes in economic dynamics that he is finding difficult to reconcile with his ideas of what it means to be a man. Even when a man is not the primary source of income, this behaviour may indicate an attempt to establish authority,

control, and power. It emphasises the idea that hegemonic masculinity is more about the maintenance of power systems than it is about real-life situations. Even in situations when the man is genuinely economically dependent, such a demand may also be a deterrent for an underlying feeling of shame or an inability to live up to hegemonic masculine standards. In these situations, compensatory behaviours that maintain established power structures can arise. The demand for money might be indicative of an affiliation to economic masculinity, in which controlling money constitutes a way to demonstrate autonomy, power, and control while conforming to social norms that favour male domination. This nuance speaks to a complex interplay between contemporary gender norms and economic realities and traditional masculine ideals.

When Lerato refused one time, because she had to buy uniforms for her younger siblings, he beat her so severely that she had three broken ribs. She lost her job after a long hospitalisation. It was at this stage that Lerato's extended family intervened and managed to kick him out. Brodie (2020:19) alleges that in addition to women being killed because they are women, they also get killed because they are trespassing on sacred male ground, which, in this case, is the public sphere of work which, according to the traditional gender roles is a sanctified space for men. The fact that Lerato provides for his child while he is loafing around the township, poses a threat to his phallus and it is compensated for through violence.

When Lerato started working for Nobantu's company, the boyfriend asked her to take him back and she refused. When he failed with this trick, he demanded to see the baby. Once again, Lerato refused, and it is then that he beat her so hard that she was left with a blue eye and ugly marks all over the body. She also got burnt on her breast when he pushed her onto a burning stove. Brodie (2020) alleges that sometimes men get mad when women terminate the relationship. They get jealous that they might be seeing someone else, yet they think that they are entitled and have control over the woman, by virtue of being their partner. The attitude of entitlement displayed by Lerato's boyfriend resonates with Andile's attitude towards Nobantu, who gets mad when Nobantu refuses to be controlled by him. Just like Andile, Lerato's boyfriend resorts to punitive measures that will make him feel that he still has power over her as a man, though Andile's do not involve physical violence. Andile's anger and

determination to punish Nobantu becomes vivid as the narrator says, "He would make her suffer" (2008:65).

As Tshepiso continues with the story, she highlights that Lerato was reluctant to press charges because as the victim alleged, in some cases the perpetrators of violence are given short sentences if they do go to jail. When they come out, they are usually worse than when they were arrested. This made Lerato scared that if he comes out of prison, he will kill her. If he does, it would mean that her child will be left without a mother, and her younger siblings, without anyone to take care of them. This constant fear under which Lerato lives resonates with Gqola's (2015) fear factor theory which states that South African women live under constant fear of being violated physically, sexually, emotionally, or otherwise. It further resonates with Brodie's (2020:73) allegation, that for a long time, violence against women has not been regarded as a serious crime in South Africa. Instead, the victim would be blamed for having provoked the perpetrator, and the couple would be instructed to go home and resolve it on their own.

2.4.2 Mike: a protest masculinity in *The Madams* (2006)

Wanner's characterisation of Mike reflects the phallic challenge as outlined in Frosh & Baraister's (2008) psychosocial theory, which was later modified to speak to the South African context by Langa (2020). These scholars contend that the phallus, a symbol of masculine dominance, does not confer any stability on males; rather, it puts pressure on them to perform well because they get fixated on doing things correctly. This suggests that mastering the phallus is the key to successful manhood and that when it fails, the man's world crumbles.

Mike met Lauren at university where they were both studying towards their degrees. Although they were on the same social and educational level, he harboured gender binary ideology and allowed the gender role mentality to dictate the terms of their relationship. His behaviour indicates that from the onset he owned her, and, as "his" woman, he perceives her more as an object and can do whatever he likes about her. Lauren divulges this to her friends after one of their violent encounters, "Mike has

been beating me for most of our relationship [...] It began not long after we started dating at university" (2006:139).

In his report on the mass killing of fourteen women in an institution of higher learning in Canada, Dworkin in Brodie (2020:19) comments that the female students were murdered "because they were women, and also because they were engineering students; because they were learning a male science, because they wanted sacred male knowledge. They were trespassing on sacred male ground." By sharing the same public sphere of the university environment, eager to gain knowledge and contribute meaningfully to society just like him, Mike feels threatened by Lauren. Desperate to control her and to make himself feel superior as a man, he resorts to violence.

Lauren has been living under constant fear ever since. In her fear factor theory Gqola (2015) posits that the perpetrator starts small to instil fear upon the victim over a period of time. He slowly manufactures this fear so that the victim is convinced that the abuse was a mistake. When the manufacturing process is finished, the perpetrator uses this fear to manipulate and control the victim to adhere to the rules, conditions, and strictures which he imposes on her. The fact that Lauren would always seek Mike's approval before taking decisions on her own as an adult and a professional, makes it clear to her two friends, Thandi and Nosizwe, that she is being controlled and abused by Mike. In addition, when their thirteen-year-old son, Junior barges into Thandi's house on a certain Sunday afternoon crying, "He is doing it again. He's going to kill her, please aunt Thandi hurry up and do something (2006:136)," indicates clearly that Mike was not doing it for the first time, he does it on a regular basis. This time, he was beating her repeatedly with an empty whisky bottle, hurling nasty insults at her at the same time.

The marks on Lauren's body from a previous assault is another clear indication of this, though she has been hiding them successfully. This implies that when a victim keeps quiet about the abuse, the perpetrator feels protected, and this encourages the abuse to continue. Also, the likelihood of the abuse getting worse each time it happens is higher. This is evident from the head injury sustained by Lauren after being hit on the forehead with an empty bottle of whisky. On this particular day, she confesses, "When

we moved into the flat, he really started beating me up. He always made sure he avoided the places that would be uncovered when I dressed" (2006:139-140).

Brodie (2020:36) laments, "We don't like violence to be too close. It should be something that other people do, not us. And, ideally, it should happen to other people – to *those types* of people – not us. We use falsehood and fiction to deflect." This holds true for Lauren's story. Because they are both white and affluent, and she in particular, is a lecturer in one of the country's most prestigious universities, she thinks that being known as a victim of gender-based violence would ruin her reputation. In most cases gender-based violence is associated with the ghetto, the poverty-stricken, and the uneducated. That is why Marita, Thandi's maid, cannot control her shock when she sees the state that Lauren is in. Among interjections of disgust she explodes, "How could he? I thought he was educated!" (2006:138). Even Thandi and Nosizwe had thought highly of him because he is a teacher. Here, Wanner is challenging the stereotype that it is only men from poor backgrounds that are abusive. The argument is that gender-based violence is a social ill that transcends race, level of education, as well as socio-economic status.

Mike also stalks Lauren, and she must keep him updated about her whereabouts all the time, even if it is work-related. In the Domestic Violence Act No.116 of 1998, the scope of domestic violence was expanded to include emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, damage to property, harassment, stalking, and entering the complainant's residence without consent if the perpetrator does not share the same residence with the complainant/victim. It is this claustrophobic kind of a marriage that forces Lauren to lie sometimes. This reflects Mike's insecurity. He is threatened by Lauren's socio-economic status, and he assumes that she might be cheating with her equals behind his back. Lauren attests to this as she gives a detailed account to Thandi and Nosizwe thus:

He said he became suspicious, [...] and went and checked with the HOD for English, who told him we had not gone on any retreat. He said he has been quiet all this time, but today he wanted to teach me a lesson not to sleep around and lie to him. I told him I was just with you guys, but he said you are

both ball-busting bitches who would probably encourage me to sleep around because underneath it all, you are probably dykes (2006:141).

Mike's insecurity further explains why Lauren has four children who practically belong to MaRosie, her maid, while Thandi has one and Nosizwe two, adopted from her husband, Vuyo. His entrapment in the gender-binary ideology locates his wife in the domestic sphere and makes it difficult for him to accept that as an educated modern woman, Lauren belongs to the public sphere. It is the same ideology that gives him the sense of entitlement to his wife's body, which he impregnates at his leisure to mark his territory and to ward off any intruders that Lauren might come across in the public sphere. This explains why the narrative highlights that Lauren barely spends quality time with her children. They are more attached to MaRosie than her as she lacks the love and commitment that automatically comes to a mother who conceived out of choice.

Mike's binge drinking also suggests a phallic challenge. Pasura & Christou (2017) posit that men who are no longer the primary breadwinners in their households may turn to criminality, violence, binge drinking, or promiscuity as an outlet to cope with their embarrassment. Since Lauren is a lecturer, it is possible that she brings more to the table compared to her husband, something which goes against the traditional gender roles and challenges his status as a man. This might make him see competition in his wife and regard himself as a pathetic failure for falling short in playing the provider role that society expects of him. So, to assert his masculinity as well as his position as the head of the house, he must demand her subservience and honesty to their marriage through violence.

This is evident in the conversation between Nosizwe and Thandi after Lauren's attack as the narrative captures it thus, "But then again Siz, think about it ... remember Lauren always used to pull the 'I have to ask Mike' thing before we did anything? [...] Yeah, and you have seen how he always grabs on to her and orders her about when we are having braais" (2006:142). His bruised ego drives him to demonstrate his power and control over Lauren as her husband. The fact that he even does it in public attests to Butler's (1990) claim, that masculinity is a performance, and that public mastery of this performance is important as it asserts one's masculinity.

2.4.3 Mxolisi: a protest masculinity in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

Another protest masculinity as depicted in *Behind Every Successful Man* is through the character Mxolisi, affectionately known as Mxo, whom Wanner characterises as Tsholo's defeated and bitter cougar. He is a conceited but jobless artist who does not want to accept his status of joblessness as it marks him as a failed man. As a jobless young man, Mxo is kept and maintained by his older girlfriend, who, on top of being a full-time employee in the private sector, scooped away half of the inheritance when she divorced her fifty-five-year-old husband with whom she was married in-community of property. The fact that he is maintained by an older woman, bites into his ego as Mxo becomes very careful not to allow his girlfriend to control him by organising jobs for him through her connections. Though he knows very well that both being a kept man and having a romantic relationship with an older woman go against the traditional norms and expectations of his society, he feels it more demeaning to work for a woman.

When Nobantu asks him to join her company he refuses blatantly, losing control of his emotions. He snaps, "Did Tsholo ask you to do this? [...] Because I don't want any favours and I don't prostitute my art...I don't want to work on your little label so people can get to know my name. Can you understand that?" (2008:115). By using "little" to describe Nobantu's label, Mxo is lashing back at her, for traversing the public sphere, which is the reserve for men, and for undermining his masculinity enough by offering him a job when it was "supposed" to be the other way round.

Also, by deliberately scoffing at Nobantu's label, he wants her to get demoralised, lose confidence in herself as a progressive woman, and probably discontinue the label if it is not appealing to the public. Here, Wanner is highlighting that the reversal of gender roles which came alongside changes in the socio-economic sphere has created a site of struggle between masculinities and femininities. This has resulted in a crisis in which most men find themselves trapped, and they resort to violence as the only way out. This explains why Nobantu must be harsh and use biting words which will hurt his ego to have him agree to work for her. Nobantu touches a sensitive spot when she tells him that he will forever exist behind Tsholo's shadow as his cougar whose needs are being taken care of by a woman, rather than be his own man.

Connell (2000; 2005) states that a man is supposed to play the provider role and failure to do this threatens his masculine ego. By foregrounding the concept of a “kept man” in her work, Wanner is trying to highlight an urgent need to embrace such transformation in contemporary South Africa, as an attempt to address the scourge of violence that continues to haunt the country. Desperate to compensate for his joblessness, Mxo, just like Vuyo in *The Madams* (2006), uses his age as well as his sexuality to charm Tsholo, who in turn, takes care of him, qualifying him as a sexualised masculinity. The fact that he is a young stud who satisfies Tsholo’s sexual needs boosts his ego and makes him feel needed like a man, despite his joblessness. As he can see that Nobantu is not prepared to beg him, unlike Tsholo, he reluctantly takes the job because he is aware that as a man, he is supposed to be self-sufficient.

2.4.4 Vuyo: a sexualised masculinity in *The Madams* (2006).

Wanner’s portrayal of Vuyo suggests desperation among black South African men to prove that they are real men, to themselves as well as the public. Vuyo is a handsome and charming ex-convict with little income, who uses his looks to compensate for his failed masculinity with womanising tendencies. When his concubines fight over him and when he starves Nosizwe of sex, it strokes his ego and makes him feel that he is a “real man” and that these women need him to complete them. This womanising attitude aligns with the claim made by Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger (2012), Langa (2016) and Pasura & Christou (2017), that one of the indicators of successful masculinity is the number of women that a man has.

As a kept man, just like Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010); Lerato’s boyfriend and Mxo in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), Vuyo is desperate to get recognition as a man from his partners as well as those around him. He even goes to the extent of cheating on his wife Nosizwe, who maintains him together with his two children from different mothers. The fact that he cheats with Nosizwe’s maid, on Nosizwe’s bed, under Nosizwe’s roof, indicates that emasculation can cause men to stoop so low, as long as they get the satisfaction of getting back at those who undermine their status as men. By making Nosizwe stay with and take care of his two children, and by impregnating Nosizwe’s maid, Vuyo symbolically scoffs at Nosizwe’s predicament. He

is sending her a message that despite all the money that she has, she will never be complete as a black woman because she is barren. Just like him who feels incomplete as a kept man, he wants to emphasize that both of them have their own shortcomings.

Vuyo also lusts after Marita, Thandi's white maid. He claims that as a man, he cannot be restricted to chocolate ice cream when there is a vanilla flavour to try out, implying that he wants to have a taste of sex with a white woman. Contrary to the belief that the type of violence that matters is physical as well as sexual violence, Vuyo's emotional treatment of Nosizwe is the most reprehensible, especially since there is nothing she can do to change her situation. Her barrenness incompletes her as a woman, both to the eyes of her husband, Vuyo, and to the society at large. To compensate for this shortcoming and to gain Vuyo's attention, Nosizwe wears imported designer clothes and takes in Vuyo's children from different mothers. All these efforts go to waste because Vuyo is not deterred from his promiscuous behaviour.

Once again, by highlighting Vuyo's status of a kept man, Wanner draws on the trope of gender-role reversal where the man finds himself symbolically married to the woman or the woman's family, as it is the case with Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010). This has created chaos in men's psyche, as it highlights the transformation of the binary between masculinity and femininity into a grey area to which society at large needs to adjust. Additionally, by portraying Vuyo as a dynamic character who changes into a gender-sensitive man after being shot by Nosizwe as punishment for sleeping with Petunia, their maid, Wanner is highlighting the malleability as well as the performative nature of masculinities. After Lauren has been attacked by Mike, it does not bother Vuyo to run errands for Nosizwe and assist her settle Lauren comfortably in their home. He willingly goes to the mall to buy her some cosmetics and new clothes to change into (2006:139). His transformation is also evident when he fights for Lauren's justice after she has been attacked by Mike. When Thandi and Nosizwe fail to persuade her to press charges and obtain a protection order against Mike, Vuyo succeeds with his tactics as Thandi reflects:

He brought a mirror and showed her face. She shivered at the first sight of herself – seeing the bruises that were fast becoming blue-black, the cut on the

eye, the loose tooth. Then he did what we had not managed to do. He managed to get through to her by destroying the only defence she had for going back home to Mike – the 'father of my children' defence. "Listen, Lauren, if you go back there and Mike kills you next time, your children will be motherless and just as certainly fatherless, as I will either kill Mike myself or, if I don't, I will make sure he gets arrested. I will be a witness and make sure he stays in prison for a very long time. Is that what you want for your children? (2006:143).

The fact that Vuyo, as a changed man, now embraces a feminist stance and challenges gender injustices suggests the malleability of masculinities. Hopkins (2013) argues that men who adopt a feminist viewpoint do so with an awareness of gender equality that is nuanced and recognises the advantages of feminism for both men and women. Such a stance encourages healthy interpersonal interactions and social dynamics, while challenging conventional ideas of masculinity. This suggests that redefining masculinity and eschewing conventional gender norms that demand emotional stoicism and power are common goals of men who embrace feminism. Such a shift liberates men from the expectation that they have to be the primary breadwinners and permits them to show vulnerability and take on caregiving responsibilities, as demonstrated by Vuyo, who seems to have undergone genuine transformation. He acknowledges and appreciates Nosizwe's role as a breadwinner who provides for him and his children. These adjustments may result in more equitable partnerships in personal interactions as well as healthier emotional expressions. In partnerships, feminism promotes self-actualization and reciprocal development. Men who follow feminist ideals, like Vuyo, usually discover that sharing responsibilities, like childrearing and housework, makes their relationships more fulfilling and meaningful. Hopkins (2013) further asserts that in addition to reducing the pressure on men to perform conventional responsibilities, this equitable division of labour also helps men develop stronger emotional connections with their partners. Men who identify as feminists are in a better position to acknowledge the harm that patriarchal systems do to all people, including men themselves. This suggests that by confronting these established norms, men can advocate for a society in which both women and men are not constrained by conventional gender roles.

2.4.5 Henri and Oupa: sexualised masculinities in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

Though nothing much is said about these character archetypes, Wanner portrays them as “bad boys”, notorious for womanising. It transpires that Tsholo has been tolerating Oupa’s promiscuous ways ever since they got married, until Penny, Oupa’s twenty-year old girlfriend leaked out photos of Oupa and herself in compromising positions. Feeling violated, Tsholo decided to file for divorce after which Oupa did not hesitate to marry Penny, despite their age gap of approximately thirty-five years.

As a feminist, Wanner is trying to interrogate the African culture, which condones promiscuity among men, thereby encouraging women to hurt one another, while men often stick together and support one another through the “bro code”. Keith (2020) defines the “bro code” as the commitment that men make to always put men before women. Pasura & Christou (2017) maintain that when an older man is seen in public with a younger woman, it strokes his ego, and it asserts his masculinity as it serves as proof of his sexual virility. This is evident when Nobantu masquerades as Oupa in her chat with Andile, “Yes, you can buy yourself one of those sexy bikinis and walk on the beach...and all those young studs would be wondering how I managed to get a hot chick like you with handfuls of luscious breasts” (2008:173). The implication here is that to Oupa, Penny is more of a trophy wife that he can show off to the public than a meaningful partner. This further aligns this work with Butler’s (1990) performativity theory which contends that gender is a performance, and that heterosexual men must publicly perfect this performance to gain recognition from other men. By prancing with Penny in public, Oupa is trying to prove his masculinity and to flaunt his sexual prowess to be acknowledged by other men.

Wanner also introduces another sexualised masculinity, Henri, whom he, just like Oupa, portrays as character archetype, notorious for womanising. When Nobantu goes to Henri’s office to seek legal assistance when registering her company, he makes sexual advances at her, and the fact that Nobantu is Andile’s wife, his colleague, does not deter him. His socio-economic status allows him to prey on vulnerable women and treat them as sexual objects than fellow human beings, because he is already married to a fellow French-Canadian. When he finds Nobantu on guard, Henri notices and he

quickly recedes, pretending to be the busy lawyer once again, which is an indication of his predatory character.

By highlighting his sexual appetite, especially for black women, Wanner brings the question of race to the fore, aligning her narrative with Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, which maintains that race intersects with other factors to produce social inequality which contributes to the exploitation of women. In their study on black male mine workers in Marikana, Sikweyiya et al. (2022) discovered that sex-starved men would use their hard-earned money to buy alcohol and take care of financial needs of women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in exchange for sex, making the relationship more transactional than romantic. This implies that money has the potential to give predators like Henri, power and control over desperate women, especially black, since they are always associated with poverty.

Henri's lust for Nobantu when she asks him for assistance in registering her company highlights intersectionality by showing how socioeconomic class, gender, and race interact to influence people's experiences and interactions. Her appeal for assistance, which can be explained as a move that signifies her determination and desire for independence in a male-dominated business environment, illuminates the gendered power structures that are pervasive in the workplace. Henri's lust can be interpreted as an expression of patriarchal ideas that perceive women, especially black women, as objects of desire rather than as equal partners. It highlights how society tends to sexualize women, undermining their autonomy and aspirations in the workplace. His feelings for her are more than just personal attraction; they also speak to the way society views race and gender in general, especially in South Africa where past injustices still exist, irrespective of the constitution which encourages equality for all. Nobantu faces discrimination on two fronts as a Black woman, first, as a woman and secondly, as a member of a historically marginalised racial group. Though Henri's lust may appear flattering at first, it runs the risk of diminishing Nobantu's professional goals, which would undermine her agency and strengthen gender stereotypes. In addition, Nobantu's request for assistance in registering her company underscores economic intersectionality. She puts herself in a vulnerable position by asking for assistance, and her success depends on Henri's desire to cooperate, which

could be swayed by his emotions. This hypothetical situation demonstrates how women's routes to success can become even more complicated when economic empowerment becomes intertwined with personal connections and societal expectations.

2.5 Complicit masculinities

Wojnicka (2021) argues that despite their pivotal role in sustaining hegemonic structures of masculinity, complicit masculinities have not received the academic attention that they deserve in the contemporary world. Connell (2005) and Messerschmidt (2018) point out that men with complicit masculinities are those who gain from hegemonic masculinity without necessarily supporting the patriarchal system. Wojnicka (ibid) alleges that both scholars have only given it a generic definition, as a form that does not actually embody hegemonic masculinity, yet those who subscribe gain from the patriarchal dividend, thereby helping sustain hegemonic tendencies among men. Likewise, Wanner does not dwell much on complicit masculinities in her work as she does with the valorised, the vilified, as well as the problematic masculinities.

2.5.1 Mandla and Thandi's fathers as representations of complicit masculinities in *The Madams* (2006)

In her portrayal of these characters, Wanner hints at their complicity with hegemonic masculinity as they tend to overlook some hegemonic practices which eventually hurt women who are close to them. They are both aware that Vuyo has been cheating on Nosizwe with her maid for a long time, yet they do not see the importance of informing either Thandi or Nosizwe, claiming that it was not their place to do so. Their silence or "bro code" encourages Vuyo to continue, as it gives him the affirmation that it is the "man thing" that they are aware of and understand as fellow men. Here, Wanner employs foreshadowing, as Mandla also engages in a similar activity towards the end of the narrative. Likewise, Chukwu, who is his friend and Thandi's by default, also knows, but he also sees nothing wrong in it as he keeps it a secret from Thandi. In

both cases, as indicated in Wojnicka (2021), these complicit masculinities legitimise hegemonic masculinities, as they show approval which perpetuates such hegemonic tendencies. This challenges Tseole & Vermaak's (2020) assertion that male complicities are rather passive expressions of masculinity which can be simply reduced to not challenging the gender system.

On the contrary, such circumstances that normalise and naturalise hegemonic tendencies assist in creating and maintaining GBV tolerant cultures. In *The Madams* (2006), when Mandla cheats on Thandi, and Chukwu knows it, Mandla trivialises it and expects Thandi to easily forgive him. However, when Thandi does the same to get even, Mandla blows it out of proportion as he explodes, "Y-y-y-you what? [...] You went and did the same thing that you accused me of doing and now...?" (2006:224). When this altercation eventually leads to a separation, Thandi is the one who begs for Mandla's forgiveness to save their marriage. This suggests that some patriarchal contexts condone certain behaviours when they are done by men, yet they forbid the same where women are concerned. By highlighting this, Wanner underscores the double standards upon which patriarchy is premised.

2.6 Concluding remarks.

In conclusion, this chapter examines the various interpretations of masculinity found in Zukiswa Wanner's texts and demonstrates how these are portrayed in a way that challenges conventional ideas of masculinity in the contemporary world. Guided by the intersectionality theory, it investigates how different socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors intersect in the formation of these masculinities, and how these constructions benefit or hinder men in their performance of masculinity. Furthermore, it educates us on the idea of dominant masculinities, how they are upheld, and the ways in which males use their power over women and other vulnerable groups. Additionally, it looks more closely at the various angles that can be used to examine masculinities and how those perspectives affect the way in which men perceive themselves, particularly in relation to women.

Drawing on the work of Starck & Luyt (2010) who claim that the uncertainties, insecurities, and anxieties about the post-apartheid socio-political transformation are

projected, negotiated, and defended in different ways, the study observes that dominant masculinities opt for violence as a means of claiming back their masculine power and restoring their dignity. They feel that the empowerment of women has left them redundant and has stripped off their power and dignity, which leaves them emasculated. As Frosh & Baraister (2008) as well as Langa's (2020) psychosocial theory indicated how threatening the phallic challenge can be to a heterosexual male in the first chapter, the male characters in this chapter demonstrate determination in ensuring that they protect their male ego, even if it means engaging in or threatening their partners with violence. They believe this, as far as Gqola's (2015) fear factor theory is concerned, will put women in their place.

Contrary to the dominant masculinities that feel threatened by the emancipation of women, the chapter also observes that masculinity can be perceived from a positive perspective as well. Characters interrogate these traditional notions of masculinity against the array of new choices presented by the post-transitional socio-economic as well as political realm. This affords them space to embrace a non-hegemonic version of masculinity which encourages power sharing and gender equality.

From this stance, it can be deduced that the transition from the apartheid regime, which was premised on patriarchal ideologies, to the democratic which emphasised equality, was quite jagged. Men were not afforded convenient spaces to shift their mindset and resocialise themselves in a manner that embraces power sharing. They had to figure out new ways of defining masculinity on their own.

As it has been stated that dominant masculinities use violence as a tool of maintaining power and control over women, the subsequent chapter discusses the different forms of violence that the dominant masculinities engage in, as a means of asserting their dominance as well as protecting themselves against being emasculated by women.

CHAPTER 3

BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN MASCULINITY CONSTRUCTION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous in that it examines the relationship between the construction of different masculinities and GBV. It aligns with Sikweyiya et al.'s (2022) argument, who claim that most violence is perpetrated by men and the victims are mainly women. However, this does not imply that all men are violent, as indicated in the previous chapter, neither does it imply that men do not violate other men, or women do not violate men. Although this does occur, the focus is mainly on women, children, and other vulnerable groups since, according to traditional gender roles, they have always been othered by the heterosexual male (Buiten & Naidoo 2020). These scholars define GBV as violence that is directed to a person because of their gender. While it is experienced by both men and women, boys, and girls, as well as non-binary people, it is more commonly directed at women and children (ibid). Ndlovu (2011) argues that a discussion of how women are oppressed in different ways, and how they respond to that oppression through different versions of femininity, would be senseless without a closer scrutiny of men and the diverse discourses of masculinity they use to identify themselves as men, and how these identities shape their behaviours towards women.

The chapter focuses mainly on hegemonic and other problematic constructions of masculinity as Wanner highlights the centredness of violence around these versions of masculinity. With the woman at the centre of this discussion, this chapter examines the disharmony created by her entrapment in the private familial sphere, according to the traditional gender norms, and her attempts to challenge the oppressive ideologies as she navigates her rightful place in neo-traditional and gender-sensitive spaces. The embeddedness of this tension in the patriarchal system makes it difficult to challenge the power endowed upon the heterosexual male, as it would translate into challenging Africanism itself. This tension, as Ndlovu (2011) postulates, transforms the home into the very site of anxiety and unhappiness, a place of suffocating emotional intensity,

where beneath the calm surface, a nightmare of complicated webs ensnares the woman in complex and painful patterns. In the same vein, the chapter investigates how male characters perceive the dichotomy between men and women, how they perceive their maleness, and how they strive to ensure that these boundaries are enacted and sustained. By making some of her heterosexual male characters claim the public space as man's domain, Wanner reverberates Clowes (2008) who alleges that to assert his masculinity, the black man in the late 1950s' *Drum Magazine* had to embrace the narratives of individualism that portrayed him as independent, isolated, and autonomous, locating him far away from women and children.

This is evinced through the characterisation of Andile in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) and Martin Mtshali in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), who avoid the feminised domestic spaces because they do not want their masculinity to be represented through the proximity of wives and children, and the resultant accomplishments to be analysed as a joint effort. Dlamini (2018) posits that the casting of the black woman as a threat to both black and white patriarchy still benefits contemporary South African black masculinity construction, and it condones violence, femicide and perpetual infantilisation of women in the society and the home. This is evident in the way in which Wanner stereotypes some of her male characters as villains who are opposed to egalitarian ideologies.

To highlight the pervasiveness of GBV in contemporary South Africa, Wanner brings to the fore such factors as patriarchy, culture, misogyny as well as toxic masculinity values as the main sources of the problem. By highlighting the discord in the familial sphere, Wanner is trying to demonstrate post-transitional South Africa's dilemma whether to accept and uphold the new gender order thus relinquishing the old and traditional. She achieves this through constantly creating grey areas between feminine and masculine spaces, suggesting an overlap or fluidity between the two. This suggests that certain configurations of traditional femininity and masculinity hinder and frustrate the meaningful transformation of contemporary black South African masculinities.

Furthermore, the chapter examines the way in which Wanner interrogates the narrow social definitions which restrict GBV to physical and sexual violence. Through a

nuanced account, she carefully weaves various forms of GBV into the plot structures of her novels. In addition to the prevalent forms of GBV, which are physical and sexual violence, Wanner brings other forms of GBV to the attention of the reader. These are foregrounded in such a way that they highlight the gravity of these often-conjectured forms of GBV, some of which can have a lasting impact in the life of the victim or, when little attention is paid, even escalate to femicide which has put South Africa in the global spotlight. Femicide is defined by Brodie (2020) as the killing of a woman or a girl, in most cases by a man, because of her gender. Among the forms of GBV discussed in this chapter are physical violence; sexual violence; emotional violence; verbal abuse and condescension, as well as child neglect.

3.2 Physical violence

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines physical violence as being slapped or hit with something that could hurt you; being pushed or shoved; being hit with a fist or being kicked, dragged, or beaten up; being choked or burnt on purpose; and being threatened with a gun, knife, or something similar, or having these weapons used against you as a victim. Studies have indicated an interplay of numerous causes of physical violence in familial spaces and romantic relationships. These include witnessing violence in the family as the child grows up; drug and alcohol abuse; socialisation of boys and men into violence; as well as emasculation which is associated with failure to meet the social expectations of manhood (Brodie 2020).

In the South African context, Mshweshwe (2018) highlights the importance of recognising intersectionality in explaining men's violence, as it helps to locate the problem of violence in the specific historical context of apartheid which subjected the black man to systemic violence. This has permeated through generations, and its pervasiveness manifests in oppressive patriarchal practices which continue to haunt contemporary South Africa, despite the constitution which speaks otherwise. However, according to Moran (2009), patriarchy does not always imply oppression and evil. Because it offers fathers a vital role in the family and encourages them to be actively involved, patriarchy, according to her, is required to sustain the family and resist societal tendencies towards negligent fathering. Therefore, one could say that the

benefit of patriarchy is that it creates and safeguards children by giving men and women distinct roles, which keeps the family together as a strong social unit. It is, nonetheless, arguable to what extent fathers impact positively in this.

To highlight the gravity of traditional patriarchy as one of the main contributors to physical violence, Wanner manipulates some of her heterosexual male characters such that they portray a tight grip of traditional patriarchy as well as gender order on contemporary Black masculinity and femininity performance in the familial space. Power and control are salient in the intimate relationships of her characters. Her fictional representations of GBV reflect that misogyny is rife, and that as a patriarchal country, as indicated by Mtshiselwa (2015), South Africa falls short in affording women safe spaces to negotiate gender equity. She points out that though the constitution of the country has managed to bring transformation in certain socio-economic as well as political aspects, women's treatment has worsened.

3.2.1 Lerato's chauvinistic boyfriend in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

Through Lerato's boyfriend, whose name Wanner has withheld, the author portrays a frustrated and thwarted masculinity, whose anger for failing to fulfil his masculine role of providing for his family has translated into tremendous bitterness, resentment, and misogyny. Rackin (2016) defines misogyny as a form of sexism that comprises of the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women, and its primary goal is to keep women at a lower social status than men. Lerato's boyfriend has quit his job as a boiler, with the allegation that he is being exploited, because the employer underpays him for the professional job that he is doing. It is under such circumstances that he ends up being a kept man, just like Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010). However, the way in which these two kept men respond to their status differs significantly. Mfundo, Slindile's boyfriend-cum-husband on the one hand, admits that he enjoys the role as he happily announces, "I was enjoying the Mfundo Domestic God role and I did not want to get out of it" (2010:55), yet Lerato's boyfriend on the other reacts with exaggerated aggression which almost results in femicide. What Wanner is trying to highlight here is that, with the remarkable shift in the socio-economic sphere, which

has allegedly favoured black South African women and stripped men of their traditional provider role, some black South African masculinities are flexible enough to embrace the status quo, while others blatantly refuse to adjust. Because the provider role comes with additional power and entitlement, as indicated in Sikweyiya et al. (2020), some men want to hold on to this power, in addition to the patriarchal dividend that is traditionally endowed upon them by virtue of being born male. It is this power that allows men to appropriate and control women.

With South Africa being a patriarchal society where heterosexual masculinities are strongly predicated on dominance and control over women, Wanner wants to draw the reader's attention to the paradigm shift that has necessitated the transformation of the binary between men and women into a grey area to which people need to adjust. The dilemma whether to adjust or not, is caused mainly by the entrapment of the contemporary South African society in traditional gender roles. Despite twenty-nine years of democracy, a greater percentage of the society still upholds and condones traditional values which see the man from the perspective of a demigod.

The fact that even women around Mfundo regard him as a failed man when he fails to sustain his family indicates that even women have been socialised to uphold and embrace the superior status of men, albeit at the expense of their constitutional rights. Through Mfundo's frustration as he laments, "Why then was society in general and South African society in particular crueller to me because I was a man who chose to stay at home?" (2010:55), Wanner challenges the reader to look beyond superficial interpretations of feminism, where Mfundo's disgruntlement is analysed from the perspective of double standards, and engage in a more nuanced analysis of the text. This type of reading would consider the ways in which Mfundo's experiences demonstrate intersectionality of racial, class, and sexuality challenges, since these elements also influence societal norms and perceptions of masculinity. A more profound interpretation would support a collaborative approach for gender equality in which women around Mfundo work collaboratively with him to challenge and redefine societal norms. This perspective supports the premise that breaking down detrimental gender norms benefits everyone and creates a fairer society, which is in line with feminist ideology.

Through direct presentation, Wanner portrays Lerato's boyfriend as an abusive control freak, who controls Lerato's life as well as her salary. Direct presentation in characterization, also known as direct characterization, refers to the method by which an author explicitly describes a character's traits, personality, and background. This approach provides clear and straightforward information about the character, allowing readers to understand who they are without ambiguity. As the narrative unfolds, it transpires that he demands Lerato's money on month ends, leaving her with nothing. Pond (2019) argues that perpetrating violence replaces material resources and acts as a power base for a husband with little or no income. Despite the fact that he is not working, and he is sustained by Lerato, her boyfriend uses aggression to restore dignity to his challenged phallus, and to assert that he is still the man of the house. Frosh & Baraister (2008) concur with Langa (2020), as they maintain that having the phallus attached to men as the symbol of power does not guarantee any stability, instead it brings performance pressure to the male subject, as he becomes obsessed to get things right. This suggests that successful masculinity comes from mastering the phallus, and when the opposite happens, the man's world crumbles. In most cases this shortcoming is compensated through violence, as it is the case with Lerato's boyfriend.

Ratele (2016) submits that some men believe that being a man means dominating others, especially vulnerable groups. He claims that in such cases, the motivation to dominate others appears to be central to the relationships that these men have with women and children as well as other marginalised men. Because of social stratification, which is always characterised by unequal access to development as well as employment opportunities, not all masculinities become successful. It is those thwarted masculinities that resort to violence as a crucial mechanism that will assist them to assert their masculinity (ibid). This implies that for such men to be regarded as real men, they must control the vulnerable through violence or the threat of violence to instil fear, as indicated in Gqola's (2015) Female Fear Factory Theory.

In this theory, Gqola states that over a period of time, through violence or the threat of violence, men manufacture fear in their female partners which they use to manipulate them to live by their rules. Sikweyiya et al. (2020) postulate that when

boys transition into manhood, the teachings they get focus mainly on traditional gendered expectations, assertiveness, dominance over women, family leadership, and the breadwinner role. Failure to achieve these usually results in aggression, especially since the South African constitution has allegedly given economic power to women to the detriment of men.

The status of a kept man undermines Lerato's boyfriend's masculine ego, and this results in him harbouring anger issues which precipitate gruesome physical aggression. With the provider role being reversed, he begins to perceive her with suspicion, more as a threat to his status as a man. Ratele (2022: 69) argues that our relations as human beings are to a greater extent influenced by power. There is no subjective life outside of power, it shapes almost all the aspects of our lives. This means that even violence is related to power, the will to control, and the frustration of this desire to control other people and events (ibid). Lerato's boyfriend's obsession with power and the desire to control her makes him go overboard, as he uses violence as a defence mechanism to protect himself against being castrated by a woman. He holds a view that decision-making is the preserve of men, and that as the man of the house, it is his cultural role to make decisions, including putting the woman in her place.

The patriarchal culture acts in his favour in this regard, as Sikweyiya et al. (2020) concur that the endorsement of such traditional male gender role attitudes condones violence against women. The fact that he spends Lerato's money irresponsibly by buying drinks for his friends, reflects anger and resentment. As far as he is concerned, the woman has transgressed by taking over the provider role that culturally belongs to him. It is for this reason that she must be punished.

The state in which Nobantu, Tshepiso and Thando find Lerato after she fails to report for work, reflects deep seated anger issues of the perpetrator. It is alleged that the reason for the attack is that Lerato's brothers kicked him out, and Lerato is refusing to let him see their child, while also refusing to give him the money that she has saved for her sibling's uniform. Although he has not even paid *lobola* or bride price for Lerato, which grants the man ownership of the woman according to cultural norms (Sikweyiya et al. 2020), by virtue of being a man he feels entitled to the ownership of Lerato as

the mother of his child. Thus, as far as he is concerned, having fathered Lerato's child grants him the status of a husband.

Culturally, if the wife questions the man's inability to provide for her, this is interpreted as a direct assault on his masculinity, and he can use violence to reclaim his power and control and remind the woman about her place (ibid). This suggests that violence is not only about inflicting pain and suffering, rather, it centres more around power and control.

In his argument on the role of money in perpetuating GBV, Ratele (2022) asserts that the role played by money is two-fold. The lack of money is a key stressor in our society because almost everything revolves around it. In a relationship, a lack of money both increases the number of the causes of conflict, while it is at the root of other causes of conflict as well. Conversely, those who have it use money as an instrument to exercise power and control over their partners who do not have it (ibid). This suggests that money symbolises power, and those who do not have it, like Lerato's boyfriend, lack this power and experience a phallic challenge. As indicated earlier, the presence of the phallus pressurises the man to fulfil his traditional gender roles, in this case, being a provider. The fact that Lerato's boyfriend does not have money and depends on his woman for survival has stripped his masculine power off and rendered him less of a man. To compensate for this loss, he restores his dignity through violence.

To elaborate on Ratele's argument that money is at the root of other causes of conflict (ibid), it can be posited that its presence or abundance unsettles men as well. A moneyed man will ensure that those whom he regards as inferior to him remain trapped in that state of inferiority. This narcissistic attitude emanates from the fear that if their economic status improves, they might pose a challenge to his power. Wanner demonstrates this submission through her characterisation of Andile Makana in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) and Martin Mtshali in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014). Throughout the text, Andile is determined to ensure that Nobantu, his wife, does not work, while Martin cons his sons to remain in power (2014:314).

As Tshepiso details the extent of the abuse, she mentions that Lerato has a black eye and dark marks all over the body. She also got burnt on the breast when her boyfriend

pushed her onto a burning stove. Conversely, what Nobantu sees as they enter through Lerato's door is far worse than the account given by Tshepiso. As the narrative captures the gruesome detail of the assault, it explains:

The fair skinned girl had managed to get herself a real shiner, and not only was her left eye swollen, but the right-hand side of her jaw was also badly bruised, and her left hand was in a sling. In Nobantu's earlier conversation with Thando and Tshepiso they had failed to paint an adequate picture of Lerato's injuries. Nobantu's heart lurched. How could one human being do this to another?

Thando and Tshepiso guided Lerato into the living room. Once there, Nobantu was shown that there was more to the injuries than had initially met the eye. There was a large bump on Lerato's forehead, a result, she heard, of getting her head slammed against the wall before she passed out. On top of that, as mentioned earlier by Thando and Tshepiso, her breast had been seared by the hot plate in the kitchen (2008:142).

Despite her condition, Nobantu learns that Lerato is reluctant to press charges. Brodie (2020) alleges that initially, only violence against women which took place outside the home environment or outside a romantic relationship was criminalised. Any form of violence that took place between partners in a home environment was treated as private business, and it was left to the couple to sort their issues out. Such attitudes have permeated the South African cultural setting such that in some cases, both men and women support these traditional stereotypes. The normalisation of this patriarchal belief explains its resilience in post-transitional South Africa, as it is held by both men and women.

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This suggests that a context that favours men's violence against women has been created and maintained. It explains why Lerato's boyfriend violates her repeatedly, because as far as he is concerned, it is his cultural responsibility to discipline his woman when he sees the need. The boldness with which he does this comes from the certainty that just like the contemporary South African society, Lerato will not talk because talking about violence does not guarantee any justice in post-transitional South Africa. Instead, as postulated by Brodie (2020), it puts the victim's life at risk as she gets exposed to secondary victimisation. In some cases, the perpetrator who was not convicted comes back to violate the victim further (ibid). This means that the entrenchment of patriarchy continues to deny safe space to South African women.

Various NGOs fighting for gender justice such as People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), Sonke Gender Justice, and Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa, have tried to claim space for women, but it is impossible to claim space that never existed. Thobejane (2015) as well as Ratele (2016) argue that even the icons of the struggle, Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukhwe, and Steve Biko were so pre-occupied with the struggle against racial domination that they homogenised blackness and mistook women's blackness as identical to men's blackness. This resulted in their failure to address the issue of male domination. It is to this effect that Ratele (2016:130) alleges, "About black females, Biko says almost nothing."

The painful reality of this is that the defeat of racial oppression did not magically result in a society that is free of patriarchy. Although many black women lost their lives fighting for liberation just like men, the fruits of liberation are now being enjoyed by men only, for women, the struggle continues. This implies that in their struggle against male domination in contemporary South Africa, women are on their own, polarised by power issues from men. Although the study focuses on black South African masculinities, Wanner also highlights that white South African masculinities share the same cultural sentiments as black masculinities, especially where the power over and the appropriation of women is concerned. In *The Madams* (2006), Wanner portrays Lauren's father as an abusive drunk, who compensates for his failure as a man by

beating Lauren's mother. He spends all the trust fund put aside for Lauren's education on alcohol because as the man of the house, he is responsible for decision making even though his decisions put his daughter's future at stake. Similarly, Mike, Lauren's husband, displays some characteristics of a phallic challenge when he develops abusive behaviour towards his wife, which always accompanies binge drinking. The fact that she is a lecturer at Wits University while he teaches at a secondary school, as well as her exposure to a more public space unsettles him. He controls her movements, stalks her, beats her up with dangerous objects and hurls derogatory insults at her. Contrary to the belief that violence is prevalent among poor black communities, Wanner underscores the pervasiveness of a patriarchal ideology across cultures. She wants to highlight that power over vulnerable groups is a cross-cultural phenomenon which transcends race, socio-economic, as well as educational status.

In his argument on GBV, Ratele (2022) submits that the hegemonic capitalist thought has drilled into people's minds that it is only people who are needy, people who are nothing, and people who are deprived of material possessions that must be associated with cultural and psychosocial ugliness. It is amongst such people that we should expect bodily and psychological violence. We do not expect to find violence in affluent communities with rich homes which look wonderful from the outside yet there is viciousness within. The way people present their lives to the outside world can be the exact opposite of what is going on in private. It is such ideologies as these that sneer upon lessons which teach us that care in action carries more weight than an expensive gift (Ibid).

The crux of the matter is that heterosexual men's desire to dominate women is found in almost all homes and relationships, regardless of the socio-economic stratum they occupy. Men across races and social classes do not take kindly to women who display signs of non-compliance by challenging their power and undermining their control. To prevent violence, they want respectful, acquiescent, and subservient women who know their place.

As Brodie (2020) concurs with Gqola (2015), the pervasiveness of GBV is maintained through instilling fear in the victim. This is regarded as one of the most popular control strategies used by abusive heterosexual men as evinced in Wanner's texts. The ever-present threat of violence allows men to control women and to ensure that they conform to their demands. It is not only Lerato's boyfriend who instils fear as a weapon of control in Wanner's texts; the same behaviour is portrayed through the characterisation of Mike in *The Madams* (2006); Mzilikazi's father in *Men of the South* (2010); and Martin Mtshali in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), who will be analysed in detail in their respective sections.

One of the nuances that Wanner highlights in her texts is the South African legal system which tends to align with the patriarchal system. Brodie (2020) maintains that during the apartheid era, violence against women in South Africa was usually excused under the claim that men were stressed by the political instability that was going on at the time. Sometimes the victim was blamed for allegedly pushing the perpetrator too far, adding to the stress that he was already going through. In contemporary South Africa, the abrupt change in the socio-economic sphere which has allegedly endowed more power to women while ripping off the same from men is the new source of stress. This might explain why violence against women is not receiving the attention it deserves. As indicated earlier, power is culturally regarded as the preserve of men, and women with power are seen more as transgressors in a patriarchal society. Marita, Thando's white maid in *The Madams* (2006) is arrested for shooting and killing her abusive boyfriend, using the same gun he had been using to torment her. Prior to the shooting, when she goes to report the abuse to the police each time it happens, no action is taken, but when she ultimately uses the same gun in self-defence, she is arrested. The implication here is that it is a crime when a woman violates the man, but when it is the man who is the perpetrator, he is merely seen to be carrying out his cultural responsibility. To address GBV, Wanner's novels call for the interrogation of oppressive cultural practices as well as meaningful social transformation.

3.3 Sexual violence

With South Africa being rated amongst the most violent countries in the world, rape has been constructed as a normal part of everyday life. In a patriarchal country like South Africa, rape is associated with historical gender oppressions, assertions of masculinity and social control. Scholars agree that the pervasiveness of rape in the country is associated with the fact that most cases are not reported due to the lack of law enforcement, safety concerns, economic circumstances, and lack of conviction rates (Morrell et al. 2012; Richter et al. 2015; Brodie 2020).

Historically, rape has been associated with female victims where the perpetrator wanted to assert his masculinity. Scholars concur that male rape has been a rare phenomenon, largely associated with prisons where the perpetrator wants to assert dominance and control over the victim. This is believed to produce feelings of defeat, both in a physical and psychological way as it goes against the social construction of masculinity that socialises men into becoming sexually dominant, violent, invulnerable, and strong. By highlighting the rape of Zuko by his uncle Liam, in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014), Wanner is interrogating the foregrounding of vaginal discourses on discussions about rape in contemporary South Africa, which invalidates the credibility and gravity of male and anal rape. She challenges the social constructions of rape, which stereotype men only as perpetrators not victims, something which compounds the problem rather than address and alleviate it. Also, since male rape is commonly associated with prison, which is regarded as a ruthless environment, Wanner wants to highlight that it also happens in the community as well as in the home environment. This brutality of the home environment that Wanner highlights brings the home under scrutiny, and queries its safety, as it is normally regarded as a sanctuary which is characterised by love, safety, and warmth. The relevance of this in contemporary South Africa is undisputable, as the cases of rape of children and small babies by close family members are commonly reported in both the visual and print media.

In the same vein, the focus of the text on male-to-male injustices highlights that if the heterosexual male perceives an individual as the other, the chances of being victimised sexually and otherwise are high, since heterosexual masculinity is often about dominance. Fighting for the emancipation of all the vulnerable groups irrespective of

their gender affiliation, feminist writers such as hooks (2000) have argued that men's emancipation is as essential a part of feminism as the emancipation of women since they are equally harmed by gender role expectations and sexism.

3.3.1 Liam, the sexual predator in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014)

Told in the form of a non-linear or disjointed narrative, the story begins with Germaine Spencer, Zuko's mother and wife to Martin O'Malley, isolating herself in grief, following Zuko's suicide after being raped by his uncle, Liam. A non-linear or disjointed narrative is a storytelling technique that involves presenting events in a fragmented or out of chronological order. By deviating from the traditional linear flow of a story, this approach enables a deeper examination of plot twists, characters, setting, themes, as well as the nuances associated with these. The non-linear, fragmented narrative style in Zukiswa Wanner's *London Cape Town Johannesburg* (2014) aptly captures the complexity of the protagonists' lives and their relationships. It deftly interweaves the lives of its protagonists across numerous timeframes and settings. By alternating between multiple time periods and locations, Wanner effectively conveys the sense of confusion and disorientation that frequently accompanies significant life events and personal upheavals. As the protagonist navigates life between London, Cape Town, and Joburg, the non-linear narrative highlights the volatile nature and flexibility of personal and cultural identity. The three sections of the story (London, Cape Town, and Johannesburg) represent various phases in the lives of Martin and Germaine, the central characters. The devastating suicide of their son, Zuko, at the beginning of the story establishes a desolate mood that permeates the entire text. The story is sparked by this first incident, which makes the characters consider their past and the events that brought them to this point of despondency.

Wanner juxtaposes the past and present with flashbacks so that readers can piece together the historical context of these individuals as well as the development of their relationships over time. Martin and Germaine's perspectives generate a deep, complex picture of their experiences. Each character shares snippets of information that illuminate their respective emotional states and the nuances of their relationships. This

approach not only assists character development, but it underscores the fragmented nature of their lives, as they navigate parenting, love, and loss in a rapidly evolving sociopolitical landscape. The story shifts between their early years in London and their subsequent experiences in South Africa, highlighting the ways in which their cultural and personal backgrounds influence who they are. At the conclusion, readers are left speculating about the future of Martin and Germaine's relationship, which highlights the long-lasting consequences of Zuko's passing on their lives.

With the use of flashbacks and foreshadowing, Wanner adds depth to the story and allows the reader to navigate through the plot and get to understand the events leading to the death of the boy on his thirteenth birthday. The first-person narration in the form of monologues affords Germaine and Martin space to open up to the reader and share their traumatic experience. This re-telling of events allows the reader to empathise with these parents as they take her along in their emotional journey, blaming themselves for failing their child instead of protecting him as per their vow when he was born.

Though Martin has kept it a secret from Germaine, despite their policy of openness towards each other, it transpires that Liam's ex-wife, Jenny, had filed a child rape and domestic abuse case against him, under the allegation that he had raped their sons. Although Martin finds it hard to believe these allegations against his brother prior to Zuko's rape, Wanner foreshadows what is going to befall Zuko later in the story. She wants to highlight that the ambivalence of men where sexual abuse is concerned, is tantamount to participation and complicity in perpetuating GBV. Martin's silence about this violation of the twin boys resonates with Brodie's (2020) argument, that nobody wants to associate himself/herself/his family with violence of any nature, it should be something that happens in the neighbourhood, not inside the family. Martin attests to this as he laments: "But how was I to know that his ex-wife's allegations were true? One never wants to believe the worst about those they love. So, I did not. And I never shared what I knew with Germaine" (2014:11).

Although the intention might be to protect the image of the family, the danger of failing to disclose violence is that it protects the perpetrator from facing the

consequences of his actions, while at the same time encouraging him to continue violating those whom he finds vulnerable. That is why Martin, under these painful circumstances and having his family torn apart, admits that Zuko's death is his fault, as he says, "I really could have prevented this" (2014:11). As indicated earlier that rape is associated with power issues, Wanner portrays Liam as a predator who uses his economic and political power to violate the vulnerable people around him, especially young boys. Zuko is his third victim, following his twins and Mxolisi.

The narrative indicates that Mxolisi was the son of his maid, whose educational expenses he took care of, while secretly molesting him behind his gullible, appreciative, and unsuspecting mother's back. Out of fear of his political connections and economic power, rather than pressing charges against him, Mxolisi's mother and Martin decide to suffer in silence, in case the disclosure results in secondary victimisation. This situation demonstrates how economic power affects gender dynamics in a significant way, especially in terms of how it might impede victim justice and prolong abuse. Liam represents a masculinity that is intricately linked to economic dominance. His victims find it difficult to confront him because of his social standing and financial capacity of protection. This dynamic reflects a larger societal issue in which men in positions of economic power tend to make use of their position of authority to exert influence over certain circumstances and uphold established patriarchal systems. Because victims may believe that the legal system is prejudiced towards the interests of those with wealth and influence, they may be deterred from pursuing justice out of fear of retaliation, both socially and economically. The fear that Mxolisi's mother had of exposing Liam highlights the psychological effects that wealth has on those who are victimised. A vicious cycle of silence and cooperation might result from the fear of losing one's financial security or suffering more misery. The societal stigma that comes with being a victim of violence, especially in situations where power and strength are generally associated with masculinity, exacerbates this anxiety. The victim may become more vulnerable as a result of feeling helpless due to their reluctance to confront a powerful perpetrator.

Wanner's narrative also highlights the intricate web of oppression that results from the intersection of gender and economic power. In some cases, the societal

expectation for men to be protectors and providers translates into a violent and dominant kind of masculinity. In this situation, Liam's financial dominance not only makes his abusive actions possible but also establishes him as an authoritative figure that the victims feel reluctant to oppose. This intersectionality serves as an example of how the dynamics of class and gender can reinforce violent cycles and obstruct the pursuit of justice. This dynamic has ramifications that go beyond isolated incidents of abuse.

Wanner's depiction of Liam as the economically powerful perpetrator, and Mxolisi's mother's as well as Martin's fear highlights a societal issue in which power imbalances brought about by economic disparities can result in structural injustices. Victims are left with no recourse when strong people are not held responsible for their actions, perpetuating a culture of impunity. Given the circumstances, it is imperative to critically assess the ways in which economic power influences gender relations and to implement societal and legal changes that will empower victims and undermine the systems designed to protect abusers. Liam is the epitome of a toxic masculinity that is violent and entitled. His financial situation supports his perception that he has the power to manipulate people, especially women and vulnerable groups. His sense of entitlement, which justifies his behaviour with riches and power, is a fundamental component of his masculinity.

According to Javaid (2015), secondary victimisation refers to the re-traumatisation of the sexual assault, abuse, or rape victim either by the institutions dealing with the case or the people around the victim. Secondary victimisation of male victims may be associated with the social construction of male rape which is characterised by myths that trivialise its seriousness and make victims reluctant to disclose. Just like in Zuko's case, failure to disclose prevents the victim from getting assistance, and it results in unpleasant consequences. These myths claim that men cannot be raped; only gay men are victims; 'real' men can defend themselves against rape; men are not affected by rape; gay and bisexual men deserve to be raped since they are deviant and immoral; male rape only occurs in prisons; and that if a victim physically responds to rape, he must have wanted it (ibid). It is such societal expectations about the male

gender role and the concept of male heterosexuality that inhibit Zuko's understanding of his own sexual victimisation and deter him from sharing this most excruciating pain with his mother. Although some of these myths might not be applicable to Zuko because of his age, the stigma, the pain and feelings of self-blame, trepidation and shame suffered by all victims regardless of age, are the same, as his last journal entry relays his acutely torturous defilement at the hands of his uncle Liam. The entry poignantly captures his feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and the desperate desire for relief from his trauma.

In this entry Zuko expresses his intention to end his life the following day, which is also his thirteenth birthday. He recounts a traumatic experience involving his uncle, who raped him, leaving him feeling betrayed and deeply hurt. Zuko reflects on the love he felt for his uncle, contrasting it with the pain of the violation he endured. He expresses his pain and feeling of betrayal thus:

Tomorrow I'll be dead. I loved him as much as I love my own father and mother. [...]. I felt safe with him. [...] He is my uncle. MY UNCLE. How could he do this to me? [...]. The pain won't go away. [...] I still need to write a short note to dad before I go and slash my wrists in the bathtub. (2014: 332-333).

He describes the helplessness he felt during the assault and the subsequent emotional turmoil, particularly the fear that his uncle's power as a politician would prevent justice. Zuko wishes he had confided in his mother instead of his father, who has not taken action to address the situation. Overwhelmed by pain and despair, he mentions taking wine and sleeping pills, indicating his intention to end his suffering by slashing his wrists in the bathtub.

Zuko's defilement in the hands of a politically and economically powerful man indicates heteropatriarchal tendencies in post-transitional South Africa, as it resonates with the rape allegations against the then South African president, Jacob Zuma, who had allegedly raped Fezekile Ntsukela Khuzwayo in his Forest-Town home in Johannesburg on the third of November in 2005. The victim had paid him a visit as her late father's closest friend (Tlhabi 2017). Failure to grant justice to these two victims suggests that a heterosexual male in the position of power in South Africa is entitled to the bodies

of the vulnerable. Just like Zuko and Liam, Fezekile, whose pseudonym was Khwezi, a name lent to her by a friend to protect her from all the harassment she was going through, had trusted Jacob Zuma. She had related to him more as a father because of the relationship Zuma had had with her father, Judson Khuzwayo before he died in exile. Though Wanner's work is fictional and Tlhabi's more documentary, both writers are challenging the South African legal system as a platform of patriarchy where lawlessness and inequity triumph over justice, as well as the complicity of the South African society in the oppression of the vulnerable groups.

After pressing charges against Jacob Zuma, Fezekile and her mother are subjected to gruesome secondary victimisation and, among other horrible forms of torture that she is exposed to, their house gets torched by Zuma's supporters (Tlhabi 2017). She gets blamed for the rape, harassed by the police, people and other organisations instead of protecting her. All this torture is aimed at exacerbating her trauma so that she gets distracted when testifying against Zuma. The truthfulness of the brutality of rape is captured by both writers when Zuko in Wanner (2014:333) says, "The pain won't go away," and Fezekile in Tlhabi (ibid:13), when asked if she had come to terms with the rape says, "I don't know. You know, like losing a limb, your eyesight. Something you cannot reverse. You wake up with it every day but are not always conscious of it? You accept it as part of your life, a chapter in your journey. Something like that. I wish I had lost a limb. Rape is like death."

The rape of Zuko by his uncle and Fezekile by one of his father's closest friends, whom she refers to as "*Malume*" Zuma (ibid:26), indicates that in most cases, rape is pre-meditated and the perpetrator is rarely a stranger who takes advantage of you because you are walking alone during the night, wearing revealing clothes or under the influence of alcohol. It is usually someone close, well known, and trusted by the victim.

In her conversation with the journalist, Tlhabi, Fezekile recalls three incidents of rape that she has been subjected to in her life, which makes the one perpetrated by Zuma the fourth. It first happened when she was five, then when she was twelve, and when she was thirteen (2017:29). All the three happened in exile, where the freedom fighters were fighting alongside her father for a noble cause (the liberation of the

black people from the oppressive racist system), yet they enjoyed violating the body of a five-year-old girl. Fezekile also mentions a very high rate of transactional sex in exile, where young women who had left their homes to join the struggle were promised scholarships abroad, food and clothes in exchange for sex. The brutal conditions in the camps forced these women to comply with the demands of these senior commanders. These stories, including Zuko's, expose the façade which always characterises the narratives of the struggle. The fact that even the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), whose sole purpose was to heal the wounds left by apartheid and reconcile the country, bypassed the brutal treatment of women and children, and instead chose to highlight the narrative of heroism and victory, indicates the fallacy around which the narrative of freedom is built, which, according to Tlhabi (2017), was fought on and across the bodies of women and children. This suggests that as the heterosexual male's other, women and children had no share then, and have no share even now, in the justice that was being fought for. In other words, the struggle was built on patriarchal principles and was meant for the liberation of heterosexual men. The fact that other transgressions at the camp were punishable while rape was just taken for granted and covered up, further proves this.

The aftermath of this trivialisation of rape is evident in the statistics of GBV in contemporary South Africa, where women and children are still violated on a daily basis by men, with very little or no consequences. It is worth noting that all of this happens against the backdrop of the constitution which emphasises gender equality. If the rights of women and children meant nothing during the struggle for liberation, it does not come as a surprise that they mean nothing now, twenty-nine years after South Africa was declared as a democratic country. The fact that there were some senior men in the movement who also violated women sexually and otherwise (ibid) but were appointed as senior members of government in the new dispensation explains why the violation of women and children is seen through the reductionist lens and not taken seriously.

The question is, if those in power, like Liam, are guilty of partaking in this heinous crime and their actions are deeply rooted in patriarchal principles, how do we challenge the gendered norms that lead to the formation and sanctioning of patriarchal

and violent masculinities? Tlhabi (2017:63) argues that as much as sexual violence was in the DNA of the struggle, it is in society's DNA today, democracy has changed nothing, instead things are worse. That is why Gqola (2007) states that though 1994 and 2004 marked a spectacular milestone in our country's democracy, much still needs to be fought for, many freedoms still need to be attained and defended. She further alleges:

The discourses of gender in the South African public sphere are very conservative in the main: they speak of "women's empowerment" in ways that are not transformative, and as a consequence, they exist very comfortably alongside overwhelming evidence that South African women are not empowered: the rape and other gender-based violence statistics, the rampant sexual harassment at work and public spaces, the siege on Black lesbians and raging homophobia, the very public and relentless circulation of misogynist imagery, metaphors and language (2007:115).

In his diary entry, Zuko mentions that his father has kept quiet about the rape, yet he had promised to do something about it. He does this because Liam is politically connected and economically powerful. His power will allow him to deny the allegations and through his political connections he will hire a powerful lawyer that Martin cannot afford. This might result in Martin losing his job. By highlighting Zuko's disappointment in his father, Wanner taps on the trope of verbal silence which characterises most forms of abuse, and its potential of destroying lives as well as families. The sombre atmosphere created by the traumatic re-narration and re-thinking of Zuko's death and events related to its cause unearths the importance of communication and speaking about rape to make rapists uncomfortable, thus deterring them from committing further or future violations (Dlamini 2021). From Dlamini's perspective, if Zuko had opened up to his mother and other people around him, Liam would have been exposed for the pervert he is and Zuko might have received help instead of committing suicide.

Speaking out about violence leaves the marginalised South African in a dilemma. On the one hand, as Dlamini (2021) states, for the country to be able to fight this scourge, the victims must speak out. On the other hand, as indicated in Fezekile's story in Tlhabi

(2017) and Lerato's story in Wanner (2008), speaking out can lead to secondary victimisation because patriarchal South Africa has endorsed and engraved the power of the heterosexual man over women, children, and vulnerable groups. In Fezekile's case, both the victim and her mother are exposed to sheer torture because Fezekile has chosen to speak. In Lerato's case, the narrative indicates that she is reluctant to press charges against her boyfriend because she alleges that the legal system is lenient towards the perpetrators of violence. They either get arrested and released early or do not get arrested at all. If this happens, she is afraid that he might come back and kill her.

The precariousness of silence versus speaking out is captured by Tlhabi (2017) in a conversation that she has with Makhosazana Xaba, a political activist who escaped rape during the apartheid era, as she comments, "Silence is complicated. It is negative at times, but if it keeps you alive, is it still negative?" (2017:64). Until the country comes up with a strategy of addressing patriarchal and misogynistic savagery and creating safe spaces for the victims of abuse to open up, our society will continue with an endless struggle for the emancipation of women, children, and other vulnerable groups. This dilemma beckons future research to strategise on how to create safe spaces and to protect the victims of abuse from the structures and behaviours that uphold, perpetuate, and strengthen hegemonic masculinities and patriarchal power relations.

In an attempt to expose the pervasiveness of GBV in contemporary South Africa, and to highlight its presence across all races and cultures, Wanner brings to the fore the story of Marita, Thandi's white maid in *The Madams* (2006). Before imprisonment, Marita was married to an abusive biker boy who violated her physically, sexually, emotionally, and otherwise. He demanded her to cook, do his laundry, and clean for him. In addition, he ordered her to make money for him by prostituting herself. If she did not have enough clients and failed to bring enough money, he would beat her severely, threaten her with a gun, and refuse her access to the TV. Marita reported this several times to the police, but she did not get any help. However, when she eventually decided to stand up for herself and kill the man, using the same gun he used to threaten her with, she was arrested and imprisoned immediately.

Sikweyiya et al. (2020) argue that the legitimisation of wife-beating in South African culture through policies that positioned women as minors while allowing men to control them has made it extremely difficult to address GBV. If the society finds it culturally appropriate for men to beat women, it is going to be difficult for feminists to challenge a mindset that is embraced by the majority. If perpetrating GBV is being perceived as a demonstration of masculinity and a way of proving that a man is in control of his household as prescribed by hegemonic standards, the country is still far from attaining egalitarianism. Marita's story reiterates that of Lauren, proving that just like in black communities, GBV in white communities transcends social class. Both stories further prove that when it comes to GBV, the binary between black and white has narrowed to a thin line, as the scourge knows no colour.

3.4 Emotional violence

With South Africa ranking as one of the most violent countries in the world (Dlamini 2021), GBV is interpreted in superficial terms and focus falls exclusively on physical and sexual violence in both intimate and non-intimate relationships. The gendered inequalities and micro contexts of power often govern and shape the familial as well as the social dynamics of everyday practices, resulting in the trivialisation and normalisation of other forms of violence. As indicated earlier, South Africa's criminal legal discourse happens to be masculinist, as it muffles the women's voice and agency, thereby protecting the perpetrator. The rigid discourse of the less innocent victim who is constructed as provocative (Brodie 2020) trivialises the daily victimisation of women by men, leaving a question of how far the constitution has translated into practice.

It is worth noting that both the black South African woman's agency and resistance contribute to her predicament, as it amounts to the transgression of the gender norms. When Andile, Nobantu's rich husband, violates her emotionally throughout the narrative in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), except in the last chapter where he seems to understand things differently, her family and friends accuse her of being a spoilt brat when she complains, since Andile does everything for her. The everydayness of these forms of normative violence makes them continue with impunity, yet several studies indicate that the effects of emotional violence are

comparable to or even outweigh those of physical violence. This is because they leave internal wounds which are not easily detectable and therefore receive less attention (Lawrence et al. 2012). In some cases, emotional violence is often reported to occur in unison with physical violence, as it is the case with Lauren and her abusive husband in *The Madams* (2006).

It is imperative to highlight that emotional violence is more than just name-calling. Lawrence et al. (ibid) maintain that emotional violence often entails a pattern of ongoing intentional domineering tactics employed with the intent of exercising power and control over the victim's thoughts, beliefs, or conduct, and to punish them for resisting perpetrator regulation. Among others, it often includes victim blaming, undermining the victim's self-esteem and self-worth, verbal abuse (swearing, humiliation and degradation) systematic social isolation, and spiritual abuse (misusing religion or spiritual traditions to justify abuse) (ibid). All these tactics are meant to silence the victim and to rob them of their agency.

Emotional violence may not be easily detected as it can be subtle and insidious yet overt and manipulative at the same time. As it is evident in Mzilikazi's mother who has endured emotional abuse from her husband for a long time in *Men of the South* (2010), the fact that it is not physical makes the violence look natural. For example, when she confronts him about his extra-marital affair on which Mzilikazi's father spends his money in Johannesburg, while she takes care of the financial needs in their rural home, instead of responding to her accusations he snaps, "So you are questioning me now and you want to be the man of this house? Heh?" (2010:89). To show how brutal the treatment is, though it is not physical, the narrative indicates, "She started crying silently while apologising for no wrongdoing" (ibid). The acceptance as well as the internalisation of oppressive structures and ideas that both happen gradually, masks the underlying power relations, making the victim to view the abuse from the perspective of the perpetrator.

As highlighted in Gqola's (2015) female fear factor theory, this gives the perpetrator full control of the victim, who, unfortunately is not aware of and therefore does not question her own role in the production as well as the reproduction of domination and subordination. This socialisation, coupled with the entrapment that characterises this

type of abuse makes the victim too afraid to leave, yet she is harbouring a wounded psyche on a daily basis. Bhambra & Shilliam (2009) argue that the invisibility of emotional violence constitutes an effective tool of silent domination. The main motive of such domination discourses is to silence the peripheral or subaltern discourses which aim to challenge domination and subordination of the vulnerable groups. For the society to achieve egalitarianism and afford voice and agency to the vulnerable groups, systematic and structural changes must take place, not just mere speaking up.

In addition to the constitution that clearly stipulates gender equality, several NGOs have tried to address the problem, campaigns like the 16 days of activism against GBV are conducted yearly and people speak, but the statistics of GBV and femicide reflects a daily escalation. As indicated earlier, future research should take a closer look at the gaps and silences about genuinely safe spaces for women in contemporary South Africa.

3.4.1 Emotional distance, verbal abuse, and child neglect: Mzilikazi's father in *Men of the South* (2010)

Wanner portrays Mzilikazi's father as one who symbolises apartheid black masculinity. She deliberately withholds his name and refers to him as "Mzilikazi's father" throughout the text. The intention is to emphasise his role in the family as a rigid patriarchal and traditional father figure, and the resultant relations between him and his family that ensue from this hierarchical arrangement. Through the characterisation of Mzilikazi's father, Wanner problematises the perception of the patriarchal father figure as the symbolic progenitor as well as the source of knowledge, power, and identity. Positioning his traditional role against the backdrop of the contemporary era, which is characterised by drastic political as well as socio-economic changes, Wanner interrogates the relevance of the patriarchal father figure in a familial setting which is perceived as a microcosm of a bigger society. Located at the top of the traditional familial hierarchy, the father figure is portrayed as a leader whose role is to uphold the societal order and stability by imprinting and reproducing the norms, values, and behaviours that have been pre-approved by the society. Culturally, as Mzilikazi's father

expects of his eldest son, Mzilikazi, the boy child is regarded as a link between the family and the society and is responsible for continuing the legacy of the society by identifying with his father. It is worth noting, however, that these social mores that have been naturalised are socially constructed and can therefore change and adapt to different political and socio-economic circumstances as suggested by Clowes (2008). This suggests that just like masculinity, fatherhood is more of a contested and malleable than a fixed entity, as evinced in the black South African history of fatherhood.

Mapping the evolution of black fatherhood through South African history as portrayed in the *Drum Magazine* of the 1950s, Clowes (ibid) indicates that the black father figure of the early 1950s was portrayed as an involved and nurturing father in a domestic environment. However, this changed over the decade as both the visual and verbal images of a black father in the magazine removed him from the familial spaces and located him either in work contexts devoid of wives and children or in the process of moving out of the home, leaving wives and children behind. In other words, the magazine created a narrative of individualism, independence, and autonomy which attached a more profound breadwinner role to the black South African man. Such images had been used in *Outspan* and *Femina* for decades to portray the fatherhood and masculinity traits of the white man. *Outspan* and *Femina* were the magazines which targeted the white readership in the 1950s.

Since the magazines of the white audience asserted masculinity by removing the white man from the vicinity of women and children, the portrayal of the black man inside the home might have compromised his masculinity and assisted in his infantilisation and emasculation by the white man. From this perspective, it is worth noting that the discourses of colonialism are centred around notions of difference, where the coloniser is regarded as masculine and adult, while the colonised is regarded as feminine and childlike (Hodes 2014). This implies that according to the western discourses of masculinity, what defines a "real man" is his whiteness as well as his distance from the home environment. As masculinity is a contested arena, the black South African man's retaliation to racial emasculation by creating distance between himself and his

family was seen as the only way of asserting and reclaiming his manhood as well as agency.

Coupled with the harsh apartheid living and working conditions, especially in the city, the emasculation and infantilisation inculcated violent mannerisms among black men. These mannerisms, which were meant to be strategies of survival in the city became woven into the psyche of the black man and were thus transferred to the home environment as it is evident in the way in which Mzilikazi's father in *Men of the South* (2010) relates to his rural family. Giving an account of this violence, Breckenridge (1998) and Morrell (2001) indicate that the dehumanising working conditions of the black South African fathers as well as the brutal environment that they were exposed to in the cities daily, produced men who were accustomed to pain, hardship, and violence, such that violence became part of patriarchal practice.

Though the visibility of Mzilikazi's father in the familial sphere is low as it was the case with all the mine workers who seldom visited their families, we find patriarchy speaking the law of the father, to which everybody in the house must submit. Failure to submit to the law of the father has serious ramifications. What the "law" means is that the patriarchal father is a domestic despot, who commands submission and respect through instilling fear to his family members. He regards it as his traditional responsibility to enforce rules, establish distinct boundaries, and administer discipline. This perception of his role as a father concurs with Andrews' (2021) claim, that father figures in South African literature have always been perceived as designers, creators, and gatekeepers of knowledge and meaning who are endowed with moral authority, agency, and dominance.

The emotional distance that has developed over the years between Mzilikazi's father and his children culminates in internalised fear in Mzilikazi and his younger brother, Vusi. The fear surfaces as the two boys relocate with their father to Johannesburg after the death of their mother. Wanner captures the uneasiness experienced by the two boys in their father's company as Mzilikazi reflects:

I remember looking at Johannesburg with awe. The streets were wide, there were so many cars and so many people, how did they all live together without

killing each other? And look at those lights, how did they get up there? I had so many questions but could not ask any as I was seated next to my stern father. Vusi and I did the next best thing. We kept on nudging each other at this wonderment or that. We were both true examples of Jims coming to Johannesburg that day. After some kilometres of looking around, I was overcome that I forgot caution and said to Vusi [...] (2010:94).

As indicated in Gqola's (2015) Fear Factor Theory, the manufacture of fear among the vulnerable groups is kept alive through its production and reproduction, until both the reproduction and the fear become invisible and normalized. Once the fear is normalized, the fear factory will be strengthened and those who view it with suspicion will be silenced and called into order. To prove that the fear has been internalised and normalised in Mzilikazi and Vusi, Mzilikazi confesses to the reader that the beauty of Johannesburg overwhelmed him, and he forgot caution and overstepped the boundaries of walking on eggshells around his stern father.

The same trope of patriarchal boundaries associated with fear is evident in the Dlamini household where Mfundo refers to his father as the law. He emphasises, "My father was the law in our house. No one had ever answered him the way Sindiso had" (2010:13). Because these children have been socialised to observe patriarchal boundaries, it shocks the Khumalo boys to see an abrupt change in their father's behaviour when he is around his educated city wife. It is to this effect that Mzilikazi exclaims:

I could not believe it. My own father who had been served hand and foot by my mother, was bringing us water to wash our hands! It must be true what I had overheard about my father's town woman. She was a witch and she had bewitched my father [...]. The man was authoritative, but this type of authority was very different from what I expected of him. This was not the same man who, when he came down to KwaMntungwa once a year, would yoke the cattle and plough tirelessly while ordering around my now dead mother. I started feeling very sorry for myself and sobbed as I washed the dishes while Vusi dried them. Our father was bathing Maria in the big white tub (2010:97).

Observing Mzilikazi's father embrace domestic chores while trying to re-socialise his boy children to do the same, highlights the flexibility of masculinity as well as the shift of power. In the rural area he embraces hegemonic masculinity which endorses his power over his late uneducated housewife and children. Though Mzilikazi's father does not use physical violence, the solid and impenetrable wall that he has established between himself and his wife and children, qualifies him as non-existent, since his family members fear him more than they can count on him as a father.

It is worth noting, however, that not all emotionally distant fathers hurt their children intentionally. Some adopt their parenting style from their own upbringing, and they are not even aware that it is abusive. This happens specifically in patriarchal communities which are characterised by rigid hierarchical boundaries, as it is the case with Mzilikazi's father. His domestic despot qualities highlight the shift of power that characterised apartheid masculinities. Being around his powerless and dependent rural family members grants him the opportunity to claim back his masculinity, which has been thwarted by the harsh apartheid conditions in the city.

This back-and-forth shift of power echoes the trope of racial unmaning that characterises hostel masculinities in Mthuzeli Matshoba's *To Kill a Man's Pride* (1984) as well as the *Tsotsi* masculinities in Mbulelo Mzamane's *My other Cousin, Sitha* (1984) and Njabulo Ndebele's *The Music of the Violin* (1984). Written during the apartheid era, these short stories address the issue of power which the black man relinquishes abruptly in the vicinity of the white man. When in his own space, being surrounded by other black people, he quickly claims his power back, and uses it to violate those he finds weak around him. In the city, around the self-sufficient and equally educated wife who shares the same status as his, Mzilikazi's father has no choice, but to share power with her. Unlike Mzilikazi's uneducated mother, the city wife is her own woman who does not expect any validation from Mzilikazi's father.

As posited by Langa (2012), *Tsotsi* masculinity was a negatively defined masculinity of the apartheid era, which was associated with anti-social behaviour. The townships saw a spike in criminal violence because of political disputes against apartheid, and youth gangs that were well-known for engaging in violent crimes such housebreaking, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, and abduction of young girls emerged. This type of

masculinity possessed an imposing identity since the *tsotsis* were often feared for their potential to be very violent (Langa 2012). Just like the disgruntled mine and industrial workers who derived pleasure from hurting and even killing the powerless people at the hostel and around the township, violence was an attempt by *tsotsi* masculinities to reclaim power and to reinstate their manhood which was continually ripped off by the white man in the city.

Arguing for a hands-on approach to raising their children, Jung et al. (2015) argues that by participating in the biological conception of a child, one does not automatically become a father. A man is regarded as a father and therefore treated thus when he takes full responsibility of his family and models appropriate behaviour for his children (ibid). This means that in addition to the physical contribution, a man must also contribute socially, economically, politically, morally, spiritually, culturally, and otherwise in the holistic development and upbringing of his child, as evinced in the *Drum Magazine* of the early 1950s. This is the type of a father that Mfundo yearns for after the mysterious disappearance of his father in *Men of the South* (2010) as he reflects:

There were two types of them, you see. There were the happy-go-lucky men in the neighbourhood who would send me to buy them some loose skyfs at the nearest spaza shop as they sat drinking at all hours of the day. Then there were the salt-of-the-earth type of men like my father and Mzi's father, who looked after their families and came home on time. But these men were dictatorial. Their wives feared them, their children feared them. I never wanted to use either of the two groups as a role model (2010:17).

This ideal father that Jung et al. (ibid) recommend contrasts sharply with the socialisation of the apartheid era which measures successful masculinity and fatherhood in terms of economic contribution. This is coupled with power over women and children as well as authority, which is defined by tyranny, as it is the case with Mzilikazi's and Mfundo's fathers. Adding to Jung et al.'s argument (ibid), it is imperative to note that emotional abuse can have everlasting and detrimental effects in the life of a child. It can have a damaging effect on the child's sense of self, future relationships, and the ability to function at home or in the work environment.

Because of their emotionally distant fathers, both Mfundo and Mzilikazi develop trust issues which make it difficult for them to maintain meaningful relationships in adulthood. Mfundo's lack of trust makes him attack an American R&B star who flirts with Slindile in front of him at an after party. He does not trust the authenticity of the love that Slindile gives him, given that she comes from a more established background than his. Having been brought up by an uncle who was a doctor and an aunt whose overseas education had earned her a job in the private sector, Slindile obtained her primary education at Sacred Heart private school before she qualified as a doctor herself at UCT. Likewise, her mother is also a doctor who qualified overseas. Contrarily, Mfundo lives with his family in Dube Township where he must sneak her in and avoid being caught by his mother, while Slindile lives in the Rembrandt Park townhouse that her mother bought her as a graduation present. Though he pretends not to be bothered, such achievements emasculate Mfundo according to the hegemonic standards, which associate success as well as material possessions with a man more than a woman (Langa 2020).

Likewise, Mzilikazi struggles to maintain healthy relationships in his life because of his homosexuality. His journey towards self-discovery is punctuated by ambivalence, which stems from the different ways in which masculinity is enacted in the rural areas and in the city. The sharp contrast between the patriarchal, violent, and uncompromising rural masculinities and the calm and gender-sensitive urban masculinities throws him into deep confusion about masculinity, which interferes with his readiness to embrace his homosexuality. He hides his sexuality both to his homophobic father as well as Siyanda, his wife.

Though he summons up the courage to divulge the disturbing news to his wife, he does not trust his homophobic father with the same. For the sake of harmony, and to protect both himself and his father from heartbreak, he keeps his sexuality a secret as he says, "In the past weeks, I had come to terms with my sexuality, but I was not ready for my father to know about it. Probably I would never be ready for this in this lifetime" (2010:122). By foregrounding this ambivalence, Wanner, on the one hand wants to highlight the deconstruction of heteronormativity in contemporary South Africa through her characterisation of Mzilikazi, who is able to challenge

heteronormativity by exhibiting more masculine traits than most straight men. On the other, her characterisation of Mzilikazi's father as a stock who strictly adheres to the traditional prescripts of sexuality highlights and challenges the narrow traditional perceptions of masculinity in the contemporary world, which define "real manhood" in more concrete than abstract terms.

The societal attitudes towards homosexuality make it difficult for Mzilikazi to trust even his closest friends, Mfundo and Slindile, with his secret. To this effect, he chooses to remain in the comfort of his closet. Behind their backs, he enjoys sex with DLF (Down Low Friend), a *tsotsi* type who is notorious for his macho lifestyle and has fathered so many children with different mothers in the hood (2010:107). Just like the string of casual relationships Mzilikazi engages in with women while studying at UCT, even his marriage to Siyanda is a coverup, aimed at masking his homosexuality and convincing the community about his machismo. When he eventually meets his soulmate, Thulani, who assists him to embrace his homosexuality, Mzi is unapologetic about refusing his company to attend his father's funeral in rural kwaMntungwa. He stresses, "Being gay in the township is hard enough, but try letting your rural relatives know that and...Hey, you know" (2010:146). Wanner manipulates Mzilikazi's fears to highlight the debilitating consequences of upholding heteronormative ideologies against the backdrop of the South African Constitution which advocates for equality for all. The entrapment felt by Mzilikazi while trying to satisfy the status quo by living his life according to social prescriptions, translates into heterosexist oppression. This indicates that democratic South Africa is still a patriarchal country.

In her text, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick delves into the intricacies and contradictions associated with the notion of the closet within the framework of LGBTQ+ identities. Although the closet is frequently perceived unfavourably as a place of concealment, humiliation, and subjugation, Sedgwick also looks at its liberating qualities. The closet can be used as an oasis of refuge where the destitute conceal their true identities to fend off violence, prejudice, and persecution. It provides a means of safety and survival in potentially hazardous circumstances in this way. While remaining in the closet, people can navigate different types of environments without instantaneously stumbling across prejudice. One might be able to obtain resources,

allies, or power by carefully masking themselves, which they could then use to overturn repressive structures. When and to whom one discloses their sexual orientation is in the power of those who are in the closet. This control affords the destitute an ability to take charge of their coming-out process and to make their own decisions, which could have important consequences. This is evident in *Men of the South* (2010) when Mzilikazi decides upon whom he is going to disclose his sexuality and when. Though Mfundo and Slindile catch him having sex with DLF, his gay partner, he is still able to keep it a secret to his father, and he only tells Siyanda, his wife, when he is ready. From this perspective, it is evident that coming out is an inherently sociopolitical action. People have the ability to make compelling arguments that subvert heteronormative presumptions and challenge norms by selecting when and how to come out.

Additionally, the closet can accentuate the intricacy and fluidity of identity. According to Sedgwick, the dichotomy of "in" versus "out" oversimplifies the experiences that a large number of LGBTQ+ people have. The ambivalence of the closet might mirror the nuanced dynamics of identity and desire. The closet has the capacity to flout social norms by refusing to conform to conventional classifications. The inflexibility of societal conventions surrounding sexuality is challenged by this opposition to binary thinking, which can be liberating. The closet can be used as a space for the destitute to discover and understand who they are without feeling coerced or judged by others. This introspective time can be very important for self-acceptance and personal growth.

The closet can serve as a space for individuals to explore and understand their own identities without external pressure or judgment. This period of self-reflection can be crucial for personal growth and self-acceptance. Some individuals may find intimacy and support from those who have gone through similar experiences in the closet. This holds true for Mzilikazi, who finds solace and intimacy in DLF's company, and learns to embrace his homosexuality in the comfort of the closet. This suggests that a sense of belonging and emotional support can be obtained from this hidden community.

It can be deduced that the closet can be a potent narrative technique in literature and culture, illuminating the complexity of gay experiences. Sedgwick's literary text analysis demonstrates how the closet can produce intricate, multi-layered narratives that subvert established cultural narratives. Allegorically, the closet can represent defiance of social norms. It might stand for a type of subdued rebellion, which insinuates the unwillingness to fit neatly into a box or be subjugated. The analysis provided by Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) shows that the closet may be a site of subversion, agency, and protection in addition to being an oppressive space. She promotes a more nuanced understanding of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences by exploring the liberating qualities of the closet and acknowledging the intricate relationship between visibility, concealment, and power.

Jung et al. (2015) also posit that emotionally abused children experience trouble in regulating emotions. Abused children cannot express emotions safely. As a result, the emotions get bottled up, coming out in explosive ways at a later stage. Adult survivors of child abuse can struggle with unexplained anxiety, depression, or anger. They may turn to alcohol or drugs to numb out the painful feelings (ibid). As an adult, Mfundo exhibits emotional instability which reflects a gap that is associated with emotional abuse in his upbringing. His violent reaction towards the American R&B star who flirts with Slindile in front of him at an afterparty reflects deep seated anger, and an inability to solve his problems in a mature way. Also, his binge drinking to the extent of missing the birth of his daughter, Nomazizi, crashing Slindile's car and the violent altercation that ensues between him and Slindile prove the truthfulness of the above-mentioned claim.

Wanner also highlights verbal abuse in her characterisation of Mzilikazi's father. Yun et al. (2019) define verbal abuse as the use of words to assault, dominate, ridicule, manipulate, put down, belittle, degrade, and negatively impact another person's psychological health with the intention to control and maintain power over that person and to intimidate her into submission. Though he is not aware that his son is gay, the disdain followed by the insults that he hurls at the same sex couple who are getting married in a television clip reflect a deep-seated homophobia as well as hypocrisy. As a traditionalist, he embraces traditional gender role prescripts which dictate that "real

manhood” is measured by one’s sexual virility, the number of women that he is romantically involved with, as well as the ability to father children. Anything that goes against this stereotype is viewed with suspicion by the heteronormative patriarch.

This is because in a traditional setting, being gay is regarded as an insult to the father, and to the heterosexual society at large. It threatens to disrupt the paternal narrative which is premised on hierarchical grounds and requires heterosexuality for patriarchal power relations to be maintained. It also undermines the significance as well as the sanctity of the familial lineage as it tampers with the concordance of reproduction. Though Mzilikazi’s father seldom goes to church and finds it difficult to embrace other Africans unless they are South African, he misuses religion and portrays exaggerated patriotism to mask his homophobic and xenophobic attitudes as he snaps:

Voetsek! Ngqingili! Do they realise that this is Africa, coming to pollute this continent with their Eurocentric ideas? You are the one who works all those NGOs talking about human rights – are these people not infringing on our rights by bringing these un-African ideas to this country? And this in a Christian country, too. What next? Will that Constitutional Court make it okay for people to marry goats? Sies! (2010:122).

Coupled with the deep-seated childhood fear that Mzilikazi still has of his father, this statement makes him vow not to divulge the secret about his sexual orientation to him. This indicates that the effects of emotional abuse can be as harmful as those of physical abuse, if not more. Unlike an emotional scar, a physical scar heals over the years. This surfaces as Mzilikazi shows signs of emotional scarring at the age of thirty years, yet the emotional abuse happened during his childhood. It is to this effect that he says, “I guess even though I was over thirty, I still feared my father in the same way that I did when I was a young boy in rural Zululand and saw him only once a year” (2010:123). It is only after Mzilikazi has ultimately summoned up the courage to disclose his sexuality to his wife, Slindile, that he realises his hypocrisy by not doing the right thing and tell his homophobic father about the wrongfulness of his outlook (ibid). It is such stereotypes that Mzilikazi wants to challenge. He is determined to subvert and challenge heteropatriarchal ideas of culture and tradition, resist

boundaries in his sexual identity, and carve a new trajectory in his self-definition as a man, and particularly, a father. As a self-proclaimed gay he states:

I was not willing to live a lie anymore. [...] Being back in Cape Town after so long was much like my UCT days, except now I was batting for the other team, so to speak. [...] This is not to say that when I got to Cape Town, I started prowling gay clubs for prospective partners or started calling everyone "darling" and doing air kisses. Okay, I will be honest. When I arrived, I did in fact start visiting gay clubs. Come on, wouldn't you? I was like a kid in a candy store, or a child with authoritarian parents sent to boarding school. Free. I was free. [...] Despite the distance, I was responsible for the two little ones whom I loved with all my heart (2010:128).

Another victim of emotional abuse in the Khumalo household is Mzilikazi's mother. Once again, Wanner withholds her name to highlight her traditional role as a mother who is supposed to bear and take care of the children, do household chores, and manage domestic matters. As a dutiful and subservient wife, she is expected to take orders and submit to the rule of her husband who exerts power and control over her. The emotional abuse that Mzilikazi's mother is subjected to is exacerbated when Mzilikazi's father who has been a mine worker for many years, qualifies as a teacher through correspondence.

Contrary to Peters' (2016) and Jewkes et al.'s (2015) argument that education makes men embrace gender equality, in Mzilikazi's father's case, it drives an even bigger wedge between him and his family, especially Mzilikazi's mother. His education defines an intellectual gap and gives him more power over his uneducated wife. It elevates him to a status above other village men, closer to the status of the white man, as it classifies him under an elite group.

As Mzilikazi's mother remains trapped within the confines of domesticity, without any hope of emancipation, Mzilikazi's father starts demonstrating exaggerated infantilisation of her. The narrative captures one of the episodes of embarrassment and infantilisation as Mzilikazi reflects, "[...] but he got irritated with the smallest things about my mother. [...] Why did she not wear the tennis shoes he had bought her so

that she would not have cracks on her feet that a fifty-cent coin could go into?" (2010:88). This suggests that masculinities differ and that men embody and perform certain types of subjectivities in varying contexts. It also challenges the effectiveness of a blanket approach as a tool to define the effect of education on masculinities.

The same exaggerated power is demonstrated by Babamukuru, in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989). The education he obtains abroad makes the extended family in the rural areas treat him like a demigod. Instead of sharpening his sensitivity towards gender roles, it plunges him into arrogance which makes him overlook the fact that his wife, Maiguru, whom he treats as his subordinate, is also educated and that she contributes equally to the economic welfare of the family. These novels demonstrate that gender performance and seniority status influence and contrast men and women's lived experiences in the home. The same trope of power over women and vulnerable groups is evident in Wanner's *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) where education affords Andile Makana, Nobantu's husband, more power which he uses to oppress his wife, as indicated in the forthcoming section.

A teaching qualification and affiliation to the elite group makes Mzilikazi's father start nit picking at Mzilikazi's mother on trivial matters which he overlooked while he was still a mine worker. The expectations and demands that he abruptly places on a rural housewife in a rural area, where some of the practices that characterise the educated elite are not common, are unrealistic. He starts criticising her for not doing things according to his new standards, treats her in a condescending manner, and exaggerates her flaws to deflect attention or to avoid taking responsibility for his own irrationality. As Mzilikazi shares these demands with the reader he reflects:

Sure, he still donned his overalls to join us in going to the fields, but he got irritated with the smallest things about my mother. Why had the children not washed before going to bed? Why did she not wear the tennis shoes he had bought her so that she would not have cracks on her feet that a fifty-cent coin could go into? Why, why, why? (2010:88).

Mzilikazi's father shows such dissatisfaction with his wife despite all the efforts she is putting to keep his household running. It is imperative to look at the effects of race

and class on the expression of masculinity among black South African men, especially those masculinities associated with the apartheid era. Race politics and racism have denied them the mainstream forms of masculine fulfilment, rendering impossible for them to achieve a valued masculine status. Though their education status sets them apart from their uneducated counterparts, they remain inferior and subservient to the white man as Sindiso, Mfundo's elder brother shouts in his altercation with his father, following his announcement that he is quitting school, "Papa, you had an education and look at you now. Is that rich? 'Ja meneer. Nee, meneer. Yes, sir. No, sir'" (2010:14).

From the perspective of the oppressed and othered, the slightest taste of elitism justifies Mzilikazi's father's endeavours to improve the social status of those around him. However, it does not justify the inhumane way in which he treats them. Having been relegated to the level of a child, Mzilikazi's mother is no longer entitled to her opinion. Her husband acts like he is always right, he is smarter than her, and he always knows what is best for her and the children. This becomes evident when Mzilikazi's mother tries to voice out her long-suppressed feelings as she bursts, "*Mntungwa, kusemakhaya la.* Don't try to make me like your town woman. You were happy enough with the way I was the whole time" (2010:89).

To demonstrate that her husband's education has reduced her to a voiceless and emotionless nonentity who depends on him to prescribe how she is supposed to feel and what she is supposed to say, Mzilikazi's father snaps at this confrontation, "So you are questioning me now and you want to be the man of this house? Heh? If your family have not taught you how to talk to your husband, you must go back to them to get some training" (2010:89). This response can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, he feels that his authority as the man of house is being challenged. With her infantilised status, she does not have a right to answer back to her husband since he takes care of almost all her needs. Secondly, it is a calculated strategy of manipulation and control. He wants to shift the blame to her and make her feel responsible for the harsh treatment he gives her. Taking advantage of her poor background, he wants her to feel indebted to him for rescuing her from the poverty of her family. The feeling of indebtedness will muffle her voice and take her agency away. Mzilikazi attests to

this as he reflects, "My mother buckled. Her family was poor. How could she go back and burden them with herself and three children under six? She started crying silently while apologising for no wrongdoing. That epitome of the emotionally abused rural housewife with a husband in town, that was my mother" (2010:89).

Once again, Wanner draws on Gqola's (2015) fear factor theory. She highlights that fear is not only confined to physical and sexual abuse. All forms of abuse have connotations of fear. According to Mulaudzi (2013), once a woman enters marriage, she is culturally not allowed to leave. Leaving reflects badly on the woman's family as it indicates that they have failed to bring her up in a principled way. To save their reputation, some families send the victim back to her abuser, which sometimes results in femicide as indicated in Brodie (2020).

Not only does Mzilikazi's father abuse his wife emotionally, he is also neglecting his children as he fails to take care of their financial needs. Just like emotional abuse, child neglect is seldom perceived as a form of abuse since it is not physical, resulting in less intervention. As a mineworker who spends most of the time in the city and comes home once in a year, Mzilikazi's father leaves the financial responsibility to Mzilikazi's mother. It is to this effect that Mzilikazi's mother complains, "I have never been there, but I hear Johannesburg is not that big. People talk, and I know about the wife and the house, while I must sell vegetables so that the children can have some new clothes as you only bring things once a year when you come for Christmas" (2010:89).

In their investigation of masculinity construction among black male mineworkers in Marikana, Sikweyiya et al (2022) discovered that the role of a provider is one of those inescapable demands on a man, which had been imposed by society and internalised as an intrinsic part of their manhood. Because these men should straddle the temporal space of work and the rural home space, they argued that their absence justifies the emotional distance between a man and his offspring, which they regarded as secondary to the breadwinner role. While Mzilikazi's father masters the skill of distancing himself emotionally from his wife and children on the one hand, failure to

provide for them on the other, flouts this social convention, proving once again that both masculinity and fatherhood are malleable social entities.

This flexibility of mineworker masculinities becomes evident when some of the participants indicated that the reconfiguration of masculinities was common, where some men would spend money publicly through drinking, bribing women for sexual favours and engaging in other extravagant behaviours that would gain them recognition and admiration by women and other men. Though Wanner does not give a detailed account of how Mzilikazi's father spends his money, she brings it to the reader's attention that he is also involved in an extra-marital relationship with a nurse in Johannesburg, whom he settles down with after the death of Mzilikazi's mother.

As indicated by Hunter (2002) in Reid & Walker (2005a:141), around the 19th century, isiZulu culture allowed both men and unmarried women to enjoy multiple sexual relations, though the number of these was limited for women compared to men. However, around the 1940s and 1950s, *umthetho* (the law) which allowed and encouraged promiscuity only to men and prohibited women from the same, was introduced and weaved into the social fibre of hegemonic masculinity (ibid). The term "*isoka*" would be used to applaud men's promiscuous behaviour whereas a more derogatory and harsher "*isifebe*" would be used to label a promiscuous woman. Though *ubusoka* was initially encouraged among young unmarried men, the *isoka* masculinity gradually gained popularity in men's discourses of masculinity, even among married men, to whom *umthetho* was flexible enough to allow extra-marital relationships (ibid). As an embodiment of traditional Zulu masculinity, Mzilikazi's father perceives it as his right to have an extra-marital affair, as it affirms his status of being a real Zulu man. The fact that what is deemed right for men is wrong for women, suggests a meticulously controlled and prejudiced gender binary which is premised on subjective patriarchal values and characterised by double standards.

Research further indicates that emotional abuse might have detrimental effects on the health of the victim. These include among others, depression, anxiety, chronic pain, heart palpitations, nightmares, and insomnia (Javaid 2015). When Mzilikazi gives a

brief account of his mother's death, he indicates that due to the shortness of the illness, the villagers implicated witchcraft in explaining it. He reflects:

When I was eight, my mother woke up one morning complaining of a headache. I went to school as usual, but before the school was finished, the same uncle who coached me in stick-fighting had come to fetch me. My mother had died. My father came for the funeral, and during it, there was much talk by relatives about my mother having been bewitched by my father's town woman. I remember well what was said. From one aunt, "Eh, it is said the woman is from far away in Thaba Nchu. They say people from there are very good with witchcraft" (2010:93).

In this excerpt, Wanner is highlighting the potential danger of emotional abuse. The embeddedness of subordination, domination, and exploitation of women in the power structures of society has resulted in the acceptance, legitimisation, and normalisation of emotional abuse. The fact that the dominant discourses of violence always trivialise emotional violence and downplay its consequences often results in the lack of awareness among victims. Under such circumstances, the victim as well as those around her or him may find it difficult to report the abuse and to access help. As indicated in Javaid's assertion (*ibid*), the assumption that Mzilikazi's mother's death might be related to the abuse is not far-fetched. This normalisation of emotional abuse has put men at an advantage of maintaining power and control over women and vulnerable groups, which has led to the perpetuation of this form of violence. It is to this effect that Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2016) argue that control over women is not always enforced by overt acts of violence, but the internalisation through continual socialisation of the superiority of men and the possibility of violence.

Though the unpalatable effects of all forms of abuse that are perpetrated by men towards women are evident in Wanner's texts, it is imperative to take a closer look at the most significant nuance that Wanner also highlights. The emotional abuse that Mfundo suffers at Slindile's hands challenges the notion that it is only women who are victims of violence. However, because of the traditional gender roles which expect them to be strong physically and emotionally, men might find it contemptible to

disclose their predicament even to those closest to them. While Mfundo cares for their daughter Nomazizi in a gender-sensitive manner towards Slindile, Slindile ridicules him for these actions, demonstrating her discontentment with his inverted gender roles. The narrative captures her provocative and demeaning utterances as she snaps:

I want you to be the man of the house for once. I want you to actively start looking for a job instead of using Noma as an excuse. For fuck's sake, it would be much cheaper to have Noma in daycare than to have you eating me out of house and home day in day out, and wasting electricity watching Judge Joe Brown and soap reruns the whole day. I want you to be able to take me out to eat like we used to (2010:57).

This mindset teaches Mfundo that romantic love alone cannot change long-standing gender stereotypes and expectations. For him to be regarded as a man, it is an obligation that he gets a job and play the provider role. As Mfundo painfully realises that Slindile can no longer handle the pressure of being seen with a kept man, his ego is painfully undermined. The wound of humiliation and emasculation cuts even deeper when Slindile throws him out of her house, to go and live in his mother's house in Soweto. By highlighting the inability to transcend conventional limitations about gender performance roles, Wanner prompts the reader to reflect on the transformation progress of contemporary South African gender relations, since Mfundo is rejected because of his idealistic demeanour and inability to support his family financially.

3.4.2 Misrecognition, verbal abuse, and condescension: Andile Makana, Nobantu's husband, in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

Written in the form of a bildungsroman, Wanner's *Behind Every Successful Man* portrays Andile Makana, Nobantu's husband and her co-protagonist, as a dynamic character who embarks on a long and onerous journey towards self-discovery. Set against the backdrop of a democratic South Africa which is governed by the constitution, Andile finds himself stuck in the traditional ideologies of masculinity construction that sustain men's power and dominance over women by asserting heterosexuality, independence and playing the breadwinner role. Occupying a social

stratum that is below his wife's unsettles him as he equates it with emasculation, especially in the rural areas, where much prestige is attached to class and institutional stratifications. This bolsters his urge to secure a reputable career as an attorney from the University of Cape Town. His fear stems from cultural beliefs that his society upholds as well as a sense of self-worth that is hinged on successful manhood and fatherhood. Morrell (2001) posits that traditionally, a man is supposed to provide for his family. This implies that being a successful breadwinner has a big influence on how successful masculinities are constructed. Men who are unable to support their families and themselves run the risk of being viewed as inadequate, which diminishes their manhood in the eyes of society. This desperate urge to prove himself as a "real man" has been fuelled by Nobantu's father, who did not support their marriage at its initial stages because he doubted if a commoner like Andile would be able to take adequate care of his daughter (2008:19).

As posited by Langa (2020) in his psychosocial theory, this type of insecurity leads to masculine anxiety, which is the fear of collapse in self-identity as a man, if he fails to perform. It is this constant fear of being labelled as a failed man that unsettles Andile's phallus and makes him end up violating his wife emotionally, in an attempt to prove, especially to the public, that he is a "real man". This behaviour resonates with Okonkwo's in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), who, in a fit of desperation, tries to prove that unlike his father Unoka, he is a "real man" who commands respect. He achieves this through establishing his compound, controlling his wives and children, providing for them, displaying his bravery, and killing senselessly. In both cases, this public display of masculinity affirms Butler's (1990) claim that masculinity is a performance, and that mastery of this performance affirms one's status as a "real man."

The narrative starts in medias res with Andile having ostensibly thrown an extravagant thirty-fifth birthday party for Nobantu in their golf estate home in Johannesburg. The expensive birthday gifts, amongst which is a Jaguar, are aimed at three goals. First, Andile wants to show off MAPAMO holdings (acronymised after the surnames of the three shareholders, Andile Makana; Anant Patel; Oupa Mokoena) to potential investors before the company gets registered at the Johannesburg stock exchange. Also, he

wants to make a public statement by asserting his masculinity and power, having defeated the circumstances of his past. Furthermore, it is a calculated strategy of buying Nobantu's silence, convince her that he can do anything for her, and rob her of her autonomy, as she keeps pestering him about establishing her own business and becoming self-sufficient. From Andile's perspective, Nobantu's self-sufficiency will imply that as her husband, he has failed to play his socially prescribed role of being a provider. His fears are confirmed when Anant, his colleague and friend advises him to support Nobantu's dream. He says:

I hear you, man, but letting her do this [...] it will appear as though I cannot take care of her as I should [...] I keep thinking, if she does this thing and becomes her own woman, where do I fit in? What can I give her that she cannot give herself? You see, Anant, my role has always been that of a provider. I was the guy in the driver's seat. Now, suddenly, she doesn't need me. This business thing has destroyed the fabric of who I thought I was in this relationship. I mean, Anant, have you seen those executive bitches that we have to deal with? What if she becomes one of them?" (2008:139).

When women show men how much they depend on them, it gives them satisfaction and strokes their male egos but when the opposite happens, it challenges their phalluses. Andile gets scared after Anant cautions him that if he fails to address his differences with Nobantu, it might result in divorce. Also, when Nqobisa goes missing under Andile's care, he fears that it might result in Nobantu divorcing him. The irony here is that Andile is the one who has been taking delight in threatening Nobantu with a divorce if she opens her own business. What sends him into a panic is the dread of losing the dignity that comes with being married. According to some hegemonic ideals of masculinity, a man must have a career, a home, a wife, and children (whom he can control) in order to be respected and treated with dignity Gennrich (2013). To this effect, Adichie (2014:27-28) argues:

But by far, the worst thing we do to males – by making them feel they have to be hard – is that we leave them with *very* fragile egos. The *harder* a man feels compelled to be, the weaker his ego is. And then we do a much greater

disservice to girls, because we raise them to cater for the fragile egos of males. We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, 'You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him.

The above assertion holds true for Andile. It is evident that he had constructed his male identity on the Anglo-Saxon and African neo-traditional principles that cast the Black woman as a minor who belongs to the private sphere, only to be provided for by a man. The only role that Nobantu is expected to play is that of a dutiful wife to Andile, and that of being a mother to his two children. As prescribed by traditional gender roles, she is expected to pose as a trophy, signalling and symbolising Andile's success to and against his male counterparts. She is supposed to model as an object, over which Andile has the rights of power and control. The traditional gender roles dictate that for a man with a phallic challenge like Andile, a wife is only there to reassure him that he is a "real man" by deferring or throwing away her own agenda to accommodate him, allowing him to take charge and to stroke his ego, even if it means doing so at the expense of her own dreams and aspirations as a human being. Looking into the question of power and control alluded to by Ratele (2022) earlier, it is evident that Andile wants Nobantu to depend on him economically, so that it can be easier to maintain his power and control over her. Looking at both Andile and Lerato's boyfriend who share a common goal of having absolute control over the lives of their partners, it becomes evident, as Ratele (2022:122) establishes, that the desire to have control over others transcends the boundaries dividing the absolutely destitute, the economically poor, the middle stratum, and the economically very rich.

Freud (1924), Lacan (1958), and Butler (2009; 2011) have all made substantial contributions to the discussion of the phallus, each presenting unique viewpoints that are indicative of their more comprehensive theories of psychoanalysis, gender, and sexuality. In Freudian psychoanalysis, as observed by Hook (2006), the phallus, which stands for masculine strength and authority, is essentially viewed as the penis, a biological organ that denotes dominance and masculinity. This perpetuates a binary

conception of gender in which femininity corresponds with lack and masculinity with possession. The theory propagates terms such as "castration anxiety" for males and "penis envy" for females, presenting these feelings as fundamental to comprehending the emergence of the psyche and the Oedipus complex (ibid). Castration anxiety, according to Freud (1924), refers to a young boy's fear of losing his penis, an organ which he associates with power and pleasure. He fears that his father will castrate him when he discovers that he is sexually drawn to his mother. Penis envy, on the other hand, refers to the feeling of inferiority and jealousy that a girl child experiences when she discovers that she does not have a penis. The girl supposedly feels deprived and desires to have this male sexual organ. In real life scenarios, when confronted with circumstances that undermine their authority or power, or when they feel challenged in their masculinity, some men may suffer from a type of anxiety known as "castration anxiety." On the same wavelength, "penis envy" may be viewed as women's resentment of the social status and dividends that men generally enjoy rather than as a genuine yearning for male genitalia, especially in the contemporary world (Rae 2020).

Lacan (1958), on the other hand, redefines the phallus as a symbolic signifier that stands for lack, desire, and the identity structure. He views the phallus as a concept that represents the absence which fuels desire rather than an organ, making it a more abstract and sophisticated idea than Freud's biological explanation. Lacan's view shifts the focus of Freud's castration complex from the actual fear of losing the penis to the symbolic implications of the process itself. Castration, in Lacan's view, represents the realisation of a gap in the symbolic order, which is necessary for the development of identity (Rae ibid). This deviation from the biological to the symbolic challenges the strict dichotomies and hierarchies that define Freud's initial theories and permits a more nuanced view of gender, identity, and desire. Lacan uses the phallus as a symbol for both want and lack to enable a more in-depth examination of how people perceive one another and how they view conventional ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman.

Judith Butler examines Freud and Lacan critically, as evinced in her writings *Gender Trouble* (2009) and *Bodies That Matter* (2011). She critiques the Freudian and

Lacanian binary concept of gender as restrictive, as these two allegedly exclude non-binary and queer identities. She contends that the phallus represents a symbol that perpetuates patriarchal systems and undermines the fluidity of gender identities. Because of its emphasis on a male/female dichotomy, which she views as a reflection of heteronormativity that marginalises different sexualities, she queries the authenticity of this perspective, especially when addressing gender issues in the contemporary era.

Conversely, she suggests that gender is performative and produced via repeated social practices, rather than being a stable identity related to anatomy. In this way, she refutes Lacan's idea of the phallus as a fixed signifier. Her deconstructive approach contends that the connotations associated with the phallus can be reinterpreted and subverted. This perception destabilises the phallogocentric frameworks set by Freud and Lacan. With Butler's perspective in mind, gender can be understood more inclusively, recognising non-binary identities and challenging the conventional connections of phallus power and desire.

In *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), Lacan's idea of the phallus, which captures the fears associated with masculinity and social expectations, serves as a critical lens through which to analyse Andile's concerns. For Andile, the phallus represents his standing in society, his expectations that go along with it, and his manhood. Given his wife's independence and success, it is possible to interpret his fear of failure as a fear of being castrated, that is, of losing his envisioned phallic authority. His ability to prosper and provide is intricately tied to his sense of self-worth, which is in keeping with traditional notions of masculinity. The social constraints that define a man's success in terms of his capacity to support himself financially, as well as his ability to provide for and dominate his family, further exacerbate this fear of failing. As Nobantu proclaims her own identity and goals, Andile's response mirrors the Lacanian concept of the phallic challenge. He feels threatened by the realisation that his value is not exclusively determined by stereotypically masculine characteristics, which casts doubt on his identity as a man. As he struggles with thoughts of inadequacy and jealousy, this challenge makes him face the limitations of his identity.

Aligning herself with Butler's stance, Wanner's narrative subsequently disrupts gender norms by demonstrating how Andile's anxieties are a result of an overt grasp of what it means to be a man. His struggle exposes the limitations of a phallogocentric conception of identity, in which relationship dynamics or personal fulfilment is not prioritised over societal norms when determining a man's value. This situation highlights the need for a re-evaluation of gender roles as well as a more nuanced interpretation of gender identity that challenges the narrow standards which determine worth and success in both men and women.

To highlight Andile's determination to dissuade Nobantu from pursuing her goal of becoming a businesswoman, Wanner clearly captures Andile's stance in his conversation with Nobantu thus:

Andile looked at her as though she had lost her marbles. Then, slowly, he started laughing. When he finally got hold of himself, he looked at her with tears streaming down his face and said, shaking his head like he couldn't believe he had just been woken up for this, "Nobantu, we have talked about this. I know you are a trained auditor and have those little sketches of yours you call designs, but do not deceive yourself that you can crack it in the business world. It's not that easy, and it would be twice as hard for you. You have barely practised your profession," he said patronisingly, like a parent talking to an impetuous three-year-old. "Hhayi, man, why don't you just concentrate on what you do best..." He paused and chuckled. "Being a housewife and a mother. Besides, no one cares about putting their children in designer gear" (2008:30-31).

From this excerpt, it can be deduced that Andile has chosen his words as well as gestures in a strategic way. He pretends to know what is best for her and acts as if he is smart. His intention is to undermine her dream, articulate it as ridiculous or unmerited, and to plant a seed of self-doubt, worthlessness, and self-loathing. He wants her to believe that she cannot make her own choices and decisions, and that she absolutely depends on him for validation. To his advantage, he manipulates the monolithic discourses of dominance which stratify society, accord more agency to the

dominant groups while silencing the marginalised. The excerpt underscores the way social hierarchies and inequalities are camouflaged and maintained through minimal use of physical violence, yet the impact they have on the victim is equally abrasive.

The condescension with which he treats her on the night of the party fuels Nobantu's determination to start her own business. It starts with one of Andile's business clients asking what Nobantu does for a living. In his state of drunkenness, Andile responds on Nobantu's behalf, loudly enough for those in the vicinity of the conversation to hear, and says, "Eish, *sisi*, our Nobantu here does nothing. She is just a housewife" (2008:25). This response is both condescending and infantilising. It insinuates that in comparison to her husband, who is a CEO of MAPAMO, Nobantu is as good as a nobody. Also, having her husband speak for her in her presence suggests that Andile regards her more as a child than his partner.

To underscore the brutality of Andile's words and the depth of the wound they have cut into Nobantu's psyche, Wanner emphasises them in italics, "*She is just a housewife*" (ibid). It is to this effect that Nobantu leaves the party immediately and goes straight to their bedroom. She has been publicly humiliated and disrespected, yet, as a wife, she should show respect to her husband. This suggests that in a patriarchal marriage, respect is not a give-and-take concept, it is only worthy to be received by the man, yet not suitable to be given back to the woman. The effect of Andile's piercing and sarcastic statement becomes evident when Nobantu looks at the rudderless image of herself in the mirror and reflects on what Andile has just said. She first tries to laugh it off, but the laughter turns into tears as she pours herself a glass of vodka and orange juice (ibid).

Contrary to Magodyo's (2013) as well as Naidoo's (2018) submission that formal education can play a significant role in helping men redefine what it means to be a "real man" and adopt positive masculinity, Andile's education does not influence his perception of gender roles. Despite having graduated as a lawyer at UCT and holding the position of CEO at MAPAMO holdings, he sticks to what his culture has prescribed and expects from him as a man, and what his culture expects from Nobantu as his wife. It is to this effect that he declares, "I would like to think that I am just a

culturalist. I want to take care of my wife and children. I want to be the breadwinner like the man is supposed to be” (2008:177).

In his argument on traditional masculinity, Ratele (2016) contends that the arguments that support the goodness of ‘the traditional’ are usually alibis for the perpetuation of heteropatriarchal masculine power, especially in cases where such power feels threatened. Resorting to tradition is a way of defending heterosexual men’s culturalist power, oppression of women, and exclusion of homosexual males, since there is a strong association between tradition and dividends of heteropatriarchal sexual domination. It is imperative therefore, that all the hidden stories within tradition are exposed, especially those which seek to ensconce a view of the rights of heterosexual men over women and homosexual men (ibid).

For some time, Nobantu has been relentlessly asking for Andile’s permission to venture into a clothing design business, but he has refused blatantly. Instead, to earn himself more credit at Nobantu’s expense, he has suggested that Nobantu should consider working for any charity organisation on behalf of MAPAMO. Because Nobantu wants something that will give her a sense of purpose and fill her with a sense of accomplishment, instead of continuing to live behind the shadow of her husband, she refuses. This implies that, unlike most women who have been socialised into normalising forms of abuse that are not physical, Nobantu is aware of her constitutional rights. She is ready to interrogate the oppressive structures of society, and she is not prepared to play the role of an accomplice in her own oppression. However, it has taken time for Nobantu to recognise the abuse and reclaim her agency. Brodie (2020) states that in an abusive relationship, the abuser manipulates the victim into believing that she is responsible for her own abuse because she refuses to comply with the culturally approved strictures of submitting to her partner. At some stage, unaware that Andile was manipulating her fears and values to control her and make her feel guilty, Nobantu had even blamed herself for messing up her reposeful marriage. This naivety, which characterises many a woman in patriarchal societies, becomes evident as the narrative indicates:

The previous time she had raised the subject, a few months earlier, he had even threatened her with divorce should she go ahead and defy his wishes. That time, Nobantu had cursed herself, asking herself why she caused so much trouble. Andile was right, of course, he gave her everything. She even had an untouched account where he had been depositing twenty-thou monthly for the last five years in the event that "if anything happens to me, you at least have some ready cash, before you begin sorting out the entire legal wrangle." She had been silenced then, certain that she did not want to get a divorce (2008:32).

Javaid (2015) states that in an emotionally abusive relationship, the abuser controls the emotions of the victim. He refuses to accept her feelings by trying to define how she should feel. Consequently, the victim may begin to agree with the abuser and become internally critical. Once this happens, the victim becomes trapped in the abusive relationship, believing that she will never be good enough for anyone else, except the abuser.

The truthfulness of this assertion becomes evident when Andile fails to understand Nobantu's confrontation after he refers to her as 'just a housewife' (2008:25). As far as he is concerned, Nobantu is an ungrateful little brat, who has the audacity to keep whining after he has spent so much to prove how much he loves her. The treatment that he expects from her is that of a demi-god, that she should sing his praises instead of confronting him. He believes that if a man provides for his wife, she no longer has any agency, she is expected to share his opinion no matter how oppressive.

The entrapment that Nobantu feels in her marriage has made her feel like she has lost her touch, not only as a woman, but even to Andile as his wife. His obsession with money and his pre-occupation with proving that he is a "real man" has made him forget that he has a wife whom he must make time for. His failure to attend the Atlanta Fashion Week with her because he would be too busy networking and making money (2008:24), and his inability to have a meaningful conversation with his wife as they used to because he always comes home tired after high-level meetings, networking parties and golf games that cannot be missed (2008:20), all indicate that money is

more important to him than his wife. As she shares the gravity of the situation with the reader, Wanner writes, "Today would have been a good day to make love to his wife, he thought, but all that socialising had made him tired. Besides, his wife, who was not much of a drinker, had been drinking at the party and was probably in a vodka-induced dreamland by now" (2008:21).

From this statement, it can be deduced that Andile is trying to make excuses to alleviate or to dismiss the guilt that he feels about his failure to carry out his conjugal responsibility of ensuring that his wife's sexual needs are catered for. To him, money is all that matters, and if the public is convinced that he can cater for all his wife's material needs, his phallus, which has been challenged by his poor social background, will be restored. The lack of intimacy between Andile and Nobantu has driven a wedge between them, and Andile seems to wonder what the cause is as the narrative indicates:

He remembered how it had been when they first got married. When he returned home after a long day's work, Nobantu would always have dinner ready, take a shower with him and rub his shoulders while listening to stories of how his day had been spent. [...] He remembered how sexually passionate she had been, both of them had been, never too tired to make love. He wondered what had happened to them. Nowadays they had both started knocking on the door of their ensuite bathroom to make sure that the other was decent – she could not even pee in his presence as she used to do in the early days of their marriage. Yes, they still had sex. No, not as often as they had done back then. He was tired, or she was tired [...]. When they did do it, it was robotic, and immediately afterwards, they would each roll to their own side of the bed (2008:18).

This detailed account of Andile and Nobantu's sexual life underscores the danger of androcentrism and the importance of intimacy in a relationship. According to Wharton (2012:42) androcentrism refers to an ideology which regards maleness and masculinity as the norms of human life. In most cases, feminist research focuses on forced sex as a form of violence. Conversely, this excerpt highlights that as much as

coerced sex is a violation of human rights, starving your partner of intimate sex, which is characterised by trust, closeness, and being vulnerable with each other both emotionally and spiritually, also amounts to emotional violence. Both partners are expected to contribute equally to the emotional welfare of their relationship. Andile's behaviour in this case resonates with a patriarchal ideology, where hierarchy and male dominance are eroticised, where men are often regarded as sexual subjects and women as objects who are simply there to cater for the sexual needs of men. Whether a woman desires sex for her own sexual gratification is often irrelevant and can sometimes be associated with a lack of morals. Because patriarchal heterosexuality is dominated by, identified with, and centred around men, it illustrates and teaches patriarchal ideologies, that it is men's needs and experiences that are important and that should be respected.

In his discussion on intimacy in relationships, Ratele (2022:123) warns that using the term 'intimate' loosely, to refer to the relationship between two people just because they have a steady relationship, stay together as spouses, and have sex, can be misleading. There are intimate relationships without intimacy. Citing the work of Jamieson (1998) he claims that intimacy refers to a very specific sort of knowing, loving, and being close to your partner. It is characterised by talking and listening, sharing your thoughts, and showing your feelings. The most crucial aspect is mutual disclosure, constantly revealing your inner thoughts and feelings to each other. This type of intimacy requires the couple to participate as equals (ibid). From this definition, it can be deduced that Andile and Nobantu's is not an intimate relationship. As indicated earlier, Andile operates on patriarchal terms, and he will do anything to maintain superiority to his wife. Once a relationship builds on inequality, violence is inevitable (ibid).

Initially, when Andile was still courting Nobantu, Wanner makes it clear that "he loved her, but more importantly, she had the type of demeanour that would make her a great wife for the type of man he knew he wanted to become" (2008:17). She also adds, "In those early days with Nobantu, he had wanted to possess her in the same way that he had wanted to possess the city" (2008:15). This indicates Andile's hunger for power as well as his proprietary approach to all else around him, including people.

He wants to show that he has control over his life and Nobantu's, and also that he wants his power to be felt in Johannesburg as a whole.

From the onset, Andile had wanted an accessory for a wife, someone who would complete him as a man, not compete with him for equality. Despite her education as a qualified accountant and her expertise as a designer for children's clothing, culturally, and according to the standards with which Andile operates, as a woman, Nobantu still belongs to the private space. It is only when Andile needs her skill that he is reminded of her potential. For example, when Andile left his well-paying job to venture into business (MAPAMO) with his friends and they did not have enough money to run it, Nobantu had volunteered to assist them with bookkeeping and running the reception, but immediately the company started running successfully, he quickly remembered that Nobantu's place was in the kitchen. This is because he does not want to give Nobantu credit for the success of the company because she is a woman, and according to the hegemonic and masculinist standards, her place is in the kitchen or behind the shadows.

Reynaud (2004) claims that man takes pride in making woman into the symbol of his own dependence. The further he alienates himself from her, the more he feels in control of his own masculine self. Through the femininity (passivity)/masculinity (virility, agency) binary that he creates, he exaggerates anatomical differences and increases woman's dependence. The extent to which he achieves this will help him concentrate everything that is associated with human strength in himself. What Andile attempts is to manipulate Nobantu into thinking that the world of work is only meant for men, so she cannot be successful in it, when ironically, she is the reason behind the success of the company, hence the title, *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). This indicates that Andile's mind-set is still trapped in "the man the hunter, the woman the gatherer" ideology. In this ideology, Haney & Barber (2022) state that with regard to sexual division of labour, women are relegated to the home while men are expected to go out and hunt for the means of survival. Andile wants to take credit all for himself to prove how powerful he and his team of men are. He expects to see only himself and his own needs reflected in his relationship with Nobantu. To show that he is the only one that matters in this relationship, the narrative states, "But it wasn't just the

sex. They no longer discussed general affairs as they used to do in the early days of their marriage either. Their talk now centred on how his day had been (him) and what money was needed for the children or some mundane domestic issue (her)” (2008:20).

Though it is not Nobantu but other men who are going to ultimately confirm his “real manhood”, the success of it depends solely on her cooperation, and if she refuses, cooperation must be enforced. To further assert that Nobantu belongs to the kitchen, when he spills some cognac on their expensive carpet on the night of the party, he does not regret it as Wanner writes, “There were two maids in the household and his wife to supervise them, he was sure that between the three of them they could get the stains out” (2008:12-13). This suggests that Andile’s misogyny and heteropatriarchal attitude have both relegated Nobantu to the level of a maid. He perceives her more as a senior maid who must be responsible for the smooth-running of the household, than his equal. His comparison of her to the city earlier in the narrative and the way he had wanted to possess her insinuate objectification, because under normal circumstances, no human being can own another as if she was an object.

Becker (1999) argues that in patriarchy, men use women and femininity to define themselves as men and their masculinity. They regard each other as real men and not women, when they display characteristics of being masculine, independent, powerful, commanding, invulnerable, rational, and in control. In contrast, a real woman is not seen as fully human and she is expected to be dependent, vulnerable, pliant, weak, supportive, nurturing, intuitive, emotional, and empathic (ibid). It is such patriarchal ideologies that make Andile oblivious to Nobantu’s needs and adamant not to allow her to venture into her own business. His condescending statement about the occupation status of his wife has added to the humiliation Nobantu experienced some time ago when her daughter, Nqobisa gave an innocent but embarrassing response when the children’s party hostess had asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. She had boldly said:

I haven’t really thought about it. Maybe I’ll own a company like my father or be a doctor like my Aunt Nazli. [...] But I know what I don’t want to be. I don’t

want to be like my mother. She does boring stuff like going to the salon and getting her nails done all day. She just waits for Dad to pay for everything (2008:44-45).

It is these unpleasant experiences that give Nobantu a strong urge to prove her potential as a businesswoman, not just a directionless housewife as Andile alleges. With the fear of getting her sense of self eroded by all the verbal abuse, name calling, and gaslighting, Nobantu eventually reclaims her agency and leaves the Makana household in an attempt to find herself. Instead of supporting her, Andile shifts the blame to her and his determination to punish her gets even stronger. This suggests that as patriarchal standards expect women to be confined within the domestic sphere, those who venture outside these confines are stigmatized for not acting like proper women. Because they take up roles which are traditionally meant for men, they might be seen as challenging men or encroaching their space. In such cases like Nobantu's, they always face harassment and abuse from men, who are attempting to reinforce their own power and control. The narrative captures Andile's reaction thus:

He couldn't believe it. How could she be so selfish, so inconsiderate. Hadn't he expressly forbidden her to get into business? What type of a wife just left without telling her husband? What type of mother left her children without warning? He wouldn't stand for this. He would make her suffer. He would make her beg to come back home. They would see how long her independence would last without money (2008:65).

As alluded to by Ratele (2022) earlier, money is used as a tool of power and control. Earlier, Andile has been using money to dissuade Nobantu from being an independent woman by doing everything for her, including buying her expensive gifts. Although Nobantu did not need anything, the money still belonged to Andile. Now that Nobantu will be making her own money, Andile is afraid that she will reclaim her autonomy, and he will lose power and control over her. Once this happens, Nobantu will move from the position of subordination to equality, and this is what haunts Andile.

Becker (1999) posits that what drives patriarchy as a system is a dynamic relation between control and fear. Through patriarchal practices men seek security, status, and other rewards through control, since it is the ability to maintain control that protects them against the loss of respect and humiliation (ibid). This resonates with Connell (1995;2000) and Morrell (2001), who maintain that men have a sensitive ego which drives them to engage in a continuous struggle to prove to other men that they are real men. This suggests that though patriarchy oppresses women, it is more about what is going on among men. Paradoxically, although the oppression of women may form the basis of patriarchy, the possibility is that it is not the point of patriarchy. This is evident through Andile's fear of trying to prove to Nobantu's father that he is a "real man" who can take proper care of his daughter. This fear of validation is hovering like a dark cloud above his head, regardless of the successful businessman that he has made of himself. The narrative captures Andile's fear thus, "Fifteen years after getting married to Nobantu, he still sometimes got the feeling that, in spite of all his success, her father didn't think him good enough for his daughter. What then if she went to work and this became some sort of proof that he couldn't look after her?" (2008:19).

Nobantu's father is not the only one whose validation Andile seeks. He also wants to prove his potential to white people whom he alleges think that he owes his success to the connections that he has gained because he is black (2008:29). As indicated earlier in Clowes (2008) and Hodes (2014), hegemony is racialised and successful masculinity is defined by individualism, independence, isolation, and autonomy. At the top of the spectrum is the white man who is perceived to have mastered it all, with the black man and the white woman sharing the same status immediately below the white man. Since successful masculinity removes the man away from the wife and children and portrays his success as an individual effort (ibid), Andile's effort to remove Nobantu from the public sphere is an attempt to assert his masculinity, and to show the public, especially the white people, that she has in no way participated in his success.

Andile's desperate attempts to keep Nobantu locked in the domestic sphere are resilient and unbending. When divorce threats and condescension seem to have failed, he tries economic abuse because he knows that she, together with her dream of

starting her own business can barely survive without money. When Nobantu confronts him, after all her credit cards have declined and brought her humiliation at the restaurant, his response reflects that he blames Nobantu for the inconvenience that she is going through. Instead of addressing it like a mature adult he snaps:

Don't ask me stupid questions. I worked for that money, and I can very well cancel what cards I want or freeze any account I want. Now [...], now listen, sweetie, stop being silly and just come back home. You don't need to go to these lengths. Come home. The kids need you and I need you. Everything will be alright once you get these stupid ideas out of your head. We can go on as before (2008:89).

The language that he uses to address her is abrasive. It is evident that he is addressing someone whom he regards as inferior to him. As suggested by Murray (2016), regardless of where they are located in the socioeconomic ladder, in a misogynistic patriarchal society, women must always negotiate their way in terms of very prescriptive and fundamentally gendered scripts. As the man of the house, Andile must always have the final say, even if it concerns other people's lives. This indicates that in the Makana household, misogyny is rampant and explicit. When a woman deviates from these prescribed gender roles, as Nobantu does, her actions are interpreted as threatening, not only to the social structure, but also to the mythology that separates women into demons and angels (ibid). Oakley (2002) concurs with Murray (ibid), as she states that angels are epitomes of sacrificial femininity, always putting other people first and running the domestic sphere to the best of their ability. If an angel like Nobantu, who has been submissive to Andile for fifteen years, suddenly and unexpectedly turns into a demon, the punishment that ensues must be harsh, so that she can learn a lesson.

For a very long time, Nobantu has been a Victorian angel in the Makana household, always putting Andile as well as the children's needs before her own. In her analysis of the evolution of the black South African man, Clowes (2008) states that the patriarchal ideologies that confine the woman to the domestic sphere are more of a

Victorian influence than African. They were welcomed to the African scene because the black African man wanted to mimic and challenge the white man's hegemony, which projected his success by isolating him from the domestic space and locating him in the external world of work, far away from his wife and family members. This left the wife solely in charge of every aspect in the domestic sphere. It is on this Victorian influence that African patriarchal ideologies are premised, where the woman is portrayed and understood from a stereotypical and one-dimensional perspective.

Theoretically, Oakley (2002:107) explains that homes and families are represented as safe and harmonious havens of retreat from the harshness of the external world. It is the responsibility of the woman to maintain this domestic idyll that should always be ready for the master's return home, with lamps lit; hearths with fires burning; and welcoming doors opened on scenes of love, acceptance, and security (ibid). As indicated in an earlier excerpt, Nobantu tries hard to reify this idyll, as she is seen preparing dinner before Andile gets home; taking a shower with him and massaging his shoulders while asking him how his day at work has been like; making love to him and showing how much she is prepared to support him. With all the expensive gifts that he has been showering Nobantu with in return, Andile has been trying to portray his marriage to the public as idyllic, while he knows that his main goal is to buy Nobantu's silence. This explains why he is so determined to punish her when she fails to fulfil just one gendered role, which is submitting to him as the master of the house.

Wanner's depiction of emotional violence in familial spheres explicitly challenges the deeply rooted assumptions about women's roles and the portrayal of the family and home as safe spaces. She reverberates Artz (2009), who argues that contrary to popular belief, the exploitation of women is not only confined to public spaces and relationships. Instead, the home which is always regarded as a haven, is the most common site of torture and cruelty against them. In stark contradistinction to the love and warmth that characterise the idealised image of the home, Nobantu bears all the emotional torture of having her dreams and aspirations dismissed as absurd, being talked down to, and being treated like Andile's subordinate. Her home, which was

once a love nest, becomes claustrophobic as her husband is not prepared to compromise his traditional principles.

After successfully cancelling all the credit cards, Andile does not care how Nobantu copes. Even when he learns that Tsholo, her friend, has taken her in, that does not seem to bother him. Instead, when the children ask the whereabouts of their mother, Andile arrogantly says that she is somewhere around Johannesburg, chasing rainbows (2008:73). He uses blackmail to win the children to his side, so that they too, can see Nobantu's venture from his perspective, that it is all meaningless and absurd, because he does everything for her. When they meet at Oupa and Penny's baby shower, three months after Nobantu left their home, they both cannot resist making love in one of the bathrooms in the house (2008:93). The passion that is contained in the sex clearly indicates that they still love and miss each other.

It is after this passionate lovemaking that Andile asks Nobantu to come back home as if it could only take good sex to make Nobantu give up on her dreams. In addition to the objectification of women, Andile's assumption reflects eroticisation of hierarchy, power, and control. Having his phallus reaffirmed makes him think that he is the only thing that matters in Nobantu's life. This resonates with the study conducted by Langa (2020) where some of the participants indicated that the ability to perform adequately sexually and to give women satisfaction was regarded as part of a successful masculinity because it guaranteed security to the relationship. This reflects a misogynistic attitude where women are seen merely as sex conquests.

The fact that he follows Nobantu to apologise, after she leaves the party in a fit of anger when Andile insinuates that the good sex will bring her back, indicates that he desperately wants her to come back. As he confides to his friend, Anant, Andile is not coping with all the responsibility of parenting and running the household all by himself, yet his ego talks him out of it. Wanner points out that despite having spent so many years with them, Andile does not know minute details about his children. Such details include Xolani's mode of transport to and from school, Nqobisa's pick up time after school, as well as their routine in the house. In Nobantu's absence, Andile even loses

the sense of time in the morning to an extent that Nqobisa misses her breakfast, and he gets to work late, something which never happened in Nobantu's presence. However, despite all these hiccups, as the demigod that he is, he is not prepared to beg, especially a woman whom he has done so much for, as the narrative explains:

Andile told him everything. The problems he had encountered with the children in the last couple of days, his wish that Nobantu would just come back home and his desire not to be the one to back down over the conditions of her return. He wasn't comfortable with her working before, and he wasn't comfortable with it now. If she came back home, he wanted to have back the wife he used to have before all of this started (2008:137).

Ironically, when Nobantu had failed to fetch Nqobisa, their daughter from school on the day of her departure, Andile had wondered what should have kept her busy to the extent of forgetting to fetch the child from school, since the only thing she did was stay at home. Similarly, Slindile does not appreciate Mfundo's role as the stay-at-home husband while she is busy working to sustain both him and their daughter, Nomazizi in *Men of the South* (2010). Through the characterisation of both Nobantu and Mfundo, the narratives challenge the stereotype that regards being a housewife or a househusband as equivalent to loafing. The texts highlight this role as equivalent to a full-time job, yet it is barely acknowledged, appreciated, and remunerated.

3.5 Concluding remarks.

Building on the previous chapter which focused on the different versions of masculinity, this chapter takes a closer look particularly at the dominant and problematic masculinities and tries to establish the source of violence around which these masculinities are constructed. It problematises violent and patriarchal masculinities and challenges the stereotype that associates all men with violence. From a socio-political perspective the chapter highlights intersectionality as it traces the trajectory of violence from the apartheid era and the way it was weaved into the psyche of the black South African man. It suggests that heteropatriarchal men enjoy

power over vulnerable groups, and this power is always demonstrated through the different forms of violence. From a cultural perspective, it examines the way in which violence is perceived by men and women, and how it is sustained.

The findings also support Frosh & Baraister (2008) as well as Langa's (2020) psychosocial theory which states that failure to fulfil the breadwinner role has an emasculating effect on men, and it is usually compensated for through violence. It observes that heteropatriarchal men perceive women as a threat to their dominance, since the constitution has granted them equal power to men. This power unsettles the gender order as it allows women to usurp roles that were traditionally meant for men. This, coupled with the drastic change in the socio-economic climate of contemporary South Africa which has left some men jobless, renders men powerless. The loss of power is compensated for through violence.

With reference to Ratele (2022), the chapter further demonstrates the centredness of GBV around money. Both its presence and absence trigger violent reactions from men. On the one hand, its absence emasculates the man as he gets incapacitated to fulfil the provider role, which is regarded as one of the most important traditional roles that qualifies the man as a "real" man. Oftentimes, he projects his anger and frustration to the woman, especially if she can generate her own income. On the other, its presence tempts him to adopt a controlling attitude, especially if the woman is dependent on him.

Contrary to the traditional belief that violence deserves attention only when it is physical, the chapter challenges the narrow definitions of GBV as it looks at other forms of violence and the impact that they have on the victim. It has been observed that because of the insidious nature of these forms of violence, the society as well as the victims themselves trivialise them, though their effects are equally brutal. Referring to Brodie's (2020) work, the chapter has highlighted that one of the reasons why the victims trivialise these forms of abuse is because in most cases, the South African judicial system does not treat the brutal cases of GBV with the seriousness that they deserve because GBV has been normalised. This makes women reluctant to

report the incidents of violence they go through because of the fear of secondary victimisation. It is important that both men and women get properly educated about GBV. The society must learn that no form of violence is normal or justified. It is also suggested that boys should be resocialised into egalitarian ways of life by making them aware of socio-economic changes which need to be perceived from the perspective of gender equality.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN MASCULINITIES

4.1 Introduction

In the complex socio-cultural landscape of South Africa, the construction of Black masculinities has been profoundly impacted by historical legacies of apartheid and colonialism, as well as contemporary socio-economic issues. Central to this construction is the often-disregarded role of women, who both participate in and subvert traditional gender norms. It is crucial to examine how women contribute to the perpetuation of traditional masculinities through socialization, cultural narratives, and economic dependencies, while also highlighting the ways in which they challenge and reimagine these norms through activism, alternative narratives, and intersectional approaches to gender justice. Understanding this dual role is crucial, as it illuminates the intricate dynamics of gender relations and the prospects for social transformation within South African communities. By examining these dual roles, we can gain a deeper understanding of the fluid and contested nature of Black South African masculinities and the pathways towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

The extent to which patriarchy has been normalised is attested to by Chisale (2020) who argues that the patriarchal ideology has become so powerful that men can easily secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress through various social institutions which justify and reinforce women's subordination to men. Some women are complicit with patriarchal practices, especially in domestic spaces as evinced in Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010) and *The Madams* (2006) in the sections that ensue. Knowles (2019) states that complicity in feminist studies refers to a situation whereby a woman is aware and not happy with her husband's patriarchal and abusive behaviour, yet she chooses not to challenge it. Such silence may be motivated by several factors including fear of emotional or bodily harm, the need for financial support, feelings of psychosocial insecurity, low self-esteem, desire for respectability, cultural expectations, psychological dependency, the feeling of indebtedness, and the

hope that the abuser will change (Ratele 2022). These, coupled with the traditional notions of womanhood result in women accepting their objectified status which has been imposed upon them by society as normal and legitimate.

The feeling of indebtedness as well as adherence to tradition is evident in the characterisation of Mzilikazi's mother in *Men of the South* (2010), whose housewife status makes her suffer in silence and not query the abuse she gets from her husband. Even when she tries to stand up for her rights, her husband manipulates her poor background to silence her as he snaps, "If your family have not taught you how to talk to your husband, you must go back to them to get some training" (2010:89). Mzilikazi shares his mother's pain with the reader as he reflects, "My mother buckled. Her family was poor. How could she go back and burden them with herself and three children under six?" (ibid).

Monteverde (2014) posits that the normalisation and internalisation of these conventions masks the underlying power imbalances, and muffles the victim's agency and voice, thereby accentuating the reproduction of the abuse. However, not all women are complicit in their own patriarchal oppression (ibid). Some may challenge it openly, like Nobantu who is prepared to sacrifice her marriage in exchange for her freedom in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). Others may look silent externally, as an indication of subordination, yet internally they engage in silent revenge, like Thandi in *The Madams* (2006). When Mandla, her husband, cheats on her with a nurse with whom he works at the hospital, Thandi does not confront him openly. Instead, she silently plans a weekend getaway alone at the Victoria falls, where she sleeps with a stranger. She does this to get even with Mandla. It is this subversion which is aimed at the transmutation of the abusive partners, that gives women a feeling of victory and justice. By foregrounding both complicity and subversion in her texts, Wanner unveils the unjust and manipulative nature of patriarchy. In its reaction to resistance, she also wants to highlight that patriarchy is never stable and constantly evolves, and that it is also resilient. Through the characterisation of Nobantu, Wanner suggests the possibility of reclaiming one's voice and agency in a patriarchal and abusive relationship.

4.2 Complicity and Subversion: Negotiating gender equality in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008)

4.2.1 Subversion of oppressive patriarchal ideologies and misogyny

As indicated in the previous chapter, the bildungsroman nature of the text portrays both Andile Makana and Nobantu his wife as co-protagonists, who embark on separate crushing journeys of self-discovery. Their journeys necessitate that both characters make life-changing decisions which involve a lot of sacrifice. Their feminine and masculine subjectivities are highly informed and shaped by their understanding of traditional gender roles, which have constructed the masculine and the feminine subjects as highly polarised entities. While Nobantu strongly believes in gender equality and is even prepared to sacrifice her marriage in exchange of her independence, Andile admits to being a culturalist (2008:177), who strongly believes in his traditional breadwinner role as a man, which entails providing economic sustenance to one's family. He is adamant not to allow Nobantu to open and run her own business, because doing so will portray him as a failed man who cannot take care of his family. Through the metamorphosis of these main characters, Wanner underscores the ambivalence of South African masculinities in the fast changing socio-economic as well as cultural sphere, while simultaneously challenging the relevance of the gender roles in the contemporary world.

The poem "*I have been a woman for too long*" by Criselda Kananda at the beginning of the narrative captures the limitations and frustrations that women often encounter in a patriarchal culture. It speaks to Nobantu's experience of struggling to define herself outside of the responsibilities of mother and wife. The statement alludes to a dissatisfaction with stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a woman, reflecting Nobantu's personal wish to defy cultural conventions and pursue her own goals. Similar to Nobantu's choice to leave her luxurious life in Johannesburg in order to follow her ambition of starting a clothing line, the poem acts as a call to rebellion for women to reclaim their identities and assert their agency. The tone of the poem might be seen as a cry for empowerment as well as a sadness. It emphasises how important it is for women to see their value and potential outside of the home. This feeling is

reflected in Nobantu's journey throughout the novel, as she ultimately decides to put her goals ahead of social demands, emulating the spirit of emancipation that the poem invokes. *Every Successful Man* has recurring themes of women's freedom, identity, and criticism of male supremacy. By describing the emotional and psychological implications of adhering to established gender norms, the poem accentuates these issues. It challenges readers to consider the social systems that control women's lives and to reconsider what it means to be a woman in the modern world.

Simphiwe Dana's rebellious song, "*Zundiqondisise*" (2008:49) (Understand me for what I am), which the reader encounters later in the novel, serves to further emphasise this melancholy tone. Nobantu sings this song as if she was addressing her oppressive and patriarchal husband, Andile, who subjects her to condescending treatment any time he feels like. She sings it as she is driving into her freedom, chasing her dream, far away from her husband and their claustrophobic home, which she feels has held her captive for fifteen years. The song, which is track number 3 in Dana's album, *The One Love Movement* goes thus:

Awulilo iphupha lam (You are not my dream)
Zundiqondisise, Zundiqondisise (Understand this, understand this)
Ungelilo izimba lam (You are not my sustenance)
Zundiqondisise, zundiqondisise
Zange ndithi andinako (I never said I could not)
Zundoqondisise, zundiqondisise
Nguwe owandenz'usana (You made me like a child)
Zundiqondisise, zundiqondisise
Ndinendlela yam yokuphuma (I've got my own way of going)
Zundiqondisise, zundiqondisise
Ndinendlela yam yokungena (I've got my own way of coming)
Zundiqondisise, zundiqondisise
Ndinendlela yam yokuthetha (I've got my own way of expression)
Zundiqondisise, zundiqondisise
Ndinendlela yam yokundiza (I've got my own way of soaring)

This song's message is a scathing critique of female subservience. The character in the song apostrophises an unnamed audience member who is assumed to be a man,

and she instructs him to let her live her life. She makes clear assertions that she is not completely devoid of intelligence to a point of vacuity, which would necessitate instruction and all manner of guiding from the male. She asserts her intelligence, independence, and lack of need for a man to make judgements about her best interests as if she were a child.

The storyline of the narrative begins in the middle of the story and follows the protagonist from her teenage years to the present, including her thirty-fifth birthday celebration and its aftermath. The narrative reveals that Nobantu had no plans to get married when she became pregnant at the age of nineteen. Her utmost desire was to carry on with her academic pursuits. She had misgivings about getting married, but Andile took a difficult decision for her. He argued that he wanted to be a responsible father and that if he had an illegitimate child, people would assume he couldn't support his family.

With the extra pressure from Nobantu's mother, Andile is able to convince Nobantu to marry him. The mother argues that if their daughter had a child out of wedlock, it would be embarrassing for the royal family. This indicates that Nobantu's mother holds the same cultural values as Andile, according to which a "real man" takes care of his family by getting married and providing for everyone in it. In return, a woman who has been married has the primary duties of being a homemaker and a mother. In other words, the woman must accept that the man will take care of her financial needs completely.

It is evident from the moment Nobantu gets pregnant that Andile wants to manipulate her for his own selfish benefit. He wants her to bury her dreams and remain trapped in the domestic sphere, while he pursues his and enjoys the limelight. The narrative shares this with the reader thus, "He loved her, but more importantly, she had the type of demeanour that would make her a great wife for the type of man he knew he wanted to become. He had known then what he would do. He would marry her" (2008:17).

From this excerpt, it is evident that as a royal child, Nobantu had been brought up with principles. She had respected Andile as her boyfriend, and still respected him as his wife, as the narrative indicates that everyone knew that she sought Andile's approval on anything and everything (2008:77). Moreover, as Andile admits, "she was too much of a good mother, reared by traditionalist parents, to want to get a divorce" (2008:20). In her analysis of traditional gender roles Adichie (2014:24) argues:

We spend too much time teaching girls to worry about what boys think of them. But the reverse is not the case. We don't teach boys to care about being likeable. We spend too much time telling girls that they cannot be angry or aggressive or tough, which is bad enough, but then we turn around and either praise or excuse men for the same reasons.

This kind of socialisation which teaches girl children subservience and prepares them for marriage at a very young age sends a message that it is bad for a woman to fight for her rights. On the same wavelength, it sends a message to boy children that they are entitled to be respected by girls, regardless of the way in which they treat them in return. The irony is that these two people who have been brought up with contradicting principles are expected to settle down in a marriage situation and make it work. If it fails, and ends up in a divorce, which is always perceived with disdain, the woman is always blamed for failing to protect her marriage as Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh (2018) argue.

It is this kind of socialisation makes Andile think that he can dominate Nobantu. However, with the education her parents had exposed her to, Nobantu had learnt to weave these principles together with the ability to fight for her rights, into the fibre of her being. This obstinate side of her, that neither Andile nor her mother knows, explodes when Andile deliberately inconveniences her by cancelling all the credit cards in a desperate attempt to sabotage her dream of designing children's clothes and to bring her back to servitude after her unceremonious departure in her quest for freedom.

In their telephonic altercation, Nobantu loses control of herself in a manner that surprises Andile. The narrative captures Andile's surprise at the sudden change of his wife's idiosyncrasy thus, "He was shocked at her language. In all their fifteen years of marriage, Nobantu had never once raised her voice to him. Whenever they disagreed, she would normally pull back and sulk" (2008:89). Andile's shock suggests that in a patriarchal context, anger is one of the things that are not expected from a woman, especially if it is directed at a man, and that man is her husband. A woman is supposed to suppress her feelings because she is a woman. For the sake of peace and harmony in the house, she is the one who is expected to compromise her feelings, not the man. This means that while some behaviours do not matter when portrayed by men, they are discouraged from women.

As she yells, "You bastard, [...] How the hell did you think I was going to survive if you cancelled the cards? Do you ever think of anyone but yourself?" (ibid), Nobantu's reaction clearly indicates that she is tired of being dictated to by Andile. This unexpected behaviour does not necessarily mean that she has lost respect for him, nor does it mean that she loves him any less. The only thing she detests is patriarchy and misogyny. She only wants him to take her seriously and to understand that she has a life of her own which is characterised by dreams and aspirations that have been shelved for a very long time.

Beauvoir (2011) argues that if a woman wants to overcome her complicity in her own unfreedom, there is no way out than to strive for her liberation. If a woman learns that she is the inessential and never becomes the essential, it is because she does not effectuate this change herself. For women to be regarded truly free, they must be able to express their existential freedom in the real world. According to Akinbode (2023), existential freedom refers to the notion that people have the inherent freedom to choose their own paths in life and make decisions, irrespective of the external restrictions and limitations. This concept places a strong emphasis on accountability, authenticity, and the inherent uneasiness that accompanies authentic freedom. It can be argued that though Beauvoir's suggestion seems to be the only way out of this predicament, it would assist too if the society would revisit the way in which boys and

girls are socialised. If from a very young age the children would be taught that biological anatomy is not an issue, and that as human beings they are equal and should treat each other thus, this approach might assist in producing a more egalitarian future society.

The stance that Nobantu takes in her quest for freedom, unlike Mzilikazi's mother who backs down when an altercation ensues with her husband because of dependence and protecting her marriage in *Men of the South* (2010), is to stand up for her rights, even if it means giving up her marriage. This kind of reaction reverberates Knowles' (2019) argument that, contrary to the belief that complicity is the inevitable outcome of women's existence, in most cases it is women themselves who play an active role in reinforcing their own unfreedom. It is worth noting, however, that refusing to be complicit comes with disadvantages. As Knowles (ibid) argues, refusing to be the Other, refusing complicity with man would entail renouncing all the benefits that an alliance with the higher caste would bring, as Andile attests to this by cancelling all the credit cards to punish Nobantu. By having a man justify her existence and meet her financial needs, a woman escapes both the economic risk as well as the philosophical risk of a freedom that must sustain itself (ibid).

Nobantu's hunger for her existential freedom challenges the above assertion. She is so desperate to claim her freedom to the extent that she is prepared to take any risk to repossess it. Her determination highlights James' (2003:165) claim, that real freedom only exists between equals who are not constrained by relationships of reliance. However, the fact that Nobantu wants to break free from the shackles of domesticity and live her life on her own terms does not mean that she does not have doubts about her decision. The narrative captures her ambivalence thus:

As Nobantu hung up, she felt a mixture of elation and trepidation. Elation because it looked like she might just be lucky enough to find a place in the Deep, and trepidation because she was unsure whether this was the right thing to do. What if she failed dismally? Would she be able to crawl back to Andile

with her tail between her legs? More importantly, if she failed and went crawling back to him, would Andile take her back? (2008:55-56).

As it traces the trajectory of their relationship, the narrative indicates that after Xolani's birth, Nobantu shelves her studies temporarily to care for the baby while Andile pursues his legal career in Johannesburg. Eventually, she joins Andile in their leased cottage in Melville where she completes her Bachelor of Commerce degree. After finishing her education, she spends a stint working for MAPAMO, a newly formed BEE company. When the business grows enormous, Andile makes Nobantu withdraw into her home role as a wife and mother. This is because Nobantu is a woman, and according to hegemonic and masculinist ideals, women belong in the kitchen or behind the shadows. He does not want to give her credit for the company's success. With his humble background, he wants to prove to the world that he has what it takes, he is a man. Becker (1999) points out that males see women as conduits to the emotional world, particularly their own. These connections are crucial because patriarchy teaches males to suppress their feelings and conceal their insecurities. They frequently look up to women to help them deal with feelings of emptiness, meaninglessness, and alienation. However, the patriarchal notion that real men are independent and autonomous sets males up to simultaneously want and detest women (ibid). This claim holds true for Andile. He needs Nobantu only as a tool which he is going to use to prove to the world that he is a "real man". He wants to use her to make up for his parents' failure to secure him a spot that is held in high regard in the social stratum, like Nobantu's. However, because of his bruised ego, he wants the limelight all to himself and detests Nobantu when she wants to shine in her own right. He does this with confidence because he knows that he has the backup of a patriarchal society, which justifies injustices and inequalities. It is the type of a society that rejects explanations which contradict the widely held belief, while keeping an eye out for anything extraordinary that emerges.

The misogyny that Andile portrays by relegating Nobantu to the domestic sphere, despite having assisted them to establish their company demonstrates selfishness, irrationality, and a lack of maturity. As a heteropatriarchal man who believes that

power is a reserve for men, Andile makes it his mission to ensure that he deprives Nobantu the power and renders her as invisible as possible. He wants her to believe that she is not worthy of any acknowledgement, and that the only person to be acknowledged is him. The extravagant birthday party he throws her as well as expensive Jaguar and diamonds that he presents her with, are meant to shift the limelight to him as a successful businessman, while Nobantu remains existing behind his shadow.

Given that Andile and Nobantu's mother have similar cultural beliefs, she frequently reminds her that being a wife and mother are a woman's most important responsibilities. Whenever Nobantu complains about her husband's behaviour, she does not hesitate to say, "You have two beautiful children, a husband who loves you, a mansion that no other woman eCumakala, even the premier, can boast having. [...] What more do you want, apart from your husband and children? that is your job, Nobantu" (2008:163). This attitude suggests that wifedom can be regarded as an extension of patriarchal ideology. Her mother also emphasises that in Andile, Nobantu has everything a woman could ask for because Andile is so successful that he can grant whatever request she makes. In this way, Nobantu's mother puts her daughter against her will in a neo-traditional domestic role. This kind of support is exhilarating to Andile, since Nobantu's mother is someone they both trust.

Reynaud (2004) posits that a man takes delight in using a woman as a tool to assert his masculinity. He argues that a man feels more in control of his own manly nature the more he distances himself from her. He emphasises anatomical distinctions and promotes women's dependency through the binary of femininity and masculinity. The degree to which he succeeds in this will enable him to focus all the qualities of human strength inside himself. This suggests that a man needs a woman for his validation.

Before Nobantu became rebellious, it had delighted Andile to know that he had Nobantu in the kitchen where he wanted her. It had equally delighted him to announce that Nobantu was a housewife whom he was taking care of, which implied that he had accomplished everything he had single handedly as a man. This explains why on the night of Nobantu's party he condescendingly announces, loudly enough for people to

hear, that “Our Nobantu here does nothing, she is just a housewife” (2008:25). Now that she has left, Andile is afraid that his masculinity will be threatened, as her presence in his life, only as a housewife, had boosted his ego as a man.

Nobantu had previously pleaded with Andile to let her start her own children’s boutique, but he refused. She prefers to be challenged, have all her energy expended, feel successful, and be free to shine in her own light rather than being restricted to a household setting or working for a charity group under MAPAMO. The narrative captures the claustrophobia experienced by Nobantu as she remains chained to the confines of her home thus:

As she put on her dressing gown and made her way to their ensuite bathroom, her eye caught her framed MBA on the dressing table. Was this all there was to her life? She wondered silently to herself. Prepping her husband and children to go to work and school respectively. A workout in her gym. A shower and an hour indulging in her passion (Andile childishly called it a hobby), sketching designs for the children’s clothes she one day hoped to bring to life. Manicures, pedicures, and lunches with Oupa’s vacuous second wife [...]. Then home to make dinner and, if she was unlucky, her husband would be there, never asking how her day had been, but whining tediously about his work [...], God, she didn’t care anymore. She had started shutting him out mentally even before he opened his mouth (2008:29).

Nobantu’s brewing rebellion escalates into a conflict after Andile’s sarcastic remark that Nobantu is just a housewife. It triggers a feeling from the previous humiliating but innocent one made by Nqobisa her daughter, when a children’s party hostess asked her what she wanted to be when she grew older. She had responded that she wanted to make something meaningful out of herself, not to just sit and do nothing like her mother who waits for her father to pay for everything (2008:44-45). By embracing a subversive attitude, Nobantu wants to achieve two things. First, she wants to prove to Andile that she has the potential to succeed in life without necessarily having to exist behind his shadow. She defiantly challenges the neo-African patriarchal conception of what manhood and womanhood is by breaking free from

domesticity and venturing into the business sector. This is regarded by Andile as a sacred space which should be preserved for masculine figures like him.

Secondly, she wants to influence her daughter, Nqobisa, in a positive way by redefining what womanhood means. She will achieve this by reclaiming her agency and deconstructing the traditional notions of femininity and masculinity. Unlike her complicit mother and aunt, Nobantu wants Nqobisa to grow up knowing that a woman does not need a man to validate her. With determination and hard work, any woman can be successful in life without depending on a man. Gabeba (2014) argues that black women can sabotage the way domesticity positions them in relation to social power. This can be achieved through gaining a voice and developing a sense of identity that opposes dominant masculinities. By characterising Nobantu as a headstrong woman, Wanner underscores that a woman's life should prioritise her self-actualization, identity, and dignity first. The significant changes in modern and post-modern marriages have afforded women the opportunity to develop their identities within a marriage. Material success is also good, but it should not come at the cost of the woman's identity and dignity.

With the determination she has, Nobantu is adamant that she is not going to give Andile the satisfaction by backing down. Despite the embarrassment of having the credit cards decline in front of the people at the restaurant, she soldiers on. Having temporarily moved in with Tsholo, her friend, after Andile has cancelled the credit cards which she used to pay for hotel accommodation, Nobantu and Andile agree that Nobantu will spend weekends with the children at Tsholo's place. With this arrangement in place, Andile's ego keeps him arrogant, hoping that Nobantu will make the first move towards their reconciliation.

The narrative states that whenever Nobantu went to pick up the children for the weekend, Andile would be conveniently closeted in his study, hoping that she would at least come in and greet, but never wanting to be the one to make the first move. After all, she had left their matrimonial home of her own volition, nobody chased her out. What he did not know was that Nobantu would call the children from her phone as she waited outside in the car, refusing to enter the house that constantly reminded her of the entrapment she once experienced (2008:91) and is at pains to break free

from. This suggests that Nobantu is forcing compliance out of Andile. She is challenging the traditional notions that define complicity as the inevitable outcome of female existence. With all the power he has had over her, she now wants him to realise that she too possesses the same power as he does. In her view, for their relationship to work, he must be prepared to share the power with her. However, despite her protest, she misses him as the narrative indicates, "She missed him. Of course, she did. But she wasn't going to be the one to break the impasse. If he loved her enough, he would come to her, promise to be supportive, and beg her (not order her, as he had done) to come back home" (2008:91-92).

Even after having had great sex in the bathroom at Penny's baby shower, Nobantu becomes livid that Andile thinks it is only going to take good sex to make her drop her dream and go back to servitude. Andile adheres to his masculinist beliefs, believing that fulfilling sex and wealth are necessary for a woman to accept him as a man and fall madly in love. On the contrary, Nobantu is determined to force respect from him because it is what she truly wants. She draws her power from knowing that among other things, he loves her so much, and that the parenting job is taking its toll on him, so he desperately needs her. The fact that Andile finds it difficult to disclose his predicament even to his male friends means it would be extremely difficult for him to accept "defeat" to Nobantu and beg her to come back. He does not want to expose his desperate need for her.

It is only after Anant, Andile's friend and confidante, calls him to order that Andile comes back to his senses and realises what is at stake if he continues with his stubbornness (2008:137-138). Anant reminds him that Nobantu's business venture is her dream and has nothing to do with Andile. He contends that Nobantu is a brilliant woman, so it is not surprising that she would typically grow weary of being reduced to nothing more than an ordinary housewife since she chose marriage at a young age, when she should have been figuring out who she was and where she would fit in the world. He also reminds Andile about the sacrifice Nobantu had made when they were establishing MAPAMO, as well as the support she had been giving Andile throughout their marriage. Having said all this, Anant tells Andile to stop being egocentric and start supporting his wife.

Contrary to Kornrich et al. (2013) as well as Sportel's (2016) assertion that in the contemporary world, a shift has occurred from a rigid marriage where the husband was the sole decision maker, to more egalitarianism and flexibility where the husband and wife are equal, Andile's stubbornness suggests otherwise. It indicates that in patriarchal societies, the ambivalence that emanates from cultural ideologies still deter men from embracing egalitarianism. When they started their conversation, Andile had anticipated that Anant would support his patriarchal and misogynistic ways. This explains why he blurts out in disbelief, "Hey, whose side are you on, man?" (2008:137).

Becker (1999) points out that men bond with one another through participating in acts that degrade and devalue women. Even those who distance themselves from such rituals are complicit. It is uncommon to find a man who consistently refuses such fellowship. Men are compelled to adopt disparaging views towards women in order to affirm their participation in the masculine brotherhood, whether they are active or passive participants in these all-male groups (ibid). By characterising Anant as the type of a man who refuses to be complicit with female domination, Wanner wants to highlight that it is possible to have a breed of men who refuse to associate with patriarchal tendencies. This is the type of a man that in this narrative Wanner strongly suggests contemporary South Africa needs.

The conversation with Anant results in Andile adopting a different perspective, ready to give Nobantu all the support she needs. To Nobantu's surprise, he starts by embracing a more egalitarian approach in the way in which he interacts with her. When she asks what miracle has befallen him that made him desert his stalwart misogynistic ideology, in a few words he responds, "Maybe I have seen the error of my ways" (2008:152). Though it has been a long and onerous journey, Andile's metamorphosis from a self-proclaimed culturalist to a flexible egalitarianist suggests the malleability of masculinities. As a social construction, it means that masculinities can be deconstructed and reconstructed through everyday social interaction.

Even if the process is tough and disastrous at first, Nobantu's insubordination towards her husband and mother greatly transforms Andile's sense of worth. As suggested by Becker (1999), when hyper-masculinity is exalted and traditionally feminine traits such

as caring and valuing relationships are denigrated, neither men nor women thrive. Also, when males are forced to adopt hypermasculine traits and suppress feminine ones, and when females are forced to adopt traditionally feminine traits and suppress masculine ones, human beings do not flourish (ibid). This is evident in the plot structure of the novel where Wanner highlights both the issues that affect Nobantu as a woman, and the hurdles that Andile experiences as a culturalist in his marriage. Both Andile and Nobantu care for each other, the only problem is the way in which they interpret male and female subjectivities which seems to contradict each other.

The fact that Andile finally opens up to Anant about his vulnerability, goes to Nobantu and begs her to return home, tries to the best of his ability to support Nobantu in her journey towards independence, and starts to view his role in the family as that of a lover and a parent rather than a dictatorial Automated Teller Machine (ATM) dispensing money as a reward for behaviour he approves of, also demonstrate that masculinities are flexible. Along with socioeconomic and perceptual changes, they are subject to change (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). In light of the significant changes to the labour market that appear to advantage women, men must negotiate power sharing with women. Even though they have reconciled and Andile is a supportive husband, Nobantu still resists the temptation to involve him in her business challenges that require Andile's experience and expertise. She wants to own her success as Nobantu, not as Andile, a Black Economic Empowerment tycoon's wife.

4.2.2 Destabilising traditional gender roles.

Talbot & Quayle (2010) argue that as masculinities are socially constructed, it is exceedingly unlikely that any type of masculinity can be created and sustained by men alone. Even in rarefied male-only environments like the military, boys' nights, secret organisations, or golf clubs, where women may not be physically present, men draw on women as "the Other" to construct their masculine identities (ibid). This indicates that the identities of male/masculine and female/feminine are inextricably intertwined. The idea of woman as "Other" serves as the philosophical expression of man's dominion. In addition to having fewer resources and opportunities than men, women are less free on a more fundamental level since they are seen as the "Other."

As stated in Beauvoir (2011), this existential Otherness describes the general predicament of women and contributes to the understanding of their material and social unfreedom. In this existential meaning, to be the Other means to be the passive object to a man's active subject. As the Other, woman determines and differentiates herself in relation to man, but he does not in relation to her, she is the inessential in front of the essential (ibid). Wanner's depiction of Nobantu's mother suggests that she plays a significant role in the construction and sustenance of hegemonic masculinity as well as accept the position of every woman as the Other. She embraces an emphasised femininity which is guided by a religious adherence to traditional gender roles, and she expects the same from Nobantu. This suggests that despite the degree of equality they now enjoy in society, women still promote and uphold hegemonic masculine ideals. The entrapment of the contemporary woman in traditional gender roles which qualifies her as the man's Other is captured in Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (2011) thus:

Woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even though her condition is changing, woman is heavily handicapped. [...] Even when her rights are recognized abstractly, long-standing habit keeps them from being concretely manifested. Economically, men and women almost form two castes; all things being equal, the former have better jobs, higher wages, and greater chances to succeed than their new female competitors; they occupy more places in industry, in politics, and so forth, and they hold the most important positions (Beauvoir 2011:9).

Kostas (2021) defines emphasized femininity as an entity that is placed at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. This kind of femininity is focused on appeasing the interests and desires of men and is centred around women's adherence to their subordination to men. Despite being quite public, its subject matter is specifically related to the house and bedroom, which are both regarded as private spaces. Specifically, emphasised femininity is a metaphor for women's dependence on men, as well as their passivity, friendliness, lack of technical competence, and motherhood. It

manifests itself through the positioning of women as pariahs in the public sphere and nurturers and housewives in the private sphere (ibid).

As she yearns for the luxuries enjoyed by her daughter which are lavished on her by her rich husband, Nobantu's mother subjugates her into her husband, Andile's subservience by abusing her royal position and authority. It is to this effect that Nobantu eventually retaliates:

No, Ma, you weren't doing what was best for me. You have never done what was best for me. Doing what's best for me requires consulting with me on the decisions that affect my life, not telling me how I am supposed to make those decisions. [...] All you are worried about are the dreams that you have harboured for me over the years and how they seem to be going down the drain. [...] The boys do whatever they want to do. [...] You don't interfere in their lives. No. But you are always in my life. I can't do it anymore, Ma (2008:164).

Becker (1999) maintains that just like men, women can either be privileged or disadvantaged by the positions of power that they hold in their social settings. A person's level of privilege is determined by the social position she holds and how highly her culture values such positions. If such positions endow power upon them, just like men, women can use this power to oppress those in vulnerable categories (ibid). Even though the role that Nobantu's mother wants her to embrace is the one that will effectively deny Nobantu her humanity and suppress her freedom, Nobantu's mother does not want her to reject her role as the Other, as man's submissive and dependent counterpart. Instead, she wants her to accept and even celebrate it. This suggests that women's restrictive social environments can be a major factor in limiting their perceptions of who they are and what they think they are capable of, thereby reducing their options for survival and stifling their existential freedom.

As suggested by Beauvoir (2011) in *The Second Sex*, their materialist, phenomenological as well as existentialist mindset makes traditional femininities defend and embrace their position as sexual objects, which is tantamount to their own oppression. This complicit stance that is embraced by Nobantu's mother is responsible

for the reproduction and sustenance of the othering of women. In their telephonic altercation which ensues from Nobantu's attempt to break free from the yoke of domesticity, her mother expresses disbelief that her own daughter, whom she has brought up in a traditional way, has decided to abandon tradition. As she struggles to contain her anger, she snaps, "*Uyahlanya*, Nobantu? [...] I said are you mad? Was it your father's sisters who bewitched you? After that great party that your husband threw for you, you just leave?" (2008:76).

From this excerpt, Wanner's portrayal of Nobantu, Andile, and Nobantu's mother's ideas of femininity places Nobantu in opposition to traditionally held ideas about how masculinity and femininity are constructed. This tactic works effectively in the narrative because it challenges patriarchal notions of what a man and a woman should be. Despite her mother's misgivings, Nobantu breaks free from domesticity and ventures into commerce, an area her husband believes is just for masculine figures like him. In doing this, she defiantly challenges the neo-African patriarchal conceptions of manhood and womanhood which confine the woman in the private sphere while allowing men to venture out into the public sphere. Arguing against the socialisation of girls into role of subservience, Adichie (2014:27) writes:

Teach her that to love is not only to give but also to take. This is important because we give girls subtle cues about their lives – we teach girls that a large component of their ability to love is the ability to sacrifice their selves. We do not teach this to boys. Teach her that to love, she must give of herself emotionally, but she must also expect to be given to.

In synergy with Adichie, Wanner's text queries and challenges the socialisation of girls into subservience and the idea of family rights, responsibilities, and roles. It demonstrates how essential traditional femininities are to upholding traditional macho behaviour. Because Andile knows Nobantu's mother's traditional stance, he manipulates her into assisting him to bring Nobantu back. Horrified and mortified by how disrespectful and disobedient her daughter has become, Nobantu's mother immediately departs for Johannesburg to speak some sense to her rebellious daughter. The narrative captures her attempts to convince Nobantu otherwise as she snaps:

Just what goes on in this head of yours? [...] You have two beautiful children, a husband who loves you, a mansion that no other woman eCumakala, even the premier, can boast having. What more do you want? [...] Hhayi. Stop these selfish, childish games. Most people do not have what you have, but you keep crying. What more do you want, apart from your husband and children? That is your job, Nobantu (2008:162-163).

As far as Nobantu's mother is concerned, a woman becomes complete when she has a husband and children, and she must take it as her duty to commit fully to them. By highlighting such male and female subjectivities, Wanner underscores that according to the traditional gender roles, the simultaneous creation of complementary masculinities is necessary for the formation of female identities valued by women. However, in their conversation it transpires that Nobantu has changed and no longer wishes to do as her mother and husband command, choosing instead to go after her own desires and prioritise her work. Her understanding of how her mother and husband use the domesticity epistemes to defend their obstruction of her aspirations in the world, causes her to create a new and uncompromising frame of reference or feminine identity that dissociates from traditional notions and defines womanhood in opposition to such dominant discourses. By starting her own business, she gains a voice with which to challenge Andile's traditional perceptions of manhood and womanhood. As a result, she achieves freedom, because as stated in Dlamini (2018), freedom lies in our capacity to discover historical links to domination, and to resist the ways in which we have already been classified and identified by dominant discourses.

The same sentiments of defining femininity through opulence derived from a woman's position as the man's Other are shared by Nobantu's aunt, Thembi. Beauvoir (2011:664) argues, "Rather than resisting unfreedom and refusing the limits of her situation, woman embraces her role as the Other in an attempt to convert her prison into a heaven of glory, her servitude into sovereign freedom". To both her mother and aunt, Nobantu's happiness comes secondary, what is of paramount importance is the luxurious lifestyle that she enjoys as the business tycoon's wife. The narrative captures this sentiment thus:

In the past, when she had complained to her mother about Andile's archaic attitude towards her gender roles, her mother had always questioned her, "Hhawu, sana, why are you so ungrateful? Many women are dying for what you have, and you are complaining. Your husband gives you and your children everything. Look at your wardrobe, the trips you make. Which woman would not die to get a trip to Tahiti just to buy genuine Tahitian pearls? [...] No, my child, I did not raise you to be an ungrateful wife. Stay with your husband without complaining. Besides, you know what your aunt, Thembi says [...] "Better to cry in a limousine than laugh in a taxi" (2008:33).

Wanner portrays both women as complicit voices which embrace, actively co-produce, fetishize and normalise the treatment of woman as the significant Other. She underscores the fact that contrary to popular belief, men are not the only source of female subjugation and exploitation. Women can and do experience oppression at the hands of other women, particularly in the African cultural context. This is what Kanyoro (2002:107) conceptualises as "women's violence against women." By trying to convince Nobantu to look after her husband and children and renounce her aspirations, Nobantu's mother shows an element of internalised oppression. In the contemporary world which is characterised by an array of opportunities for women, she still affiliates to the patriarchal ideology that subjects woman to man's subservience. By portraying Nobantu as a headstrong woman who defeats all odds to achieve what she wants, Wanner contends that the oppression of women by men will be significantly resisted by women's collective activism, which is only possible when they close ranks and unite.

The same internalised oppression becomes evident when Nobantu's mother condones the blesser phenomenon between Penny and Oupa, who have an age gap of twenty years, yet she criminalises the same between an older and divorced Tsholo and a younger Mxolisi. She contends that the social standards allow men to date younger girls, claims that this has been the case for ages, and asserts that it is a traditional role for men to take care of women, not the other way around (2008:166). In defining a blesser phenomenon, Mampane (2018) claims that older wealthier men referred to as "blessers", often entice younger women referred to as "blessees", with cash and

pricey endowments in exchange for sexual favours. Mapping the trajectory of the blesser phenomenon, Thobejane et al. (2017) highlight that the term rapidly acquired popularity in 2016, when young women began posting images on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Using the hashtag "#blessed," these photos boasted of the blessees enjoying cocktails on the beach, popping champagne bottles in the club, or getting their nails done.

While Thobejane et al. (2017) contend that the blesser is a modern-day 'sugar daddy', Doyisa et al. (2023) argue that although the "sugar daddy" issue is at the base of the blesser phenomenon, the two behaviours are distinct from one another. Typically, sugar daddies provide out essentials like airtime and groceries. Conversely, although blesser also take care of these things, they tend to go overboard and shower the blessee with more expensive gifts. Some of these include high-end apparel and accessories, overseas trips, and sporadically, automobiles and real estates.

Her support for Oupa and Plastic Penny's relationship means that just like her son-in-law, Andile, Nobantu's mother supports "the man the hunter, the woman the gatherer" ideology. This is a repressive ideology since it affords males greater freedom, authority, and leisure while leaving women to take care of the family on their own. She subscribes to the socially oppressive ideology that normalises certain male behaviours, such as having multiple sexual partners, while demeaning older, unmarried women who have younger companions.

Nobantu's mother further portrays internalised oppression through her homophobic attitude. Staples (2004) maintains that any gender-based prejudice or discrimination can be regarded as sexism. Since it is associated with gender stereotypes and gender roles, it might include the belief that one sex or gender is inherently superior to others. In congruence with this, Langa (2016) claims that any kind of relationship with homosexuals is regarded by all homophobes as contaminating, hence it should be avoided at all costs. Nobantu's mother disapproves of Nobantu's friendship with Ntsiki, her lesbian friend, with the fear that she will coerce her into homosexuality, and that might result in Andile divorcing Nobantu. As a traditionalist, she strongly believes that divorce taints the image of the wife's family as it is an indication that she was not brought up in a proper way.

In patriarchal societies, marriage is held in high esteem and divorce, which is perceived with disdain, is always interpreted as a woman's fault. If it happens, she is considered to have invalidated her existence since she is believed to depend upon man to complete her (Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh 2018). Nobantu's mother's homophobic attitude as well as a patriarchal mindset emulates Ntsiki's mother's, who maintains that the demonic spirit of homosexuality that possesses her daughter should be prayed away so she can find herself a good husband (2008:128).

The way Nobantu's mother perceives Andile is comparable to Tumi's vision of a "real man" in the novel *Black Diamond* by Mda (2009). Tumi, who embraces the patriarchal ideology of a man being a provider, makes every effort to turn Don Mateza, her partner, into a "black diamond." Black diamond refers to black people who, after 1994, used their political and social contacts from the apartheid era that they developed while incarcerated to accumulate wealth through Black Economic Empowerment. More broadly, it refers to the new black middle class in South Africa. The reason why they are likened to diamonds is because of the prestige associated with the gemstone. As a result, just like a diamond, they have amassed some riches or purchased power in addition to their status. Despite the good personality that Don Mateza has, Tumi remains unimpressed. This suggests that to the contemporary South African woman, the good masculine qualities that a man might possess only count as secondary, what is of paramount importance is how much of a black diamond he is.

Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) argue that hegemonic masculinity is not a standard that is only held in high regard by men. Rather, it is seen as a cultural model or ideal of masculinity that is primarily recognised and accepted by both men and women, even if they do not have the opportunity to conform to it. As far as Nobantu's mother is concerned, with his BEE status, Andile is the most suitable husband for her daughter as he ticks all the boxes of successful manhood. This attitude reverberates Lauren's in *The Madams* (2006), a white South African woman who claims a distant relationship with the British royal family. Her obsession with the royal family results in her naming her eldest daughter, Elizabeth. As if this is not enough, she enrolls her in a Sotho class, in a desperate attempt to arrange a romantic relationship between her and the prince. The narrative captures her saying, "As a matter of fact, I enrolled her because Prince

Harry is always going to Lesotho and, who knows... she is almost a teenager. If she speaks Sesotho well enough, being a translator could be just her way back to our royal roots" (2006:23).

Just like Nobantu's mother, despite her level of education, Lauren's perception of femininity demonstrates internalised oppression. She subscribes to the traditional patriarchal belief that a woman's success is determined by her capacity to secure a marriage with a wealthy husband. This suggests that as the society holds hegemonic masculinity in such high regard, every man will be tempted to strive towards this ideal and disregard other positive character traits which would make life more meaningful and fulfilling. The downside of it is that, as Becker (1999) indicated earlier, men, women, and children do not prosper when hyper-masculinity is elevated and traditionally feminine attributes like caring, taking care of others, and valuing relationships are denigrated. Furthermore, human beings do not flourish when all males are forced to adopt hypermasculine features and suppress feminine ones, and when all females are compelled to accept traditionally feminine traits and suppress masculine ones.

Through Nobantu's resilience which eventually transforms Andile's mindset, Wanner underscores the importance of existential freedom for all human beings regardless of sexual orientation. What is important is that all people are equal and should be afforded equal opportunity to live their lives to the fullest, explore the different avenues that life offers, and utilise their God-given potential to the maximum.

4.2.3 Embracing emphasised femininity.

Wanner portrays Plastic Penny as someone who symbolises many young black South African women whose entrapment in the 'man provider' ideology make them use their youthfulness to ensnare older men to provide for their material needs in exchange for sex and companionship. Wanner withholds her real name, and Plastic Penny is a name that was given to her by Nqobisa because of her obsession with artificiality. She takes a trip to Brazil each year to get plastic surgery to enhance her beauty. The reason why Wanner has withheld her real name might be associated with her lack of identity and purpose. She does not have anything to her name, and she defines herself by

gaining popularity through living behind the shadow of prominent men. She features in the novel through the success of Nobantu's clothing line, Soweto Uprising, which she has targeted to pamper her and Oupa's unborn baby. As Nobantu's foil, her personality and the type of femininity she subscribes to are the only aspects about her that entertain the reader. Unlike the headstrong Nobantu who would do anything to restore her self-esteem and dignity by being independent, Plastic Penny's self-worth as a woman is defined by playing her subservient role to perfection.

The narrative indicates that when she took over as Oupa's mistress, she was eighteen years old, giving their relationship an age gap of twenty years. Upon realising that the married Oupa was not prepared to leave his wife for her, she intentionally published the amorous photos of herself and Oupa, and then claimed victimhood. Oupa's wife, Tsholo, felt humiliated by the leaked photos, which compelled her to file for divorce, paving way for Penny who ended up getting married to Oupa. Unlike Nobantu, who refuses to live behind her husband's shadow and establishes herself as an independent woman, Plastic Penny does not have any apparent skill, yet she is well praised in the media for her deft consumption, using Oupa's money. She influences social media fashion trends, and Nobantu's clothing line gains popularity in South Africa because Penny's child has been seen wearing it.

As Dlamini (2018) argues, the unquestioning glorification of such femininities and associated values is harmful to the development of girl children and contemporary Black South African slay culture. While it allows the girl child to embrace her body and femininity, it equally affirms to men that young girls and women are always available to them as objects of their lust and maintenance. This bolsters the urge among young women and girls to dress, look, and be beautiful in a way that appeals more to men rather than themselves.

Dlamini (ibid) further argues that while there is nothing wrong with learning the art of preservation by self-pampering and dressing well, there is a problem when a woman acquires such without her own financial support. There is something wrong with a particular type of beauty that forces women into patriarchal ideals of attractiveness while also leaving them broke. It paves way for the blesser phenomenon that is pervasive in present day South Africa's visual culture (ibid). It is under such

circumstances that Plastic Penny stalks and eventually falls in love with a wealthy married Oupa who can provide for her.

This portrayal of Plastic Penny suggests that her identity and perception of self are derived from her ability to live up to the conventional expectations of a devoted wife. Her position embodies the ideal of the typical woman, whose worth is determined by her capacity to support her husband, run the home, and follow social mores. She does not just assume this submissive role; it becomes an important aspect of who she is and how valuable she feels. Her internalisation of societal expectations stems from patriarchal norms that establish a woman's role in the home. She seeks recognition and a sense of accomplishment by aligning herself with these beliefs and succeeding in her role as a dutiful wife. However, because her value is externally validated, this also raises questions about her agency. Despite the fact that she may seem satisfied in her submissive role externally, Wanner's portrayal of Penny hints an underlying tension. The internal turmoil within the character stems from the dissonance between her true self and the identity she has forced upon herself in order to be accepted and approved. This dilemma underscores the emotional and psychological impacts of conforming to rigid gender norms. Her subjugation is nuanced because it shows both acceptance of and opposition to her assigned role. She finds solace and meaning in her subordination, but there is also a subliminal criticism of how this role limits her actual potential. Wanner exploits Penny's persona to underscore the commonly unseen challenges faced by women who are constrained by conventional gender conventions.

Though Plastic Penny and Oupa's relationship is portrayed as strife-free to the public eye, the blesser phenomenon in contemporary South Africa is characterised by serious ramifications. Scholarship has indicated that transactional sex, which is a dominant feature of such relationships, has contributed to a rise in HIV infection rates, particularly among young women. It has also been linked to a concerning rise in teenage pregnancies. While these are all terrible effects of the blesser phenomenon, the rise in gender-based violence (GBV), and femicide is particularly worrisome in contemporary South Africa, as it was highlighted in chapter one.

In their argument, Doyisa et al. (2023) maintain that in addition to jeopardising one's health and wellbeing, transactional sex which is at the core of such relationships, can result in intimate partner violence and sexual coercion. Gender imbalance is always pervasive in relationships with huge age disparities, and it is mainly women who are vulnerable under such circumstances. They experience physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Frieslaar & Masango (2021) point out that according to a substantial body of recent literature on blesser-blessee relationships, there is a strong correlation between transactional sex, sex work and gender-based violence. This violence can be explained in terms of men's gendered power and control which emanate from traditional gender norms.

In his account on the blesser phenomenon, Mampane (2018) emphasises the role of *Lobola*, a requirement that a man pays a bride price to the family of the woman he intends to marry according to the African cultural practice, as one of the significant contributing factors in GBV. This gender convention, it is argued, has created a cultural expectation that men must provide for women financially, even if they do not have any intentions to get married. As a result, women might feel entitled to be provided for by men, who in return, feel entitled to full ownership of the beneficiary and to command sexual contact with her. It is under such circumstances of obligation that women cannot negotiate the terms under which they can engage in protected sexual activity. They even fear to ask their partners to test for HIV as they claim that such conversations might incite violence (ibid). This in turn influences how they experience abuse, coercion, and force.

In his study on the blesser-blessee phenomenon, Basson (2018:10) demonstrates the relationship between this phenomenon and the objectification as well as commodification of women. He refers to the investigation undertaken by the Youth Research Unit (YRU) at the University of South Africa (UNISA), whereby the participants gave a detailed account on the existence of websites devoted to activities associated with the blesser-blessee phenomena. These included, among others, BlesserInc, BlesserFinder, and BlesserFinder Mzansi, which flaunted photos, captions, and catchphrases that suggested the commodification of women. Plastic Penny makes use of such websites to post photos of herself being pampered by Oupa's money. The

investigation also indicates that when blessers and blessees seek for one another on these and other websites, it is the language and imagery that sends the messages of objectification and commodification. Young women are seduced into these transactional sex relationships by material possessions like vehicles, luxury vacations, private aircraft, and designer handbags. In return, they flaunt their barely dressed bodies online in a way that implies that their value and worth are only defined by their bodies and sexuality.

The contemporary South African text that captures the blesser phenomenon in a compelling manner is a' Motana's *Hamba Sugar Daddy* (2016). In the narrative, the protagonist, Rolivhuwa, a teenage schoolgirl who hails from a poor socio-economic background is lured by her friend, Kedibone into a blesser-blessee relationship. She convinces Rolivhuwa thus:

I told you that you can use your body [...] It's a matter of opening your beautiful shiny thighs, and having bank notes transferred into your purse soon [...] You don't understand, Roli, I am talking about having a relationship with a man who has money; I mean a stack of money, not a lousy guy who'll tell you about burial societies, mother's funerals and a long list of lame excuses (2016:11-12).

The richer and older boyfriend, Bigvy, takes advantage of the situation and showers Rolivhuwa and her mother with gifts. In return, he owns the younger and naïve Rolivhuwa, demands unprotected sex (which leaves Rolivhuwa HIV positive) whenever he feels like, and he almost kills her when she wants to quit the relationship. Similarly, Phamotse narrates her own unpleasant real-life experiences with a blesser through the protagonist, Treasure in her text, *Bare* (2017). As she talks to her interviewer about her work on researching the blesser phenomenon, she highlights that many girls who are involved in such relationships disappear, they never come back. She also discloses that if she did not quit the relationship, her blesser was going to kill her, or arrange someone to kill her.

Reynaud (2004) indicated earlier that a man takes delight in using a woman to validate him as a "real man". As suggested in Butler's (1990) performativity theory, the attraction for men in these blesser-blessee relationships lies in the fact that being seen

with younger women by other men proves their sexual virility. This explains why blessers make life difficult for their younger women when they are no longer interested in the relationship. It is worth noting that Oupa is a willing victim who enjoys pampering the young Plastic Penny to prove that he is a "real man" who knows that his traditional role is to provide for a woman. In addition, having the young Plastic Penny as his trophy wife gives him credit among other men as it demonstrates that despite his age, his sexual virility has not deteriorated.

As indicated in Becker (1999), men who identify as heterosexual expect that their relationships with certain women will only serve to further their needs and desires. However, though they play a significant role, it is not women who ultimately affirm manhood. These affirmations will come from other men. This is evident as Nobantu and Andile's conversation insinuates that Oupa enjoys showing Plastic Penny off, while young studs wonder how, at his age, he managed to get a hot chick like her with handfuls of luscious breasts (2008:173).

In the narrative, it is rumoured that Plastic Penny deliberately falls pregnant to secure her position as Oupa's wife after Tsholo has filed for divorce, following the humiliation she experienced when Oupa and Plastic Penny's onerous photos are leaked. Knowing that she is married to a promiscuous Oupa, Plastic Penny also wants to ensnare him, with the hope that the baby would tone down his promiscuous ways. Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh (2018) argue that instead of protecting one another, women appear to support and contribute to the destruction of other women. The enemy of women seem to be themselves. Some act as agents of destabilisation, violence, and humiliation against other women (ibid).

To show her preparedness to play her housewife role and portray her emphasised femininity, Plastic Penny starts taking her future motherhood seriously. She wants to prove that despite what people think about her because of her past, she can be both a perfect wife and mother. Like a perfect wife in a patriarchal system, she is prepared to live within patriarchal parameters, where her position as a wife will be restricted to reproduction and unpaid household labour. As a complicit victim she is portrayed as an embodiment of self-sacrifice, subordination, and servitude. She derives pleasure and fulfilment from her status of being the Other, which translates into her

interpretation of freedom. She hadn't even gone to Brazil on her annual plastic surgery pilgrimage (2008:93). From this sudden change of behaviour, it can be deduced that just like traditional masculinity, emphasised femininity is also a performance. Plastic Penny is working hard to gain validation as a wife and mother from people around her. Just like Nobantu's mother and Aunt Thembi, she is embracing and defending women's position as sexual objects.

A nuanced analysis of the blesser phenomenon would argue that examining the blesser culture in South Africa requires an understanding of the socio-economic context and structural inequalities that underpin this phenomenon. For one thing, South Africa has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world (Hundenborn et al. 2019). The divide between the rich and the poor provides an ideal environment for the blossoming of the blesser culture, as young women from underprivileged backgrounds gravitate towards wealthy men for financial security. It is imperative to note that as a patriarchal society, South Africa is plagued by gender disparities and patriarchal standards that make matters worse. Due to their often-restricted economic options, women typically turn to men for financial support. This blesser-blessee dynamic is normalized and even encouraged in some cultures as a means of economic survival or social mobility. Social media outlets' depictions of extravagant lives glamorise the blesser culture. Images of luxury and money are shown to young people, which can inspire aspirational impulses that lead them to pursue these kinds of relationships. A multifaceted approach involving education, gender equality, economic empowerment, and robust social support networks is needed to address this problem. The only way to effectively confront and minimise the blesser culture is to address its root causes.

4.2.4 Neo-traditional complicity in *Men of the South* (2010) and *The Madams* (2006)

It is not simply that women accept their position as the Other because they have no other option. Indeed, if they did, this would not, strictly speaking, be a case of complicity. Complicity implies the ability to do otherwise. I cannot be complicit in something I cannot avoid doing. The unfreedom of complicity is

not simply something that is imposed from without, as is the case with most instances of oppression. Rather, as we see elsewhere in *The Second Sex*, the unfreedom of complicity is something that is embraced from within. As Beauvoir puts it, woman “chooses to want her enslavement [son esclavage] so ardently that it will seem to her to be the expression of her freedom [libert_e]” (684). Complicity is thus distinctive in being a form of unfreedom that is reinforced and perpetuated by unfree agents themselves, even if they are not the initial cause of this unfreedom (Knowles 2019:5).

4.2.4.1 “I want you to be a man”: Woman’s manipulation of her status as man’s Other in the contemporary world.

In *Men of the South*, Wanner portrays Slindile as a static character who, despite her education and socio-economic status which put her in the position of power, prestige, and privilege, embraces the traditional tenets of femininity. Shortly after Mfundo, her cum-husband, moves in with her in her Rembrandt Park townhouse in Johannesburg, he loses his job following his altercation with an American rapper who flirts with Slindile in front of him. His career as a technician for the solitary SABC and an aspiring Hugh Masekela of the born free generation comes to an end, and all his recording arrangements fall through. This setback in Mfundo’s life coincides with the birth of his and Slindile’s daughter, Nomazizi. At first, Mfundo keeps this unpleasant news to himself and hunts for another job but when it fails, he tells Slindile the bad news.

Slindile initially understands the circumstances and feels sympathy for Mfundo, especially because during the day when she is at work, Mfundo looks after the baby, does household chores, and composes music for his next album. However, she eventually runs out of patience with Mfundo’s status of being a househusband. This is due to the traditional role script that her family and friends read to her, which she also reads back to Mfundo. Traditionally, as the man of the house, it is Mfundo’s responsibility to provide for his family, not the other way around. She finds him stretching the idea of gender equality too far, which contradicts with her notions of equality even in their space that seems to be socially progressive.

It is on these premises that Slindile's disgruntlement is based. Even though she is working and would manage to take care of the family, her perception of herself as the Other is precipitated by her conflation of manhood and fatherhood with money. She keeps pestering Mfundo for his inability to take care of her and the child and coerces him to look for a job if he calls himself a "real man". This harassment throws Mfundo into ambivalence because according to the constitution which vouches for gender equality, he perceives fatherhood and manhood as a man's capacity to love and care for his family in all circumstances, regardless of how much money he brings to the table. The narrative captures his frustration thus:

I wondered again, not for the first time: Is a man judged by a pay cheque or by his deeds? And if deeds, must one of them be employment paid for by someone or other? Was it not enough that I woke up, cleaned the house, bathed our baby, and took her to daycare? [...] If you asked Slindile, would she not tell you herself that every time she came home, the house was spotless, dinner was ready, and Nomazizi had eaten and was playing contentedly? Who determines what work is? And yet, when it suits them, we are reminded how a stay-at-home mom works harder than her working spouse. Does this only work if the partner who stays at home is a woman? And how did it fit in with all this equal rights "enlightened man" shit that Slindile and Buhle were always talking about? To hear them talk of equality, you would think they were both in Beijing with their fellow man-haters. But when it came to me getting a job, suddenly "you can't be a real man without an income"? Wasn't having a man doing the chores at home the "equality" they yearned for? (2010:60).

Slindile's concern and annoyance about Mfundo's unemployment are brought on by their friends' opinions and derision of the househusband. Because of this status, they call him Slindile's wife (2010:54). Likewise, Slindile, Mfundo's mother, and his sister, Buhle, are not happy about this reversal of gender roles and complain that Mfundo's behaviour is unmanly. In their eyes, he is failing to fulfil his inherent obligation to play a provider role. While his mother looks at the situation from the perspective of a parent who is adamant about what being a man means in her culture, Slindile's criticism of

Mfundo's decision to become a stay-at-home husband is driven by both consumerism and societal expectations of manhood. She exhorts him to find any kind of job quickly, as long as it gets him out of the house. She pushes Mfundo to get a job so she can continue dressing in designer labels and enjoying fine dining at restaurants of her choosing like they did in the past.

By highlighting both Slindile and Plastic Penny's perception of themselves as their partners' Others, as well as their entrapment in the culture of consumerism, Wanner underscores the fact that complicity is not always about embracing oppression. Women can be complicit with the traditional notions of femininity for their own personal gain. As Dlamini (2018) puts it, both women are depicted as the offspring of an artificial society that was founded on a predilection for modern Western soap opera ideals of parenting and womanhood.

In their study on young South African women's constructions of ideal masculinity in and across work, social, romantic, and family contexts, Talbot & Quayle (2010), discovered that all participants agreed upon the core principles which define a "manly man" both in a family and romantic context. These principles, which were related to hegemonic masculinity included being a hard worker, provider, and protector. When asked how they felt about a stay-at-home man, some said he was a "put-off," others said men are designed to work, and others said that it is more natural for a man to be a sole provider. As another young South African woman, Slindile clearly shares the same sentiments, regardless of her more privileged socio-economic status.

Ngabaza & Shefer (2019) contend that education gives women the freedom to reject traditional gender norms of dependence and become independent women. However, Slindile apparently believes otherwise. As far as she is concerned, taking care of the entire family is taking its toll on her as she complains, "I am tired of having to carry the financial burden in this house all on my own. I must take care of you, take care of me, and take care of Noma. It's like I have two children in the house" (2010:56). Slindile's frustration in this excerpt suggests that in the contemporary world, patriarchy still propagates the idea that women should be viewed as the Other and should

understand themselves in this way. Through social norms, myths, and prescribed narratives, woman learns that she is, has always been, and will always be the Other, irrespective of the socio-economic developments that constantly put her in an advantageous position in the contemporary world. As a result, her potential to do otherwise is constrained by this self-awareness. As Knowles (2019) points out, in order for woman to break free from this bondage and enjoy her existential freedom, she would have to reject the shared and agreed upon understanding of what it means to be a woman, which might be something very difficult to do.

The fact that Slindile has relegated Mfundo to the status of a child when he fails to play his socially prescribed gender role surfaces when she slaps him. This happens after Mfundo crashes Slindile's car in a state of inebriation. When Mfundo retaliates, Slindile claims victimhood and kicks him out of her house, leading to their breakup. This suggests that though feminists look at violence from the perspective of women's victimhood, sometimes men become victims of violence at the hands of women. On the same vein, women initiate violence and when men retaliate, women claim victimhood.

By locating Mfundo in the domestic sphere, Wanner destabilises the intricate network of relationships that equates economic labour with fatherhood and manhood. Through Mfundo's experiences in the private domain, Wanner also demonstrates the connections between domesticity, the social construction of black masculinity and femininity, as well as the evolution of black masculinity and the obstacles it faces in contemporary South Africa. As the text examines these connections, the following questions as posed by Dlamini (2018) come to the fore: Is domestic labour exclusively the domain of women, or are there connections between the creation of masculinity and domesticity? Does the fact that a man stays at home and performs domestic duties make him less of a man? Is the difficulty of household tasks gender-specific, meaning that it is only difficult for women to do them and not for men? Is there a connection between the creation of masculinity and femininity, consumerism, and male wage labour? In synergy with Tamale (2004) and Cornwall (2003), Wanner demonstrates that the distinction between the private and public spheres was very

loosely drawn as a result of imperial culture, mercantilism, and the altering economic landscapes during colonialism.

Wu et al. (2023) argue that in their financial strategies as man's Other, women take advantage of the male as provider ideal of fatherhood and manhood construction. Despite having their own sources of income, they still demand money for the running of the household from their husbands. When they happen to have used their own money, they would demand reimbursement (ibid). Similarly, the fact that Slindile forces Mfundo to work does not imply that she earns less and cannot take care of the family. Like a man, she wants him to wake up and go to work as an expression of fatherhood and manhood according to cultural expectations. Her desire to engage in the consumerism culture that is characteristic of the contemporary world drives her to equate manhood, fatherhood, and paid work. This suggests that in some cases, especially in the contemporary era where some women occupy positions of power, they can manipulate their status as man's Other for their own benefit while putting a strain on men. This explains why Mfundo wishes their child would be a girl as he confides with the reader, "I hoped it would be a little girl. Life would be easier for her in South Africa, I thought. [...] Don't get me wrong. I am not minimising women's issues, but lately it seems as though being a man is not as great as it was fifty years ago" (2010:39).

Having been raised by a working mother in the absence of his father and having witnessed the social and economic advancements that black women have made in present day South Africa, Mfundo is unperturbed by these developments and the broader gender shifts in society. He embraces an attitude that interrogates and resists the prescribed gender roles instead of trying to emulate and fit into this mould. His frustration emanates from the failure of society and his circle to accept evolving gender roles. Slindile, his mother, Buhle, and even his closest friend, Mzilikazi scoff at this attitude and constantly read him the gender role script which prescribes the male and fatherly responsibilities of a man.

4.2.4.2 The reproduction of objectifying patriarchal narratives

Knowles (2019) argues that the social world first introduces us to ourselves and others in terms of societal roles. This manner of viewing ourselves and other people is deceptive because it hides our freedom on an existential or ontological level. It is a relationship with ourselves in which we come to see our existence as fixed, and believe that our behaviour is dictated by the social role or archetype according to which we are perceived in terms of our gender, race, or ethnicity.

Citing Holland's (2001) analysis of the gendered scripts and how they constrain the way women perceive themselves and what they believe they are capable of, Knowles (ibid) contends that marriage and motherhood are the conventional endpoints for women in upper or middle-class families. There is nothing left for a woman to do with her life after that happily-ever-after is realised. This contention suggests that no matter how successful a woman can be in other areas of her life, she will feel complete only after getting married and having a child.

In *The Madams* (2006), Wanner introduces the reader to three women: Nosizwe, Thandi, and Lauren. Though they are all educated, and their education could easily afford them their existential freedom, their lives as married women are hinged on the traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and the way in which these are constructed. Nosizwe comes from an affluent family, whose wealth is associated with her mother's brilliant economic and political connections as well as Black Economic Empowerment post-1994. As an attempt to afford her independence, Nosizwe's mother gave her good education from private schools and a private university in the UK, where she met her best friend, Thandi. In a quest for completion as a woman in a patriarchal society, Nosizwe gets married to Vuyo, an ex-convict who immediately moves in with her.

However, instead of bringing her contentment, her marriage frustrates her even more as it transpires that she is barren. Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh (2018) contend that in African culture, being married primarily serves the purpose of procreation, family building, and life extension. In their observations, any African woman who has

infertility problems is to blame. Even women themselves have been led to believe this, even if there is no medical proof (ibid). Generally, in patriarchal societies a real woman is measured by her sexuality and procreation, and a woman without children is viewed negatively. As far as Spock (1992) is concerned, a wife is everything, a mother is next to God, and a woman is nothing.

It is such stereotypes associated with infertility that make Nosizwe feel unworthy of being a woman. She begins to harbour insecurities about herself, and becomes more conscious of her external appearance, which turns her into a fashion slave. Her obsession with fashion is a coping mechanism which she uses to hide her flaws, yet it comes across as hypocritical. She claims that she married Vuyo out of love and as a form of defiance against her domineering mother. By allowing Vuyo to move in with her along with his two children, Nosizwe thinks if they are staying under the same roof, she can regulate Vuyo's overwhelming sexual arousal. Little does she know that in everyone's absence, Vuyo sleeps with their maid, Petunia, whom he eventually impregnates. As expected, this shatters Nosizwe. Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh (2018) maintain that a childless marriage is a source of great disappointment and a primary cause of marital conflict, a broken household, divorce, and an impetus for the disgruntled spouse to enter into new relationships. Though Vuyo is aware of the pain he has inflicted on Nosizwe by impregnating Petunia, he knows that society will justify his actions as a man, especially because Nosizwe is barren. To highlight the predicament experienced by barren women, Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh (ibid) state that a barren woman is ideally expected to marry another wife for her husband in a traditional African society. It is better that she accomplishes this at her earliest because wasting time could have two negative effects. Her husband will either get married to another woman of his choice, with or without her consent, or hire a concubine to bear his offspring. He does this to boost his ego and demonstrate his manliness.

In concert with this statement, Morrell (2001) posits that a "real man" is measured by such factors as sexual virility, the number of women as well as the number of children he has. This suggests that in patriarchal contexts, the philosophy of marriage places

a greater emphasis on procreation than on the couple's prosperity and happiness. Attitudes towards infertility continue to be antagonistic despite people's exposure to information and education. It is to this effect that Tamale (2004) argues against the callousness of patriarchy thus:

The way patriarchy defines women is such that their full and wholesome existence depends on getting married, producing children, and caring for the family. In Africa, it does not matter whether a woman is a successful politician, possesses three PhDs and runs the most successful business in town; if she has never married or is childless, she is perceived to be lacking in a fundamental way. Girl children are raised and socialised into this ideology, and few ever question or challenge its basic tenets. [...] Thus, the domestic roles of mother, wife, and homemaker become the key constructions of women's identity in Africa.

Affluence does not save Nosizwe from the entrapment she is subjected to by being the Other. Taking in Vuyo's two children, whom she openly detests, is a desperate attempt to fill the void left on her psyche by barrenness. She convinces herself that if the children belong to her husband, they automatically belong to her. Knowles (2019) argues that people display a conflicted desire for transcendence and immanence. Immanence relates to a woman's objectification, the realities of her material circumstance, and the reality that she is acted upon rather than acting on her own behalf, whereas transcendence manifests her existential freedom, her lack of essence, and her ability to choose her projects. Due to the disturbing nature of this ambiguity, women, like men, want to resolve their own existential doubt. But how a woman accomplishes this, is determined by the limitations of her situation (ibid). The fact that a woman is only capable of existing in the world as an object or thing rather than a subject contradicts her ambiguity due to her position as the Other. To achieve transcendence, women frequently try to justify their existence within their own immanence. In the end, a woman will repeat the patriarchal narrative of woman as Other to resolve the ambiguity of her existence, which furthers her own and other women's social and material incapacity (Knowles 2019).

Nosizwe overlooks other positive aspects about herself and uses her barrenness, just like her patriarchal society, to measure her capacity and worth as a black South African woman. This indicates that there are specific methods that patriarchy employs to control women's lives by manipulating them, of their own volition, to conform to social and gender power structures. Concertedly, Knowles (2019), Messerschmidt (2012), and Talbot & Quayle (2010) assert that conventional hegemonic masculinity will always be complemented by a traditionally emphasised feminine woman. In the pursuit of a mate in non-platonic relationships, a woman will advocate for this kind of ideal man and thereby validate gender inequality and her own subordination. Strong, independent, and self-sufficient women like Nosizwe, may be willing to compromise their own identity in this situation to secure a mate and to express their emphasised femininity. This becomes evident when Nosizwe blames herself for Vuyo's infidelity. She divulges her plan to adopt Petunia and Vuyo's child to her friends thus:

Thing is ... I sometimes think that maybe Vuyo got with Petunia because she was more maternal towards his children while I just ignored them. I need to show him that I am not just a selfish, spoilt rich girl. That I am capable of loving his child selflessly [...] And of course, the added bonus is that, that Petunia bitch will be losing the child she made under deception to me, but I didn't say that in there. What I said was that the child would be better off with us since Petunia has no income (2008:168).

Knowles (2019) contends that though men and women alike may abandon their freedom and risk losing themselves in the false tales and personas that the society promotes, the situation is quite brutal for women. The social roles that they immerse themselves in and the scripts with which they come to identify are more constrained, restricting, and obviously oppressive as well as incompatible with their social and material freedom, as well as with their ability to express their existential freedom. This contrasts with the roles and identities that are available to men.

Because of their associations with these roles, women appear more involved in their own lack of freedom than men do, despite having less freedom overall than the men in their life (Knowles 2019). Notwithstanding the socio-economic as well as the political significance of celebrating women's accomplishments in the contemporary era, black South African women still have a long way to go. Using these achievements to gloss over the inward challenges as well as the social and political struggles that the majority of women still face in neo-patriarchal South Africa will only trivialise these struggles and fail to afford them the attention they deserve.

Through the characterisation of Petunia, Wanner underscores the antagonism of a patriarchal society towards women. Instead of sympathising with Nosizwe who has shown so much kindness towards her by offering her a job and enrolling her in a fashion design school, Petunia celebrates Nosizwe's predicament. She uses her fertility as the source of power to scoff at Nosizwe and Vuyo's marriage, presumably with the hope of snatching him away from Nosizwe. The relationship between these two women is complex and multifaceted. It is possible to see Nosizwe's actions towards Petunia as an effort to uplift her and as a manifestation of a sisterhood. She demonstrates a sense of solidarity typically exhibited in sisterly relationships by offering Petunia opportunities which will improve her life. While Nosizwe demonstrates so much kindness towards Petunia, this gesture contrasts sharply with Petunia's betrayal which complicates the notion of sisterhood. In addition to betraying Nosizwe's trust and kindness, this action also demonstrates competition and jealousy, which frequently crop up in dynamic female relationships. The intricacy of their interactions shows that female relationships may be contentious and supportive at the same time, reflecting the multifaceted nature of their real lives. Okpala & Utoh-Ezeajugh (2018) argue that contrary to feminist propaganda, men are not the only cause of the exploitation and suffering of women. Women themselves, who claim to be oppressed by men, mistreat, humiliate, and dominate one another. This suggests that gender warfare amongst women and male domination are equally exploitative.

Apart from being an active participant in Nosizwe's torture, Petunia is unaware that she is perpetuating her own objectification. She is aware that Vuyo is married to

Nosizwe, but she allows him to exploit her sexually. To demonstrate that Vuyo has been exploiting her, he begs Nosizwe for forgiveness and he does not contest Petunia's dismissal. He agrees to Nosizwe's condition that to cut ties with Petunia, he will have to take the child and raise him with Nosizwe. This leaves Petunia without a job and a child.

Another source of power that women use to humiliate and torment other women is age. Younger women are more appealing to men as this, according to hegemonic standards of masculinity, suggests the latter's sexual virility (Morrell 2001). As indicated earlier, Plastic Penny in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) uses her youthfulness to snatch Oupa from Tsholo. In most cases, such relationships are fuelled by materialism and consumerism. In Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* (1980) Modou, a medical doctor, falls in love and marries Binetou, her daughter's friend and classmate, who comes from a poor background. Similarly, Mawdo, Modou's friend, willingly agrees to an arranged marriage with Nabou who is young enough to be his daughter. However, unlike Nosizwe, both Ramatoulaye, Modou's wife, and Aissatou, Mawdo's wife have children, but their only shortcoming is their age. This suggests that patriarchal societies always have reasons to condone the torture of women while putting men at an advantage. The downside of it is that women will always partake willingly in the oppression and torture of other women, if it feeds their consumerist appetite. From the observations above, it appears that what is needed from women is collective activism, which can only be accomplished when they band together. This will significantly counteract the male gender's oppression of women. As long as women continue to perpetuate marital discord and familial deprivation against their own instead of standing together against subordination, patriarchal domination will remain a difficult battle to combat.

Maxine et al. (2005:1138) perceive marriage as a structural context of opportunity for husbands and wives to behave in ways that authenticate their identities as male and female. It provides a perfect platform for them to display the visible aspects of their gender ideologies as perpetuated by the patriarchal culture. In this instance, marriage is conceptualised in a hierarchical manner, with the roles of the husband and wife being distinct. Just like Nosizwe's, Thandi, her friend's marriage is also plagued by

obnoxious experiences associated with patriarchal sovereignty. Despite being the empowered contemporary middle-class woman that she is, her affluence cannot afford her a getaway from the oppressive strictures imposed on a black South African woman by patriarchal ideologies. Instead, it exposes her to more disgruntlement as she must straddle between the domestic and the public sphere. The prologue captures her exasperation with role juggling thus:

There are times like now when I get, to paraphrase The *Unofficial Woman's Handbook*, sick and tired of being sick and tired. I am tired of having to be a Super slave at the office, a Supermom to my son, and a Super slut to my man. I am tired of the fact that if I so much as indicate that I need *Me* time, I have somehow fallen short of the high standards set for me as a modern woman. I am admitting defeat to my hectic schedule. I am giving in to something I thought I would never do. I'm going to hire a maid (2006:7).

When Thandi refers to herself as a Supermom to her son, a Super slave at the office, and a Super slut to her man, she underscores the tremendous pressure and expectations that contemporary South African society places on mothers. This phrase captures the picture of the ideal mother, one who is nurturing and perceptive but also adept at fulfilling her responsibilities as a partner and a professional, while keeping her home clean. As a mom, she is expected to provide educational guidance, emotional support, and a stable home life for her son, all while juggling her demanding job at the tourism board with her social life. Her struggle with the supermom ideal serves as a reflection of the toll that these expectations may have on women's bodies and minds. The expression alludes to exhaustion and the understanding that it is not possible to achieve motherhood's ideal of perfection. Ultimately, her declaration that she is "done with being a Supermom" symbolises her acceptance of her limitations and her need for assistance, which is why she is so determined to hire a maid. With this decision, she defies societal pressure to uphold an unrealistic ideal of motherhood and acknowledges that she cannot accomplish it all by herself.

When she says that she has to be a "super slave" at work, Thandi underlines the enormous expectations and responsibilities placed on her as a professional woman in

a cutthroat workplace. This phrase captures the pressure she feels to deliver outstanding performance at the workplace, while frequently putting her personal needs and wellbeing last. She feels obliged to go above and beyond her job responsibilities, often putting her personal life and health at stake. As a result, she feels worn out and defeated. The gender dynamics in the workplace are reinforced by Thandi's account of her "super slave" status, wherein women may believe that in order to establish their value, they must put in more effort than men. This may give rise to a sense of being caught in an endless loop of overachievement without acknowledgement or compensation. The term implies broader societal expectations that South African women are expected to fulfil, including being a good partner, a loving mother, and a productive worker. Thandi's experiences with these responsibilities serve as an example of the challenges and obstacles that women encounter while trying to strike a balance between both their private and professional lives.

When she refers to herself as a "super slut" to her husband, Thandi is addressing the societal and personal pressures that force her to live up to certain expectations in her romantic and sexual relationship. This statement captures her sense of duty to navigate the complexity of her identities as a woman, mother, and professional while simultaneously being sexually accessible, enthusiastic, and receptive to her spouse, Mandla. The word "super slut" refers to the exaggerated sexual standards that are imposed on women, who are frequently judged on whether or not they satisfy their partners' sexual needs. By using this expression, Thandi appears to be implying that she feels under pressure to maintain fulfilling sex despite her other obligations. As much as she would like to be a compassionate and understanding wife, she may feel uncomfortable and resentful if she feels pressured to be sexually available. By using the term "super slut," Wanner challenges the discriminatory attitudes towards women's sexuality. This demonstrates how men might not be subject to the same scrutiny as women when it comes to labels associated with sexual expression. Thandi's admission of this pressure highlights larger cultural issues surrounding women's roles in relationships.

She admits to her naïveté when she initially thought that hiring a maid was more about playing 'madam.' Her ingenuousness had deceived her into thinking that she was free in an environment that undermines and contradicts her freedom, further alienating her from the freedom that her social context had already attempted to suffocate. Hers is a society where opportunities for emancipation and growth of the Other are either frequently denied or severely restricted. The setting of *The Madams* (2006) is crucial because it critically evaluates South Africa's social and political accomplishments by contrasting them with the rhetoric about black women's emancipation. Even though a lot has changed since the nation's first democratic elections, Wanner highlights that women's standing and treatment in both the public and private realms have not significantly improved.

Thandi further complains that being a wife and mother is not the sole criteria used to judge a woman's value. In addition, she needs to seek for her in-laws' validation of her femininity through her prowess in the kitchen and the house. Even though her spouse is a renaissance man as demonstrated through his on-and-off role-reversal, Thandi is constantly forced to put on an impromptu performance of biology-gender when Mandla's Soweto friends and family visit. When Mandla describes himself as a "renaissance man," he is expressing his dedication to sharing household responsibilities like cleaning and taking care of his child, Hintsá. This term usually refers to a multifaceted person who is skilled in a variety of disciplines while possessing a wide range of knowledge and abilities. Mandla describes himself as a "renaissance man" in the context of the novel, highlighting a progressive view of masculinity in which he actively engages in roles that are traditionally assumed by women. By doing this, he is subverting gender norms and expectations within the household. Though Mandla aspires to this role, the narrative points out that this ideal is only partially realised, signalling that there are constraints and contradictions in his actions.

From a feminist perspective, marriage is a place where the gendered division of labour flourishes since married women are expected to take on significant domestic and caring responsibilities. It is such fallacies that make African feminists like Oyewumi (2002) blame Western scholarship for viewing African gender contexts through a

patriarchal lens by promoting biological determinism. In her observation, Oyeronke Oyewumi critiques Western scholarship for its propensity to impose a patriarchal framework onto African gender contexts, contending that this distorts the way gender is conceptualised in African societies. Her writings, most notably *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997), assert that gender as it is currently understood in the West is a cultural construct that did not exist in the same form in precolonial Yoruba society. Rather, she highlights that gender identities and roles are socially constructed, and that African societal systems have been misrepresented as a result of the imposition of Western gender categories. She draws attention to the fact that biological determinism, the theory that gender disparities are more deeply ingrained in biology than in social or cultural contexts, is commonly applied in Western scholarship. This perspective minimises the varied realities of African women and their roles in society in favour of universalising women's experiences based on Western norms.

Oyewumi (ibid) argues that due to the misconception that the term "woman" and her subjugation are universal concepts, western scholars have used European and American experiences to shape the architecture and furnishings of gender research, notwithstanding the fact that gender is mostly a socio-cultural construct. According to Oyewumi (ibid), even though the importance of a western feminist ideology cannot be ignored in our quest for understanding, we must evaluate the social identity, pursuits, and issues of those who provide this knowledge. She argues that for Africans to achieve the change they desire, it is imperative to identify methods through which local concerns and interpretations can better enrich African research while concurrently taking into consideration African experiences in general theory-building.

Marriage, in Oyewumi's view, is more about lineage expansion than sexual relations. She criticises the gendering of marriage as well as the universalization of gender categories as a fundamental organising principle for all African societies throughout history. As far as she is concerned, absorbing womanhood and motherhood under wifehood is incompatible with the African context. Citing the non-gendered Yoruba family as an example; the Igbo non-gendered family as illustrated by Amadiume's

(1987) *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*; the Shona non-gendered family as illustrated in Dangarenbga's *Nervous Conditions* (1989); the non-gendered familial unit in Shand's *Songs from an African Sunset : A Zimbabwean Story* (1997); and the Ghanaian context as captured by Yankah's *Speaking for the Chief : Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory* (1995), Oyewumi demonstrates the incongruity of western feminism and the lived experiences of the black African woman. The concept of a non-gendered family in Igbo culture refers to a fluid interpretation of gender roles and family structures that does not rigidly adhere to Western binary concepts of male and female. This perspective derives from the customs and social structure of the Igbo people, where gender roles are often determined by social context rather than rigid biological determinism and can be flexible. Due to the incommensurability of social categories and institutions, she warns that when African realities are evaluated from a western perspective, we will be confronted with distortions, obfuscations, and a complete lack of comprehension. When Thandi complains about this on-and-off role reversal, Mandla contends that they are doing it for their own reputation. On the one hand, it portrays her as a decent, well brought up, and obedient daughter-in-law who is diligent, aware of her position, and hasn't used *ikorobela* to turn Mandla into a slave. On the other hand, the biology-gender role-play is intended to reassure Mandla's friends and family that he is still a man who is 'in control' of his house (2006:9). In her interview, Zukiswa Mvoko (a traditional healer, also known as Gogo Majola, who is the spokesperson for the SADC University of African Medicine, an organisation working to restore the respect for indigenous healers, their knowledge, and their traditional herbal remedies) defined *Ikorobela/ Bhekaminangedwa* (look at me alone) as a love potion made from a concoction of traditional herbs that bad women use on men. She alleged that *Korobela/ Bhekaminangedwa* is more about mental manipulation. After consumption, the recipient is no longer capable of making independent and rational decisions. He always feels compelled to appease the woman who cast the spell on him. To elaborate on this, Dlamini (2018) states that the herbal concoction is claimed to combat promiscuity and produce docility, which leads men to take on domestic tasks usually done by women in the household, like caring for children, cooking, and cleaning.

To Mandla's relatives and friends, the house and everything in it including people, belongs to Mandla as the man. Traditionally, it is like that, even if Thandi covers half the mortgage. Literature on the power dynamics in marriage reflects that in patriarchal societies, husbands hold most of the power and make the final decisions while wives typically have less influence. Sportel (2016) points out that there are several ways to exert power in a marriage, but the most popular approach is to make significant decisions like those involving money and children. Contrary to Sportel's (2016) claim that it is mainly the husband who holds the power to make decisions concerning children and finances in a marriage situation, Wanner's *Men of the South* (2010) proves otherwise. The text argues that power dynamics will favour the man only if he is the primary source of income in the family. As indicated earlier in this text, Slindile possesses more power to control the finances because she is the breadwinner in the family while Mfundo is the househusband. The power dynamics involved in this role reversal become evident when Mfundo wants to control the finances of the house and Slindile snaps, "When you chose to work, I never told you what to do with your money, so please don't tell me what to do with mine" (2010:54).

Being 'in control' implies that as a man, Mandla has access to and manages both the domestic and business realms and makes sure that gender roles are clearly defined in his home in accordance with biology and sex. This patriarchal arrangement puts Thandi at a disadvantage. Unlike her mother and Makhulu, her grandmother, the contemporary society seems to put much strain on her. She is expected to give her best to both the public and the private realm. In addition, instead of encouraging egalitarianism in men like Mandla who demonstrate a positive attitude towards gender equality, its patriarchal ideologies thwart the transformation of masculinities. This situation depicts the everydayness of the oppression of women. It highlights the potential role that limiting conditions could play in keeping women from expressing their freedom. The fact that women like Thandi are aware of this yet they fail to challenge it, renders them complicit in their own oppression, thereby doing justice to Beauvoir's (2011) idea that woman chooses to want her enslavement. She actively participates in maintaining and reinforcing her identity as the Other, which contributes

to the perpetuation of her own unfreedom. As she actively plays the role of passivity, she actively objectifies herself.

Though Mandla is willing to be a renaissance man who is trying to nullify the binary that separates man from woman, his behaviour is under surveillance by those who still embrace patriarchy. What Wanner underscores in the portrayal of Mandla's masculinity is a situation in which ancient masculine practises are gradually dying out and the modern masculinities are unable to be easily born due to conflicting cultural beliefs, the mindsets of the older generation, and culturally short-sighted relatives.

Looking at womanhood from her mother and Makhulu's perspective, Thandi is forced to consider why men's treatment of women has not altered, even in the modern era. As she begins to ruminate about the lives of women, she is reminded of a conversation that she and her mother and grandmother once had. She contests Makhulu's assertion regarding the 'freedom' of the modern black woman. She disputes Makhulu's belief that modern women are liberated. She contends that neither she nor the women around her have achieved liberation. Though Thandi contests Makhulu's assertion, there is an element of truth in Makhulu's claim. Education has significantly improved the social standing and employment prospects of black women. Additionally, it has given women the means to break free from and reject unfair relationships at home, at work, and in society at large. However, the question as to whether education eliminates power dynamics in interactions between men and women appears to be complicated.

As Knowles (2019) argues, a sort of self-deception caused by an unwillingness to challenge the cultural norms, self-perceptions, and roles that complicit agents have ingrained themselves in can be seen in the way they engage in their own complicity. Instead of opposing and problematizing dominant social narratives and limiting social roles, the complicit actor becomes obstinate about them. When Mandla cheats on Thandi, his mother uses the celebrated neo-traditional African narrative to condone it. She reverberates Morrell's (2001) assertion that having many women is one of the markers of hegemonic masculinity. Though Thandi is strongly opposed to Mandla's

mother's stance, she agrees with her indirectly as she, just like Nosizwe, blames herself for Mandla's infidelity. As she reflects, her mind is flooded with a lot of questions as captured by the narrative thus:

What was wrong with me? What had made my husband go to another woman? Had I put on too much weight during our marriage? Was I not wearing enough sexy lingerie in bed? Had I failed to be there for him when he needed me? Was I not a supportive, caring wife? Was I not a wonderful hostess to our guests, a great listener whenever he wanted to talk? Why, why, why...I asked myself a zillion questions without finding the answer (2006:199).

When she and Mandla separate after telling him that to get even, she also cheated on him with some stranger whom she met at Victoria Falls, she once again blames herself when it hurts Hintsu, their son. She thinks that it would have been better if she had given Mandla a second chance and allowed him to stay under the same roof as she and Hintsu, while she tried to rebuild the trust. Based on such complicit behaviours, Beauvoir (2011) suggests that for women to be genuinely free, they must achieve perfect economic and social equality with men, and then go through an inner metamorphosis that will prevent them from embracing and actively participating in their own unfreedom. This implies that overcoming complicity is a two-way process which will require the implementation of changes to the woman's constrictive social context as well as changes in her own actions. It cannot be assumed that changing women's external circumstances will automatically change their attitudes and self-perceptions.

Despite her misgivings about the emancipation of the black South African woman, Thandi takes pride in some of the things at her disposal as a black middle-class woman living in the modern era. She has access to benefits that are only available to men and is empowered by her education. She can enter the public realm through paid work and utilise her money to purchase a home or a vehicle without a man's permission. She also has the option to choose between a profession and staying at home, including the choice to pay half the mortgage. However, due to the ambiguity of gender roles

within the family and cultural expectations of what a woman should be versus what she wants to be, she argues that being a housewife or working woman is not a choice but rather a necessity. She reflects:

Makhulu keeps telling me how happy we sistahs should be that we are living in the age of the liberated woman where we can do what we want. But are we really liberated? At least in her day the gender roles were clearly defined. Man went to work and brought back money for rent, fees and clothing, and woman tended the house and her thirty-metre square vegetable patch. Sure, unlike me, that woman did not have a choice about whether to be a professional woman or a housewife, but that choice enslaves my generation because we are still expected to play the traditional role to perfection (2006:8).

To this effect, Thandi draws the conclusion that middle-class women have no independence, no choices, and no concept of conventional womanhood.

Black African feminist authors frequently examine a variety of recurring themes that are indicative of their distinct cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. They criticise patriarchal systems that undermine the agency and autonomy of women. These authors often address the expectations and conventions of society that shape women's roles, accentuating the struggles that women face against these limitations. Black African feminist writing often explores the intersections between colonialism, race, class, and gender. Here, authors emphasise that women face particular obstacles due to the combination of these elements, highlighting the fact that their experiences cannot be interpreted through a single lens. This intersectional approach, which also reflects in Dangarembga's (1989) *Nervous Conditions*, allows for a more nuanced understanding of women's lives in Africa.

In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Maiguru experiences a situation similar to Thandi's. Maiguru is a smart woman who holds a master's degree from a British university. She still complains all the time, especially about her husband and son, because she has not been able to move past her early traumas associated with being treated as the Other. In a state of ambivalence whether to choose independence

attained by the utilisation of her hard-earned credentials, or security gained by subservience to her spouse, she chooses security. To use Beauvoir's (2011) words, she chooses to remain the Other who actively participates in her own unfreedom.

Maiguru's complicity eventually translates into entrapment, as she struggles to impress her husband, Babamukuru, and embrace his desires. She downplays her intelligence and cedes all financial authority to him so that he may appear more generous to the rest of the family. She eventually gives in to Babamukuru's wishes after debating whether the children should go to England with their parents or stay in Africa where they can maintain a settled way of life. She does this because she wants to appease him as he wants to control the progress and development of the children without considering their potential feelings of displacement. This choice upends Nyasha, their daughter's life to such an extent that she develops anorexia and nearly loses her mind.

There is a brief interlude when Maiguru is successful in fleeing the cage of her family and house, but after a week she purposefully calls home, allowing her husband to learn about her whereabouts and bring her home. Although she is less depressed and her place in the family is strengthened because of her rebellion, the coveted independence is once again lost. Likewise, Thandi finds it hard to part ways with the security and the status that she enjoys from being a married woman, Mandla's wife.

A similar case is that of Mzilikazi's mother in *Men of the South* (2010), though she does not possess the same socioeconomic status as the other women. After having summoned up the courage to confront her husband about the infidelity coupled with economic abuse, Mzilikazi's mother, who has proven to herself and her husband that she can maintain her children through selling vegetables in the village, backs down after Mzilikazi's father threatens to send her back to her home. She claims that she does not want to be a burden with her three children, yet, having proved that she can maintain them, it appears that her worst fear is the stigma associated with a broken marriage. She, like Thandi, Nosizwe, and Lauren takes pride in being a married woman, yet the conditions of her marriage do not favour her.

When looking at the complexities, contradictions as well as the ambiguities of feminine subjectivities in contemporary South Africa, Dlamini (2018) problematises the celebration of the black female struggle icons as well as the constant propagation of successful black females without highlighting their simultaneous roles as mothers and wives. She argues that it masks the inner challenges of these women and the more significant social and political struggles that most women face in contemporary South Africa. The lack of recognition for such feminine experiences stifles the harsh experiences of the standard woman, giving national celebrations of female accomplishments greater public significance.

Though she is white and might be exempted from challenges experienced by black women because of her race, Lauren, Thandi and Nosizwe's friend, is equally complicit in her own oppression in her house. Working as a lecturer at Wits University and studying towards her PhD, Lauren's socio-economic status does not assist in her liberation. She remains subservient to her husband, Mike, who abuses her physically and emotionally. She admits to their subservience as women in her chat with her friends about the shortcomings of the Beijing conference which was supposed to move women forward as she says, "That's true [...] But the battle is not won yet. In spite of the civilised lives, we all live as daughters, as wives, as sisters, as mothers, we are expected to serve first. Our needs still come second (2006:191).

Arguably, the Beijing conference cannot be cited as the only one that has fallen short in assisting with the emancipation of women. The constitution of the country has not done a remarkable job either. Despite twenty-nine years since its inception, the status of women in relation to men remains unchanged. In fact, as indicated in the background of this study, statistics indicates a dramatic increase in the rate of violence and femicide in South Africa. Lauren in *The Madams* (2006) is part of the statistics. In everything she does, Lauren seeks for Mike's approval first. She even uses her job as a coverup when she wants to spend time with her friends. Every time Mike abuses her, just like Nosizwe and Thandi, she blames herself for having pushed him too far. Like many victims of abuse, she claims that it is his love for her that pushes Mike

towards abusive behaviour. Her naiveté becomes evident after a gruesome attack from Mike, Lauren confides in her friends thus:

It began long after we started dating at university [...] One day at the campus pub, I sat drinking with one of Mike's friends while he was playing pool and some guy came and started having a conversation with us. It was all quite innocent, but Mike came and dragged me off by the roots of my hair. [...] The guy tried to tell Mike that he was just chatting, but his interference seemed to anger Mike even more and he just dragged me home. [...] When we moved into the flat, he really started beating me up. He always made sure he avoided the places that would be uncovered when I dressed. That has been his modus operandi until today when it seemed I pushed him a little further than normal, I don't know. [...] You don't understand. Michael always apologises every time he does it. I know he loves me, and he says sometimes it's my fault, that I push him too far. He tells me it's because he loves me so much that he is so passionate towards me. He has promised not to do it again and he always cries, but maybe I cause him to hit me because, even if I stay cross at him for a while, I always realise that I may have been wrong and I forgive him. The truth is, when I received that first beating, I was a little flattered as it showed he was jealous and still passionate about our relationship. I know he loves me (2006:139-140).

Looking at Lauren's behaviour, it is evident that her husband has brainwashed her into thinking that abuse is a sign of love. Judy El-Bushra & Ibrahim Sahl's (2006) cycle of violence attests to Lauren's experience. They posit that the cycle of violence undergoes three stages. The first stage is the honeymoon phase, when everything looks lovely. The second one is the tension building when the abuse starts small, and the abuser apologises for it while partly blaming the victim for the abuse. The third one, the violent phase is when the abuser inflicts serious harm to the victim, blaming her that she has pushed him too far. He becomes remorseful after this and promises the victim that he is going to change. To convince her, he showers her with love, taking the relationship back to the honeymoon phase, making it difficult for the victim

to leave. The phases will happen repeatedly, forming a cycle, until the victim decides to leave or dies (ibid).

The fact that Lauren indicates that it has been happening ever since they started dating at tertiary indicates that she is trapped in an abusive relationship. However, when the abuse blows out of proportion, with the assistance and persuasion from Thandi and Nosizwe, she applies for the court interdict. It is noted with concern that most of the legislation protecting women merely exists on paper. As indicated at the beginning of this work, the statistics showing rape and femicide seems to be increasing daily. A lot still needs to be done to address the problem.

In his analysis, Ratele (2022:69) states that scholarship needs to look beyond toxic masculinity to address the problem of GBV. He argues that violence is related to power, the will to control, and the frustration of this desire to control people. He also draws our attention to the fact that violence starts in our early relationships (ibid: 86). It is not abnormal to experience bouts of aggression between parent and child, between siblings, and among children. This suggests that violence is an aspect of humankind that we grow up with, that we cannot avoid. As a result, Ratele (ibid) advises that when raising children towards egalitarianism, parents should make them aware that they will be hurt by others as much as they will hurt others themselves. What is of crucial importance is to know when the hurt caused is intolerable. When the child is the perpetrator, he/she should ask for genuine forgiveness. When he/she is the victim, he/she must know which kind of suffering is acceptable, when, and how to fight back, and for how long he/she must fight before leaving.

Lauren, with a nasty and bleeding cut on her eye, a front tooth which has become dislodged from her mouth, nasty bruises covering her arms and legs, as well as a torn blouse (2006:137-138), still pleads with Thandi who is fighting back Mike to save Lauren's life, that she should stop beating Mike because she will kill him. She also refuses to leave Mike without nursing him and ensuring that he is well after Thandi's attack. The facts raised by Ratele (ibid) are crucial, especially in intimate relationships where most of the violence results in femicide. The problem is that most women in

abusive relationships that culminate in femicide decide to stay and fight for the relationship, with the hope that things will change for the better.

In these novels, Wanner underscores the positionality of women in the familial unit as well as the roles that differentiate masculinity from femininity. Through the portrayal of different women with different challenges as married women in her texts, Wanner points out that women's treatment and status in the private and public realms remain largely the same, even though a lot has changed since the nation's first democratic elections. Her texts emphasise how conflicted women's characters are about the systems of power that both create and oppress them. The fact that Nobantu in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), Silindile in *Men of the South* (2010), Lauren, Nosizwe, and Thandi in *The Madams* (2006) are all intelligent, accomplished women in their own right is insufficient. If they prioritise their maternal tasks of motherhood and wifehood, they are completely accepted as real women, just like their mothers and Makhulu. If they query this traditional stance, they are viewed with suspicion by those who embrace patriarchy.

In a turnaround, Wanner also demonstrates how the patriarchal ideology subjugates both men and women in the familial unit. On the one hand, while pretending to be submissive, women might manipulate 'the male is the provider' rule to commodify motherhood and fatherhood in a way that benefits them. In *Men of the South* (2010) Slindile does an outstanding job in both roles. On the one hand, she is the submissive woman who plays the role of the homemaker to Mfundo and their daughter, Nomazizi while she expects Mfundo to play the provider role as the man of the house. On the other hand, she parades as a strong woman who works, who does not need anybody else's money, but demands it from Mfundo as a symbol of his manhood. On a similar vein, the 'male as provider' paradigm is used to instil fears about manhood. This becomes evident as Mfundo notices that everybody around him views him contemptuously for embracing the househusband role, which goes against the expectations of traditional masculinity. While it frustrates men, the traditional 'man provider role' equally frustrates the dreams and aspirations of and demoralises ambitious women like Nobantu.

In light of women's predicament in neo-patriarchal societies, Chisale (2020) opines that women can undermine the way traditionality positions them in relation to social authority by gaining a voice and developing a sense of identity that opposes dominant masculinities. By highlighting these discrepancies between the traditional and the neo-traditional points of view in contemporary South Africa, Wanner problematises the relevance of the traditional. In doing so, she brings to the reader's attention the importance of transformation which can be achieved through the blurring of the binary between the two. The characterisation of Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010) who embraces egalitarianism by being a househusband while his wife, Slindile is the breadwinner of the house, suggests this. Similarly, while both Mandla and Thandi are working in *The Madams* (2006), Mandla, who has nicknamed himself a renaissance man, freely does his share of the household chores.

Unlike in the olden days, when it was a man's responsibility to go to work while the woman was left behind to take care of the house, the drastic changes in the socio-economic as well as the political climate of the country has shifted the narrative. As Adichie (2014:17-18) argues, we have moved from the era which required physical strength as the most important attribute for survival. The world now requires intelligence, creativity, knowledge, and innovation. These attributes are not gender specific; a man is as likely as a woman to possess them. This suggests that as a society we need to shift our mindset and acknowledge that as much as women can perform those roles which were traditionally associated with men, men can equally perform those which were traditionally associated with women. The extent to which we have evolved as a society must speak to the way in which we perceive the ideas of gender.

4.3 Concluding remarks.

This chapter looks at the role played by women in the construction of black South African masculinities. Drawing from the works of such feminist scholars as Beauvoir (2011) and Knowles (2019), it establishes that the perpetuation of patriarchal practices has been naturalised to such an extent that women perceive themselves as inferior to men. Their commitment to the service of men and their acceptance of their

status as man's other has made them disregard what they are capable of. They have been socialised to actively embrace their state of subordination and to accept that to be complete human beings, they need men to complete them regardless of their socio-economic and educational status. This implies relinquishing their rights as well as their existential freedom.

The chapter highlights that the normalisation of the status of women as men's subordinates has stripped off their autonomy and robbed them of their agency to challenge oppressive patriarchal practices. Their silence has relegated them to the level of irrelevance, unless they render services to men, especially when validating them. Because women have an alternative, which is to challenge their oppression, their silence makes them complicit in their own subordination. Their complicity accentuates the reproduction of the abuse.

However, some women are courageous enough to challenge the oppressive patriarchal structures and subvert male dominance, especially where their existential freedom is concerned. The female protagonist in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) demonstrates such subversive qualities. She is determined to sacrifice her marriage in exchange of her freedom and autonomy, despite marriage being regarded as one of those aspects which complete a woman. Through this character, Wanner demonstrates that women are responsible for their own emancipation. They can liberate themselves by challenging the traditional stereotypes that subject them to male dominance.

Women must be educated on the dangers of believing in abusive relationships. As much as women avoid speaking up in fear of secondary victimisation, they should be encouraged to do so. Though their fear is justified, keeping quiet will perpetuate the abuse and deprive them the opportunity to get support. Future research should come up with strategies to create genuinely safe spaces for women to enjoy their existential freedom and to speak up without fear of secondary victimisation. Various attempts to fight GBV have been made, but the statistics keeps rising on a daily basis.

CHAPTER 5

THE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN MAN IN WANNER'S TEXTS: ALTERNATIVE MODES OF BEING

5.1 Introduction

It is impossible to talk about the contemporary black South African man, especially where matters of transformation are concerned, without mapping the trajectory of black South African masculinities. As Breckenridge (1998) in Richter & Morrell (2006) indicates, when the black South African man moved to the city to look for job opportunities, he found the urban environment brutal. The working conditions were harsh and dehumanising, and the black men were seldom allowed to visit their families in the homelands. These factors, when combined with racial emasculation, produced men who were used to suffering, adversity, and violence. As a result, violence developed into a patriarchal practice that became inextricably woven into household situations (ibid). It became the popular way of asserting masculine power and dominance, especially to the wife and children, and it gradually became accepted as a norm into which young boys were socialised. This, coupled with the distance as well as lengthy periods away from the family, widened the rift between men and their wives and children and established a hierarchy which was characterised by violence.

When the country attained democracy in 1994, the Constitution as well as the Bill of Rights drew on the past, while simultaneously trying to break free from it. This meant that among other things, these were to be crafted in such a way that they addressed the disparities between the representations of manhood and masculine identity and the representations of femininity and womanhood that prevailed at the time. The resultant change in the power relations between men and women reflected in the constitution resulted in the crisis of masculinity, which manifested in different ways. Some men reacted angrily and brutally, while others embraced the change. Walker (2005) argues that the declining patriarchal dividend caused by constitutional sexuality might have closed some avenues for men, but it also gave them new chances to define new masculinities. However, as reflected in Wanner's texts, despite twenty-nine years into democracy, modern masculinity still looks groggy, is equivocal, and is

distinguished by conflict between the aspiration to be a current, responsible, and respectable man and the urge to stick to traditional male practises. Her characterisation of the young fathers in *The Madams* (2006); *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014); *Men of the South* (2010); and *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) demonstrates the ambivalence which emanates from the entrapment of contemporary masculinities in the masculine ideologies of the past. Walker (2005) highlights the irony that surrounds the liberalisation of sexuality. She argues that instead of embracing and celebrating the equality that is enshrined in the constitution, violence has increased dramatically and has drawn scholarly interest in contemporary South Africa. In trying to explain the crisis of masculinity and the extent to which masculinities are in disarray, Posel (2003b: 12-13) argues:

The post-apartheid constitution has created the spaces for moral and cultural alternatives in the midst of – rather than by displacing – the taboos of old, as well as provoking new sources of anger and discomfort. The new visibility of sexuality coexists with a combination of angry outbursts and stern objections on the one hand, and resistant silences, denials, and refusals, on the other.

This suggests that instead of assisting South Africans transition smoothly from the mentality of apartheid and the liberation struggle to democracy for all, the constitution immersed people in a pool of ambivalence, leaving them to craft new ways of adapting on their own. In the interviews that Walker (ibid) conducted among black men who were involved in *Men for Change* (MFC), their responses reflected confusion, insecurity, anxiety, and uncertainty. MFC is a non-governmental organisation which was established in post-apartheid South Africa in 1998. Based in Alexandra township, Johannesburg, with Thulani Nkosi as its founder, the primary objective of this community-based organisation is to encourage men to make a difference within their own community. Their intention is to educate men about the harmful effects of gender socialisation, offer counselling and assistance to violent men who are willing to change, and educate men in leadership roles in organisations and schools about gender sensitivity (ibid).

In their confession towards repentance, some men expressed the intimidation they felt due to women's rising prominence and their perceived attainment of equality.

They expressed fear that men's dominant and privileged status had been unseated and undermined in some way, and the only way they could retaliate was through violence. They also highlighted the fact that as women are advancing academically and economically, it makes men feel redundant as women are now able to do things for themselves, usurping the roles previously designed for men (Walker 2005). Andile and Lerato's boyfriend share the same sentiments in Wanner's *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). The angry and violent outbursts portrayed by Lerato's boyfriend towards her as the breadwinner, and the stern objection reflected in Andile's attitude towards Nobantu, his wife's determination to run her own business, both attest to the confessions by Walker's respondents (ibid) as well as Posel's (2003b) argument about the crisis as well as the state of disarray in contemporary masculinities.

In a quest for change, some of Walker's (ibid) participants highlighted the misconceptions that they were socialised into as men. Among these was the misconception that being a man is about being able to inflict pain on others and to take pain yourself; that violating women is normal, it is a means of gaining and maintaining respect (as demonstrated by Lerato's boyfriend in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008); and that when a woman says "no" she actually means "yes." In expressing their desire to have an alternative experience of being a man and to shy away from emulating the type of a man they were socialised into, the participants highlighted such qualities as being a father that the wife and children will trust, admire, respect and not fear; the type of father in whose presence the children will feel safe; being present in their children's lives; and being a father whose children would relate to as a friend. This is the new trajectory of fatherhood that Wanner's younger generation of fathers wants to craft, albeit it is riddled with challenges that emanate from the traditional perceptions of masculinity and fatherhood.

In synergy with Ouma (2011), Dubow (2014) points out that there is a rethinking and redefining of the stereotypes that have shaped and defined men in order to create a more egalitarian contemporary society, and men are actively participating in these efforts. These initiatives are what have brought the stereotype that "all men are the same" under scholarly scrutiny. The active involvement of men in such endeavours

suggests that some men are not inherently violent, they are also victims of the socialisation they experienced in a social and political system that valued violence as a way of life and offered few or no alternative modes of being a man. Wanner's texts suggest these alternative forms of manhood and fatherhood. Through the portrayal of her young fathers, she attempts to prove that in contemporary South Africa, it is possible to have the new breed of a man and a father that embraces gender equality as outlined in the constitution, as opposed to the stereotype which represents apartheid misogyny and patriarchy.

5.2 Contestation, reification, and refraction of traditional notions of fatherhood and masculinity.

Morrell (2001) argues that it seems patently obvious that fatherhood and masculinity are related. Men have a gender identity that we refer to as masculinity, thus there must be a distinct connection. In concert, Johansson (2011b) posits that the overlap between fatherhood and masculinity qualifies the two entities to be discussed and theorised in relation to each other. Thus, in this chapter, the terms "father" and "fatherhood" as well as "man," "manhood," and "masculinity," will be discussed interchangeably.

Richter et al. (2010) argue that in work which seeks to transform masculine norms, fatherhood must be addressed because it is a crucial component of male identity. In his study on African fathers and fatherhood, Ouma (2011) points out that in African fiction, the traditional family unit is portrayed as an established institution where the father figure is revered as a progenitor gifted with authority, wisdom, and identity. As the child learns about his origins and biological links, the father's identity, which is handed on to his offspring, serves as one of the sources of stability as it ensures continuity to the family's bloodline. This family unit, which serves as a microcosm of larger society, is distinguished by a hierarchical, well-organised structure with distinct gender roles. At the top of the hierarchy, the father figure is portrayed as a figure of authority who is responsible for preserving the stability and order of society by passing down the standards, morals, and behaviours that have been socially pre-approved. In this way, the familial unit functions as one of the most important sites of gender

socialisation, where boys and girls learn about the socially prescribed gender roles from an early age.

Though located at the lower levels of the hierarchy, immediately above the girl child, the boy child is regarded as a link between the family and the society and is responsible for continuing the legacy of the society by identifying with his father. However, with increased globalisation, cultural mobility, socio-economic changes and technological advancement, the discourse of the father as a symbolic progenitor is being challenged, as contemporary South Africa is beginning to offer sons a myriad of choices and opportunities to choose from, when crafting their own identities. Ouma (2011) defines a similar situation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as the demise of custom and conventional wisdom, as well as the ensuing crisis of legitimacy and symbolic order of communal identity.

In this text, the introduction of Christianity in the village of Umuofia shifts symbolic authority and spiritual as well as moral capital to the son, who embraces an alternative view that problematises the traditionally symbolic power base of the father and the established institution of fatherhood. This suggests that just like masculinity, fatherhood is a contested concept as well as a malleable entity which is subject to change at any given time. Though change is sometimes contested, especially in patriarchal societies, Wanner's texts suggest a new breed of fathers who embrace contemporary masculinity and play a more involved parental role rather than making uninformed choices and imposing traditional ideologies on their children.

5.2.1 Representations of traditional fatherhood in *Men of the South* (2010)

Morrell (2005) points out that for many men, fathering a child is considered a milestone in a man's development. As hegemonic masculinity is linked to power, both in the private and the public realms, fatherhood facilitates the use of this power within the familial sphere to gain status and respect, which both spiral to the wider community (ibid). In concert, Clowes et al. (2013) state that having children plays a significant role in the performance of traditional ideals of masculinity. As the bearer of societal norms, values, goals and behavioural patterns, the father eventually hands

over the baton to the boychild, whose responsibility is to ensure that these are reproduced and upheld. In this way, fatherhood becomes a site where the standards of effectively executing masculinity can be imitated and passed across generations. This responsibility serves to strengthen the father's masculinity. From this, it can be deduced that the experience of fatherhood attaches more meaning to life itself, as this gender-identity development aligns with the familial stability as well as continuity in the bloodline of the family, which is a fulfilling experience on its own. The father's influence teaches the son how to be a man.

It is to this effect that the three traditional fathers in *Men of the South* (2010) are so adamant to influence their sons in the socially approved way, which is the traditional way. They want to imprint the values with which they were brought up by their own fathers, and those are associated with hegemonic masculinity. Among these, as indicated in Morrell (2005), is that a "real man" does not show affection because it is associated with weakness. In his text, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) Chinua Achebe's protagonist, Okonkwo demonstrates this quality. The narrative divulges to the reader that Okonkwo loves his daughter, Ezinma because she is manlier than his son Nwoye. However, he keeps this affection to himself and treats her like his other children because tenderness is a sign of weakness, a quality that he does not want to be associated with.

Morrell (2005) argues that in an African context, fathers can be presented as absent not simply because they are away due to migrant labour, but the rigid patriarch, who is present yet dominant and uncaring, qualifies as absent. Like Achebe's Okonkwo (ibid), Wanner portrays Mzilikazi's father as an absent father, whose coldness and sternness qualify him as absent even when he is around his family. Although Mzilikazi's father works in Johannesburg and visits his home once in a year, he remains cold and emotionally distant from his children and wife, whom he also abuses emotionally. In congruence with, and elaborating on Morrell's (2005) argument, Ratele (2022:238) asserts that from a psychological perspective, the physical death of a father is a preferable reason to be fatherless than losing him through desertion. This might be because in the case of physical death, the child eventually gets closure and accepts

that the father is gone, rather than knowing that the father is alive somewhere, but he simply does not care.

To trace the trajectory of this absence among black South African fathers, Clowes (2008) as well as Langa (2020) associate the evolution of black masculinity and fatherhood with *Drum* magazine, which targeted the black audience. These scholars indicate that the black father figure in the early *Drum* magazine of the 1950s was portrayed as being actively involved in familial matters and taking much interest in the lives of his children. This suggests that the journalists at this time viewed the construction of masculinity from an African perspective of manhood, whereby the stability of the family unit was regarded as a man's priority.

However, in the late 1950s to the early 1960s the narrative of the father figure changed, as the father began to occupy the public space of work which gradually moved him to the periphery, creating physical as well as emotional distance between him and his family. This primarily impacted fathers from rural areas who relocated to cities in pursuit of employment prospects, like Mzilikazi's in *Men of the South* (2010), and ultimately marginalised themselves from familial matters which were left under the care of women.

Scholarship indicates that the rift between fathers and their families is widening on a daily basis. Fazel (2017); and Langa (2020) concur that South Africa has the second highest rate of father absence in Africa after Namibia. This is mainly due to the conflation of the father figure with the traditional provider role at a time when the socio-economic circumstances indicate a downslide, thereby impacting negatively on this role. To avoid being seen by their children as failures, fathers normally resort to flight, abandonment, or denial (ibid). Langa (ibid) further argues that fathers may be absent through death, absent with occasional contact, absent with regular contact, and absent with no contact at all. Looking at it from a different perspective, Morrell (2005) establishes that sometimes, when the father is abusive and cold towards his children, like the patriarchal father figures in this study, this attitude may qualify him as absent to his children, though he might be staying with them on a full-time basis. He further notes that father absence is closely linked to low rates of paternal maintenance, as well as shockingly high rates of abuse and neglect of children by

men. Child neglect is clearly evident in *Men of the South* (2010) when Mzilikazi's mother has to sell vegetables so she can sustain her children while her husband is working in Johannesburg.

The unresponsiveness when Mzilikazi's father is around his family, coupled with his absence for the greater part of his life, as well as the harsh and condescending treatment that he gives his rural wife, qualifies him as non-existent to his family members. When he is around, his children fear him and find him difficult to identify with, as his obsession with hierarchical power has created a thick barricade between him and his family. As Mzilikazi's father prepares to take the children with him to Johannesburg after the death of his wife, Mzilikazi shares the anxiety caused by this new arrangement as he reflects, "Our new life with a father we barely knew and the woman who had allegedly killed my mother was about to begin. I was scared of what I would find" (2010:93). As he observes new and exciting things as they approach Johannesburg, Mzilikazi continues to express his anxiety around his father as he reflects, "I had so many questions, but could not ask any as I was seated next to my stern father" (ibid:94).

The emotional distance between Mzilikazi and his father is so wide that he cannot sustain a simple father-child conversation with him. By highlighting the difficulty that Mzilikazi experiences when trying to have a simple conversation with his father due to emotional distance, Wanner underscores the fact that identifying with the father, as a traditional norm, is more imposed than voluntary. It is impractical to identify with someone you fear. This explains why as a young father, who has been exposed to the alternatives that characterise the contemporary era and also to his own fear-ridden relationship with his father, Mzilikazi finds it difficult to take the baton and continue with the legacy which is contained in the principles and values of the family.

Clowes (2008) argues that this change in familial relations suggests Victorian influence, as *Drum* magazine of the late 1950s began to mimic *Outspan* and *Femina*, where white men asserted their hegemony by avoiding the allegedly feminised domestic spaces while black masculinity was represented through the proximity of wives, children, and other family members. As masculinity is a contested concept, the black man's mimicry of the white man's hegemony and the urge to be represented

through the proximity of other men, may be attributed to his retaliation against racist emasculation. To assert the masculinity of the black man, the magazine had to embrace the narratives of individualism that portrayed men as independent, isolated, and autonomous, locating them far away from women and children (Clowes 2008).

To account for the black man's desperation to mimic the white man's hegemony, Fanon (1986) underscores a psychological fragmentation that is inherent in the colonised black man. He points out that for the colonised black man to be comfortable with his identity, it must be approved in the world of the white man. He further argues that as much as the mastery of the white colonial discourse affords escape, it equally necessitates the death and burial of the colonised man's cultural authenticity, and this creates a destabilising double consciousness.

It is to this effect that Wanner offers the black man an opportunity of escape, by highlighting the flexibility of fatherhood and masculinity. She suggests that as much as the black man wants to assert his hegemonic status, fatherhood and masculinity are flexible and can adapt to different circumstances in different ways, thus offering him an array of options to choose from. In the contemporary social landscape, particularly, the constitution has allowed the interrogation, critiquing, re-creation, as well as the re-enactment of fatherhood and masculinities, thus allowing black fathers to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity traits while enjoying involved fatherhood at the same time. This can play a crucial role in curbing the crisis of masculinity and fatherhood as outlined in Richter & Morrell (2006), as well as the promotion of peaceful and harmonious masculinities.

It is worth noting in the narrative that the distance of the patriarchal father figure is also characterised by violence towards women and children. As indicated earlier, racial emasculation alongside the harsh and dehumanising working conditions of the black South African man during the apartheid era produced a violent man, whose violence became part of the patriarchal practice that spilled over to the home environment. However, though patriarchal fathers may be associated with sternness, unlike the mother, who loves her children unconditionally, it can be argued that fathers have their special way of loving their children. They love in a conditional way, as they prepare their sons to adjust to the harsh demands of the outside world. Once again,

reference can be made to Achebe's (1958) protagonist, Okonkwo, who is impressed by his adopted son, Ikemefuna's machismo. The narrative indicates that at a tender age, Ikemefuna demonstrates qualities associated with manliness, and has influenced the more feminine Nwoye in a manner that allays Okonkwo's fears concerning the manliness of the latter. This means that in a patriarchal setting, no matter how young the child is, especially the boy child, he should show signs of being a "real man" as prescribed by the traditional gender roles. This is clearly evinced in the narrative when Mfundo begins to play a fatherly role in his family by selling coal when his father disappears. He highlights this as he reflects, "And I, in the company of Mzi and some man our mother had hired, started selling *amalahle* (coal) to the places without electricity to help mama out with extra income" (2010:17).

Martin (2013) points out that scholars have expressed conflicting sentiments about child work. While some are blatantly opposed to it, claiming that it is exploitative and might impact negatively on the child's education and overall well-being, others believe that certain kinds of labour are good for a child's development because they help with character building or informal education. As much as the intention was good, that is to teach him responsibility as the man of the house, in Mfundo's case, it might be argued that child work was exploitative. It exerted undue psychological stress on him as he had to demonstrate that he was a "real man" at the age of thirteen, missing out on the fun that is associated with childhood. Failure to shoulder this huge responsibility made him embrace a laid-back attitude, which backfired later in the narrative as he opted for a socially vilified form of masculinity. At the age of forty, he still sneaks women into his mother's house where he stays, and from there he moves in with Slindile, where he plays the role of a househusband. All these aspects go against the traditional notions of masculinity and fatherhood, and he is sternly judged by society, including his own family and Mzilikazi, his friend. This undermines his dignity and self-esteem.

Patriarchal violence is noticeable in the way in which the two patriarchs in the novel relate to their families. Though the visibility of Mzilikazi's as well as Mfundo's fathers in the familial sphere is low, they maintain the law in their households through patriarchy, and everybody in the house must submit. In a patriarchal family unit,

failure to submit to the law of the father has serious ramifications. What the “law” means is that the patriarchal father is a domestic despot, feared more than respected. He takes it as his traditional responsibility to enforce rules, establish distinct boundaries, and administer discipline. This explains the explosive altercation that ensues when Mfundo’s father forces Sindiso, Mfundo’s elder brother, to go to school. In retaliation to his father’s dictatorship, Sindiso snaps, “No Papa, I am not asking, I am telling you” (2010:13). This reaction makes Mfundo and little Buhle, his sister, shrink with fear into the sofa because they know the kind of a hiding that Sindiso is going to get. Mfundo gives the reader a clear picture of the hierarchical arrangement within the family as he reflects, “I was scared for him, but was also immensely proud of him. To answer to our parents like that!” (2010:13). He goes on to say, “My father was the law in our house. No one had ever answered him the way Sindiso had” (ibid).

Scholarship indicates that the absence of the father, especially emotional absence, can have devastating effects in the lives of the children. Langa (2020) and Swartz & Bhana (2009) concur that the absence of the father encourages risk-taking behaviour among children and is regarded as the main contributory cause of childhood vulnerability. Sindiso’s involvement in crime, alcohol abuse and casual sex suggest the lack of guidance, affirmation, and stability, which might be enhanced by the synergistic efforts of both parents when bringing the child up. In addition to the role played by the mother, the presence of the father figure plays a significant role, as a boy child looks up to him as a role model. This is suggested by Mfundo when he argues that the masculinities demonstrated by men around him as he was growing up were not convincing, as a result, he did not want to emulate them (2010:17). These overwhelming experiences convince Sindiso that he is a man in his own right, especially because he has also undergone circumcision.

According to Mfecane (2018), circumcision is the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. Morrell (2005) argues that manhood is often a contested concept, and that it is usually characterised by tensions as young males want to be considered as men earlier than their fathers are prepared to concede. It is to this effect that Sindiso’s father shouts, as he slowly takes off his belt to punish him “You are telling me? *You* are telling *me*? *Wena uyindoda laphendlini ...* You think you are a man in this house

now that you have been circumcised, neh? Who do you think you are to talk to me like that?" (2010:13). From this it can be deduced that men are territorial, and that Mfundo's father is always on the guard against the invasion of his territory. Likewise, Sindiso's reaction clearly suggests that he fully regards himself as a man, and that he has already started to establish his own territory as he retaliates to the punishment meted out by his father. Morrell (ibid) posits that as a desired state in the life of a male, manhood indicates the time at which he stops being a minor and expects his rights to be conferred on him, and his role to elicit respect. Sindiso's reaction indicates that as a man, he demands respect and will do anything to ensure that his rights and dignity as a man are not violated under any circumstances, even by his own father.

The same fear of the law in the narrative is discerned when Mzilikazi fears to disclose that he is gay. Even though he enjoys his life as a self-proclaimed gay in Cape Town, he still fears disclosing his sexuality freely. He fears his father and his homophobic attitude. Homosexuality is often associated with stigma and discrimination, especially when viewed from a heterosexual or heteropatriarchal perspective. As Mzilikazi reflects, "I guess even though I was over thirty, I still feared my father in the same way that I did when I as a young boy in rural Zululand and saw him only once a year" (2010:123), it becomes evident that, just like Mfundo's father, Mzilikazi's father is a domestic despot, and in order to maintain good relations with him, Mzilikazi should keep his sexuality to himself.

Being gay in a patriarchal family unit is often viewed with suspicion and is regarded as an insult to the father. It signals a threat as well as an interruption in the paternal narrative which necessitates heterosexuality for the natural order of procreation as well as patriarchal power relations to be maintained. As Mzilikazi contemplates telling women who are romantically attracted to him that he is gay, he reflects, "But I cannot say that of course. It would definitely be the death of my relationship with my father" (ibid:85). To this effect he reaffirms his manhood to the public by getting married, fathering children, and carrying out the gender roles expected of him as a Zulu man. In traditional settings, getting married, having children, and establishing a stable household is regarded as one of the markers of masculinity as it ensures security and continuity of the family's bloodline.

5.3 Towards a reflexive, egalitarian, and individualised fatherhood.

Andrews (2021:283) argues:

The father, in many ways, comes to represent the nation, especially through links to the apartheid state, which is most clearly aligned with rigid patriarchal power, and secondarily through links to the liberation movement, where fathers were given the authority to define a new vision of the nation. When the apartheid state dismantles, both the liberation father figure and the oppressive patriarch begin to fade.

This implies that as the representative of the nation, the significance of the father is highly influenced by shifts in the socio-political landscape. Depending on the historical period, the symbolic father is regarded differently. During the apartheid era, fathers were viewed from a patriarchal perspective. When the liberation movement was underway, they obtained the capacity to establish a new national vision. In the contemporary era, the father has been forced to resign from his presumptive position and cut off from the masculinist power symbols he has traditionally relied on to maintain his standing.

This is evident in Wanner's texts where the contemporary South African father figure resists patriarchal worldviews of the father and challenges the patriarchal discourse of fatherhood which is associated with oppression, power, and identity. It becomes clear that the traditional father role is a representation of a fictitious ancestor, as the post 1994 fathers craft new trajectories that will enable them to forge their own identity against the replication of the traditional father figure. In *Men of the South* (2010), the young fathers, Mfundo, Mzilikazi, and Tinaye use the masculine rhetoric based on gender to query the authenticity of the father as an embodiment of identity, authority, and knowledge.

As they reflect upon their own upbringing, these young fathers problematise and deconstruct the traditional discourse of fatherhood. Unlike their fathers who were initiated into and remained within the apocryphal horizon of society, they undertake an epic journey into the tabooed, unprofiled, and unknown territory. They opt for

defiance against traditional gender expectations and strive to do better, not only for the benefit of their children, but also for their own.

These young fathers begin to view the patriarchal father as a cruel and violent force to be escaped from, and attempt to carve a new trajectory towards being a better father to their offspring. The understanding that these young men have of fatherhood is that it goes beyond the biological contribution to the conception of a child. It requires a certain degree of responsibility and involvement whereby the child will identify with the father, develop an attachment, and see his father as his role model.

From a social constructionist perspective, they view fatherhood from the perspective of a more inclusive masculinity, which embraces both masculine and feminine behaviours, aiming to achieve more egalitarian relationships. Barker et al. (2017) state that social constructionists reject the idea of inborn traits, contending that gender constructions are only the outcome of historical, social, and cultural elements interacting at a specific period. Conversely, essentialists hold the opinion that gender traits are innate essences that manifest in chemical and biological variations. They also claim that gender traits are constant across cultures and throughout recorded history (ibid). The perception that these young fathers have about masculinity and fatherhood aims at destabilising the polarisation between men and women, masculine and feminine, gay and straight, and it challenges the traditional stereotype that uses masculinity as the primary method of stratifying men.

In *Men of the South* (2010) Mfundo is a househusband; Mzilikazi is gay and Tinaye is a foreigner. Despite these labels that go against heteronormativity and challenge their status as men, they commit to be present fathers to their children rather than resorting to flight, denial, and abandonment. This is an attempt to bridge the gap between fathers and their offspring, something which, as Andrews (2021) argues, has often defined literary representations of fatherhood in South Africa. The kind of fatherhood that they embrace reflects a kind of relationship where a man's children form an important part of his identity, where he sees himself, his aspirations, and his dreams through them. Here, the father takes it upon himself to contribute to the upbringing and well-being of his child not only physically but also economically, socially, morally, spiritually, culturally, and otherwise.

By highlighting the efforts of these fathers to be present in the lives of their children regardless of their different marginal positions, Wanner underscores that instead of boxing fathers into different categories because of their socio-economic challenges, they must be acknowledged by society as one of the most significant yet underutilised resources that can have a profound impact not just on the lives of their children but also on the wider society. This suggests that by embracing the gender stereotype that assigns the duty of childcare to the mother because the father is allegedly not designed for such, the society is depriving both the child and the father of one of the most important aspects of life.

Scholarship has highlighted several advantages associated with involved fathering. Ratele (2022) maintains that being an involved father brings both stability and affirmation to the entire household. When this happens, love is shared mutually, and this brings satisfaction to the father himself. This is evident in the way in which both Mfundo and Mzilikazi love their children in the narrative. Though the society has marginalised them because of the different categories into which their masculinities have been boxed, they do not want to allow these societal labels to create a distance between them and their offspring.

When reflecting on the way in which they were brought up, they demonstrate a critical engagement with how fatherhood is defined as they decide to defy the conventions of gender expectations. Unlike his father, whom they feared more than respected, Mfundo establishes a significant bond with his daughter, Nomazizi, whom he baby-sits while her mother, Slindile is at work. To demonstrate the depth of this relationship, Mfundo reflects, "When Sli was home and Noma fell and hurt herself, it was to Dada and not Mama she went to, to kiss it and make it better (2010:57). Though he does not stay with his children on a full-time basis, Mzilikazi on the other hand, arranges with Siyanda, his ex-wife, to have the children flown during their school holidays from Johannesburg to Cape Town where he stays. He makes this holiday arrangement a norm as he does not want distance to deter him from being an involved father. Also, he makes sure that he calls them regularly. He does this to ensure that he strengthens his relationship with them, and that he supports them to the best of his ability. This

stance in these young fathers is influenced by the desire not to repeat the mistakes which were made by their own fathers.

The parenting style adopted by their fathers created circumstances which later resulted in them experiencing the father wound. Miller (2013) defines the father wound as a situation whereby the father is either physically or emotionally absent, or is abusive, negative, or overly critical, resulting in long term negative consequences for the child. Even though the father-son bond may be the most important male to male relationship a man will ever have, fathers, especially in a traditional and heteropatriarchal context, may encourage emotional distance between themselves and their sons in an effort to convey expectations about socially prescribed masculine responsibilities. The father wound may have an unpleasant impact in the well-being as well as in the future relationships of the victim. Among these are: low self-esteem; anxiety; depression, anger, and rage; too rigid or too loose boundaries; unstable romantic relationships and absent parenting (ibid).

By foregrounding the challenges experienced by these young fathers, Wanner is trying to problematise the assumed naturalness as well as the uniformity of being male, and to highlight the malleability of fatherhood as a social role. On a similar vein, she wants to demonstrate how the notions of masculinity and fatherhood in contemporary South Africa are shifting, as well as the way conventional gender expectations are being confronted to unsettle established gender roles. When Mfundo alludes to his brother Sindiso earlier in the narrative and describes how he retaliates when his father forces him to go to school (2020:13), he demonstrates the antiquated notion of conventional patriarchal fatherhood. Additionally, he foreshadows the death of the patriarch and the emergence of the new man whom the reader comes across as the narrative unfolds.

It is important to highlight that the contemporary young fathers, as reflected in Wanner's texts, are not archetypes. The narrative underscores the differences between contemporary South African fathers as well as the extremely diverse perspectives they have on their roles as fathers. This is mainly because of the contemporary circumstances in which people live, where the traditional markers of identity once thought to be essential to the self are now being demolished and

deconstructed. There is very little romantic attachment between these young fathers and their own fathers, whom they initially blame as incapacitated leaders to handle the transcultural realities they confront. Since they are expected to occupy the critical and conflicted position according to the natural order of inheritance within their families, the reality of their circumstances puts them in a compromised position when it comes to enjoying the luxury of patriarchal dividends.

Even though they see their reality as functional since it is full of boundless opportunities that are outside the purview of patriarchy, it cannot be accommodated because it is outside the customary framework. It is to this effect that their tenacious struggles against self-fragmentation, and their acceptance of and openness to the diversity and malleability of masculinity and fatherhood, all stand out in the creation of their identities. By challenging the resigned position of marginality which is occupied by these fathers, Wanner gives a voice and power to the previously silenced notions of masculinity and fatherhood.

5.3.1 Blurring the line between manliness and fatherhood in *Men of the South* (2010)

As a gay man, Mzilikazi perceives his sexual orientation as an obstacle that deprives stability to his family. His society defines manliness from a heteronormative perspective and anything that falls below this standard is viewed with suspicion. Since fatherhood is perceived as a corollary of heteronormativity, his society dissociates homosexuality from meaningful fatherhood. He laments, "Why had I failed to be content to be a father to the twins and a husband to Siyanda?" (2010:112). Here, both Mzilikazi and his wife are portrayed as victims of cultural stereotypes which criminalise homosexual relationships. To Siyanda, being married to a homosexual man and having children with him is a taboo. Before Mzilikazi even tells her, she gets suspicious of his sexuality and avoids discussing it with him as Mzilikazi reflects:

She just did not want to know and conveniently would be at work six days a week and on Sunday spend most of the day at church. She had become a keen devotee and I suppose a diplomat of some Pentecostal church called Christ's High Commission, whose lead ambassador was a certain Pastor Christina. I had

no issues with her faith – to each their own- but was worried that she was seriously absenting herself from home because she did not want to hear what I had to say. What was strange was that no matter what time she came home, she somehow expected me to fulfil my conjugal duties (2010:118-119).

Here Wanner underscores the fact that contrary to the belief that heteropatriarchal practices oppress only women while offering a patriarchal dividend to men, such practices are equally oppressive to men, especially the marginalised group. To fit and be accepted in society, homosexuals like Mzilikazi must mask their identity and live a lie. Because he is gay, he does not meet the criteria of being a father. This traditional stereotype amounts to dehumanisation as it strips Mzilikazi of the democratic freedom of choice and a right to be treated with dignity as enshrined in the South African constitution.

This is the stereotype that Wanner wants to challenge through her characterisation of Mzilikazi. She problematises the narrow traditional perception of masculinity that uses heteronormativity as a yardstick to measure manliness and vouches for a more enlightened view that accommodates gay men whose queer sexuality does not deter them from playing their roles. As a gay father, Mzilikazi disrupts the positioning of fathers as propagators of stifling gender roles or custodians of heterosexuality. In particular, he wants to prove that his provider role as a man as well as his presence in the lives of his children is not affected by his sexuality in any way. Unlike his father, as a new man Mzilikazi prioritises protecting his children physically, emotionally, socially, and economically, despite the geographical distance that makes it hard for him to visit regularly.

Morrell (2005) maintains that among the markers of “real manhood” is the ability to protect oneself as well as one’s family. Despite growing up in a physically and emotionally abusive environment, Mzilikazi is not portrayed as a wounded victim who projects his anger to the vulnerable people around him. As indicated earlier, Mzilikazi and his siblings have been violated and neglected by his emotionally distant father. In addition, the narrative indicates that Mzilikazi had been physically abused by Witness, a bully who was his classmate in primary school, and by his uncle, who taught him to protect himself the hard way from bullies. He reflects:

So, the next day he decided to punish me, ostensibly for wearing shoes but actually because I had laughed the day before when he had been unable to “tall.” But my father’s younger brother was coming from the fields and saw what was going on. When he saw me about to run away, he came over and slapped me in the face and told me to be a man as I was letting down the family name. Then he gave me a stick and told me to fight away with Witness. Of course, Witness beat me hands down, but my uncle eventually taught me the correct way of wielding a stick, and within a few months no one was willing to start a fight with me (2010:91).

Buckingham & Daniolos (2013) indicate that childhood victims of abuse are more likely to become abusers themselves in the future. It is also true that some people who experienced maltreatment in their childhood do not necessarily become perpetrators of violence in adulthood, instead they become overly vigilant for any potential abuse of their children (ibid). This assertion holds true for Mzilikazi. Despite being a seasoned warrior, as a new man he does not portray any element of violence in the narrative, instead he prioritises the protection of those he loves.

This attitude aligns the new man with the historical black South African man as indicated by Mkhize (2004). He claims that the cultural framework at the time incorporated constructive aspects of being a father and a man, and it is quite imperative that these are not lost. Being a man and a father was correlated with the capacity to exercise self-discipline. Among the most crucial aspects, this equanimity entailed not resorting to violence, especially against women and children. Violating women and children was regarded as the most horrendous and cowardly act. To show how obnoxious and unwelcome it was, men who engaged in such practices were socially ostracised by their peers (ibid).

Even when Siyanda, his wife, attacks him physically out of anger and loathing after he discloses his sexuality (2010:119), Mzilikazi does not retaliate like his friend Mfundo when he is attacked by his wife, Slindile. Instead, as a compensation for hurting her feelings he is prepared to give her whatever she wants, the house; his pension money; and a portion of his salary (ibid:120).

As a new man Mzilikazi shifts a little from living a lie, though he still keeps it as a secret from his father, and acknowledges his limitations, weaknesses, and defeats. Living a lie has denied him the opportunity to enjoy a free life and rendered his marriage claustrophobic. He feels that living under such stifling conditions, with a woman whom he forces himself to love, might impact negatively on his capacity to love his children. As he introduces himself to the reader, Mzilikazi unabashedly declares, "If there were anything like a 100% Zulu boy who is cosmopolitan, I am he. I am also a 100% gay" (ibid:85). This declaration can be interpreted as confrontational to the dehumanising labels used to define gay men, as Mzilikazi equally asserts his authenticity as a Zulu man.

Being 100% Zulu boy may be associated with conservatism, a befitting description for Mzilikazi, who, in addition to his expertise in stick fighting, clearly states that his mannerisms are those of a straight man. However, despite these qualities, the assertion that he is also 100% gay indicates that these two qualities can co-exist harmoniously in the life of a man. In addition, Wanner underscores the fact that since masculinity is flexible and to a greater extent a performance as per Butler's (1990) assertion, a man can be conservative and egalitarian at the same time.

Unlike the then South African president, Jacob Zuma, who also claims to be 100% Zulu boy and uses his conservatism to violate Fezileke Khuzwayo in Tlhabi (2017), the narrative portrays Mzilikazi as an example of a new man in the new dispensation, who embraces egalitarianism. It is alleged that in his argument, Jacob Zuma affirmed his heteropatriarchal stance by claiming that as 100% Zulu boy, it is culturally inappropriate and regarded as unmanly to turn down the sexual advances of a woman (ibid), suggesting that Fezekile asked for it.

In comparison, Mzilikazi is portrayed as a new man who is determined to participate in the turnaround of black South African masculinities by promoting gender equality. For one thing, the narrative reflects that after the annulment of his marriage with Siyanda and his relocation to Cape Town, he invites his children to spend holidays with him, where he gets to spend quality time with them. Although he spends most of the time by himself during the course of the year while the children are at school

in Johannesburg where they stay with their mother, the narrative indicates that his apartment had been decorated with kids in mind (2010:65).

Richter et al. (2010) argue that the mere fact that a child has a father who acknowledges him and spends time with him may confer societal worth on the child in countries like South Africa, where more than 60% of children do not live with their fathers. However, the issue of the positive impact of residential fathers in the lives of their children needs to be treated with caution. Some fathers, like Lerato's boyfriend in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), may be regarded as residential as they share the same familial space with their children, while their relationship with the family members is toxic due to their psychological and emotional issues. A father who violates the people whom he is supposed to protect, models fatherhood and masculinity in the most terrible way. The message that he sends to the children is that a man is regarded as a "real man" if he violates the vulnerable people around him. In their adulthood, these children are likely to emulate the violent actions of their father, defeating the purpose of being a residential father as well as generativity, which has been defined by Roy & Panda (2022) as the socialisation of young people into a peaceful and egalitarian generation.

While it is true that some fathers are inspired to model their own fathers' behaviour or parenting style, others aspire to be better fathers than the ones they had. Although Mzilikazi does not live permanently with his children, the fact that he prioritises their physical, emotional, as well as social well-being makes him a present father who contributes significantly to their lives. This attitude underscores the fact that due to socio-economic changes as well as different complexities that surround fatherhood, being a present father may not necessarily imply that one should be a residential father to impact positively in the lives of his children.

Some fathers, like Lerato's boyfriend, might live in the same space with their children, but the indifferent behaviour that they portray towards them can qualify them as absent. This suggests that it does not matter whether the father is residential or non-residential, what is important is the quality of a relationship that a man has with his children. This may include healthy communication channels between father and child, as well as the father's attitudes and behaviours towards the children.

Based on her investigation of father-child relationships, Richter (2003) established that the child's emotional health benefits from having a father around. Children who live in fatherless homes are more prone to suffer from emotional problems and depression. Boys, particularly, have some shortcomings in social skills, behavioural management, and success. Through compensatory identification with hypermasculinity, they are more likely to exhibit stereotypically masculine behaviours, such as aggressiveness compared to the sons of residential fathers who have a better approach towards masculinity (ibid). This allegation holds true for Sindiso, who might be experiencing a father wound in *Men of the South* (2010). After being thrown out by his father after their altercation, he gets involved in uncouth behaviour as Mfundo reflects:

Some time after leaving home, my elder brother went into exile as a Pan-Africanist operative. [...] But my brother, Sindiso did not join the PAC because of his beliefs. Rather because he had been liberating good-looking vehicles from the wealthier members of society and selling them to chop shops, and the cops were catching up with him (2010:16).

In concert, Ratele (2022:236) emphasises that a deficit of fatherly love is one of the most crucial factors underlying why some men feel hurt and hurt others. He goes on to argue that the desire for fatherly love can be extremely strong in a community where there has been a history of racist division, institutionalised violence, and the distorting of love requirements (ibid). As Mzilikazi demonstrates, a child needs the kind of love that will shield him or her from the harshness of the outside world.

Although there is no father template that serves as a yardstick against which effective fathering is measured, active involvement of a father in his child's life is significant if we want to address the issues of violence in South Africa. Though most fathers prioritise the provider role as the most significant marker of fatherhood and masculinity, fathers can be actively involved in the lives of their children in many ways.

With the paradigm shift that has affected the social, political, and economic spheres of existence, black South African men can explore an array of avenues which can assist them strengthen relations with their children. Echoing Richter (2003) and highlighting the importance of involvement of fathers in the lives of their children

despite financial instability, Palkowitz (2002) suggests that the long-lasting benefits on the development of a child can be attributed to a father's psychological support and emotional generosity, which involve expressiveness and intimacy. This downplays simple contact as inadequate in establishing a sound relationship with the child. In some cases, men father children outside their marriage and claim to have a relationship with the child by providing for his financial needs as well as contacting him telephonically. Such a father is not involved in the life of the child as far as Palkowitz (ibid) is concerned. To leave a remarkable mark in the life of the child, the father must offer him emotional generosity.

As he envisions outing himself as gay to women who make advances towards him, Mzilikazi reflects, "But I cannot say that, of course. It would definitely be the death of my relationship with my father" (2010:85). By highlighting the importance of this relationship to Mzilikazi, to the extent that he is even prepared to live a lie to save it, Wanner demonstrates the way children value their relationship with their fathers. Regardless of how weak their relationship is, Mzilikazi puts a great deal of effort in maintaining it.

To emphasise the importance of stable father-child relationships, Andrews (2021) argues that the patriarchal society turns a blind eye to some of the critical issues that compromise familial as well as social stability. This holds true for the Khumalo family. The fact that Mzilikazi's father cheats on Mzilikazi's mother and neglects his children while cohabiting with an educated woman in Johannesburg, is downplayed by society because it is associated with heterosexuality, yet Mzilikazi's homosexuality is treated with contemptuousness.

The self-fulfilment that Mzilikazi enjoys from this relationship with his children as a father figure reverberates Lamb & Lewis (2013), who argue that contrary to the belief that it is only children who benefit from the father-child relationship, the experience of fathering brings fulfilment, growth as well as emotional stability in the life of the father. There is an archetypal kind of a relationship where the father envisions his attitude to life through his offspring, based on his experiences as he was growing up. Here, love is given and received in the process of moulding the child and aligning him

or her with the principles and values that will make him a meaningful citizen in contemporary society.

Mzilikazi wants to be a role model to his children and promote the growth of the abilities required for successful adult acculturation to the rapidly changing social and physical world, such as the world of interpersonal relations, employment, money, politics, and power. This gives him a new sense of purpose and self-acceptance in his paternal responsibilities. This is the type of fatherhood that reflects in the early *Drum* magazine of the 1950s, where fatherhood meant more than a simple biological connection.

Richter & Morrell (2006) argue that a good father cannot be measured simplistically by his presence or absence. This implies that a father can be physically present but emotionally absent or vice versa. Mzilikazi manages to maintain a stable relationship with his children, though he stays in Johannesburg and his children in Cape Town. This indicates that stability in the lives of children and adolescents may be associated with paternal relationships characterised by closeness, mutuality, and support. Mzilikazi manages to bring emotional stability to the lives of his children amidst conflicts between his racial and cultural identity, and his life as a gay man. He does not want to expose them to the trauma of dealing with an absent father that he went through when he was growing up.

As he recalls his father's reaction to the clip about same sex marriages when they were watching news together, he is still astounded by his anger and hatred towards gay men as he reflects, "I remember watching the news with [my father] the one time. A clip about same-sex marriages having finally been permitted in South Africa by the Constitutional Court came on, and a look of disgust came over his face" (2010:122). His father, together with the ultra-patriarchal society in which they both live, perceive such behaviours as effeminate and culturally inappropriate. Mzilikazi reflects on how same-sex marriage is perceived as "un-African" as well as the appeals to authenticity that are embodied in parental myths about religion, culture, and ethnicity thus:

Deep down I thought of the hypocrisy of my father, talking of what is not African when he could not find it in him to embrace other Africans unless they were South Africans. Or talking of Christianity, at that, when he himself had not been to church since I was in Standard 5 (2010:123).

Thus, rather than being based on independent convictions, such paternal narratives are exposed as being disingenuous and employed by those fathers who wish to uphold power hierarchies. Although Mzilikazi's father is not aware of his son's sexual orientation yet, as a traditional father he attempts to preserve patriarchal legitimacy and authority over his son through the gender construct, but Mzilikazi secretly challenges this. Though he is afraid of him and cannot challenge him and his ideology openly, Mzilikazi secretly sees Down Low Friend, acronymised as DLF, his gay partner. By engaging in this activity, he is problematising the conventional discourse on gender.

Through this activity, Mzilikazi both interrogates the way society perceives, constructs, and performs masculinity and problematises the way gay relationships with their fathers as well as other males in their lives is historicised. Homosexuality affords Mzilikazi the opportunity to encounter the world in both its male and female facets. Through the characterisation of Mzilikazi, Wanner highlights the transformation of the binary between femininities and masculinities into a grey area, where these traditionally polarised entities are melting into each other. His marginal position allows Mzilikazi to blend into the convoluted space of gender identity while also allowing for creative experimentation.

Mzilikazi demonstrates his performance of sexual diversity through gayness, which is indicative of the postcolonial, postmodern as well as contemporary reality. He is determined to subvert and challenge the boundaries of his sexual identity, confront social conventions, and take a very active role in defining himself as a father. Moving to Cape Town affords him escape from the influence of stifling patriarchal conceptions and gives him physical as well as psychic space to create a new narrative about his own life. He reflects:

Now I could be the person I always wanted to be, but downplayed because of my and society's skewed expectations of what an African man should be like.

In this city, without my father and all those relatives from emakhaya, I could now become an individual and not a person who conforms to the expectations of society no matter how unreasonable those expectations are (2010:127).

As a migrant city, Cape Town affords Mzilikazi an avenue to snack on normative opposition and an environment in which the creative self can flourish. While giving him a culture of survival, it allows him to perform while simultaneously defying the expectations of parenthood and to express creative resistance in keeping with his postmodern reality and circumstances. It also helps Mzilikazi let go of his sense of ancestry. He starts dating another self-proclaimed gay called Thulani.

However, when he finds out that his father has passed away, he does not want Thulani to go with him to the funeral since he is still apprehensive about telling his family about his sexual orientation. This suggests that as much as he regards himself as a free man, part of his innermost self, no matter how small, remains trapped in tradition and it lurks in his life, ready to ambush him and remind him of traditional expectations of manhood. At the funeral, he does, however, experience a sense of liberation from the influence his father had over his life. Additionally, there is appreciation for what his father has meant to him. This becomes evident as he reflects:

We have just buried my father. I loved him, insofar as everyone is supposed to love his or her father; but more than that, I feared him. When I dropped some earth into his grave just after my mother had done the same, it felt as though I dropped some of the fear. And I cried, because for all his fearsomeness, I may never have achieved in life what I achieved without my father pushing me as he did (2010:148-149).

By highlighting fear, Mzilikazi wants to emphasise that his relationship with his father was centred around fear. Although he admits the advantages of this fear, it is not the type of a relationship that he wants to establish between himself and his own children. As indicated earlier, he wants to be a father whom his children can count on. He wants them to feel secure even when he is not around. He wants them to feel protected physically, emotionally, financially, and otherwise.

After his father is laid to rest, Mzilikazi starts to question how his sexuality squares with cultural, traditional, and masculine ideals. He starts to create a new story about how his father would view him after his death, even considering the idea that he might be able to explain to him why he is gay. Mzilikazi is able to somewhat reconcile his sentiments for his father, thanks to this more maternal kind of narrative of picturing acceptance, which is ironically but provocatively used with the once-oppressive father role in the narrative. In the absence of his father, he is given the traditionally masculine duty of family protector, complete with the typical symbols of masculine strength represented by weapons. However, he sees that his sexuality disturbs these rituals. This becomes evident as he muses:

Soon, my uncles will gather together and call me for umcimbi. As the eldest son in the family, I shall be given my father's traditional weapons (spear, shield and kierie) to remind me that I am now the head of the family and must protect all within the household. I wonder how these snuff-taking, mqombothi-drinking uncles of mine would react if they were to know that the man of the house is gay? Would they still give me the weapons? Would my father turn in his grave if, looking from above, or wherever it is that dead people go to, he got to know that his eldest son is not Zulu enough in *his* sense of the word? Or would he perhaps start having a good debate with some long-dead Zulu warrior on the untruths of how homosexuality is human and has nothing to do with Africanness or Zuluness? (150).

In this quotation the protagonist, Mzilikazi, considers the expectations society places on him as the eldest son to assume the responsibilities of a family patriarch and guardian, while also grappling with his own identity as a gay man. He poignantly asks sensitive questions about how his late father and uncles might respond if they knew he was gay, instead of conforming to the heteronormative norms of Zulu manhood. He wonders whether they would still give him the customary weapons, a club, shield, and spear, that symbolise his responsibility to protect his family. The inner struggle that Mzilikazi faces reflects the disconnect that he feels between his sexual orientation and the expectations placed on him by society to fit into a traditional, Zulu-based concept of masculinity. He wonders if his father would be embarrassed or if they would

have a meaningful discussion about whether homosexuality and African identity are compatible. This quotation demonstrates Wanner's use of Mzilikazi's persona to subvert conventional ideas of masculinity and the assumptions that underlie heteronormative relationships, which are frequently taken for granted. By lending voice to Mzilikazi's inner battle, Wanner humanises the lived experience of LGBTQ people juggling cultural expectations and family responsibilities. Additionally, the excerpt underscores how common Mzilikazi's predicament is, as many men experience pressure to live up to idealised and frequently unachievable standards of manhood. Wanner challenges readers to consider the variety of masculinities and the need for more tolerance and understanding through her nuanced depiction of Mzilikazi's complicated identity.

Even when he participates in masculinist and patriarchal rituals, Mzilikazi can picture his father accepting his sexual orientation. Incorporating both his own gay identity, which his father disapproved of, and his father's customs and expectations, he creates a tormented, dynamic form of masculine expression. His father's death at the end of his narrative is symbolic. It symbolises the death of tradition and traditional authority as well as the patriarchal laws which marginalise and suppress those who fail to subscribe to the hegemonic and heteronormative constructs of fatherhood and masculinity.

5.3.2 Is a man judged by a pay cheque or by his deeds? Delegitimising the "male provider" stereotype in *Men of the South* (2010)

The characterisation of Mfundo portrays him as a victim of absent fatherhood. He is thrown off balance by the ambivalence of having to establish the fatherly qualities that he would like to emulate when he assumes the role of being a father. This happens earlier in his life when he is forced by the circumstances to assume manly duties in his home. Mfundo grows up in a middle-class family in Orlando West, Soweto, where his mother is a teacher, and his father is a lawyer who only works as the clerk of the court due to apartheid. Due to his political activism, Mfundo's father disappears

mysteriously while Mfundo is around the age of thirteen, following Sindiso, Mfundo's elder brother's departure into exile, after a heated altercation with his father.

The sudden disappearance of these two senior male figures leaves Mfundo with the responsibility of being the man of the house, a role his mother encourages him to play. Reflecting on his attempt to grapple with this massive role at a tender age, Mfundo confides to the reader thus, "It was a role I took seriously, my mother indulged, and Buhle resented. It was a difficult role, too, since in my neighbourhood it was never defined what it was that men did, exactly" (2010:17).

The disorientation that Mfundo experiences at this stage emanates from the pressure he finds himself under to define the complex concept of masculinity. This disorientation re-surfaces once again in adulthood, when he is scouting for good fatherhood and manhood, following Slindile, his family, and their friends' disapproval of the type of masculinity and fatherhood that he embraces. Seemingly, the expectations reminisce those of the tyrannical fatherhoods that Mfundo wants to break free from, in a quest to carve his own trajectory that fits his own perception of masculinity and fatherhood. Just like the loafer type that used to sit at the tavern the whole day, drinking alcohol and smoking when Mfundo was growing up, the tyrannical fatherhood that is being imposed on Mfundo by his family does not appeal to him either. It is such circumstances as these that Adichie (2014:26) refers to when she argues:

We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them. We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a *very* narrow way. Masculinity is a hard, small cage, and we put boys inside this cage. We teach boys to be afraid of fear, of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves, because they have to be [...] a hard man.

By highlighting Mfundo's dilemma when facing the challenge of choosing the type of fatherhood to embrace, Wanner underscores the role played by society at large, especially men, in the socialisation of teenage boys. She shifts focus from Mfundo's father to other men in the community, who would model healthy masculinity to Mfundo as a boy. In these two types of men, Mfundo does not see any role model. As

far as he is concerned, a “real man” does not exist yet. This explains why he decides to be a totally different type of a man to Slindile and a different father to Nomazizi. He has been watching the harsh way his father and Mzilikazi’s relate to women and children, and he does not want to emulate that. He has been watching the happy-go-lucky men loafing around and enjoying the patriarchal dividend with a dictatorial mindset, and that does not sound convincing to him as well. As a gender-equitable man and father, he wants to change the patriarchal narrative and be a role model not only to his daughter, but to society at large.

As Mfundo demonstrates, promoting more transformative masculinities and challenging patriarchal masculinities can appear to be a daunting task that is beyond the scope of any one person or organisation since opposing patriarchal masculinities involves bringing about social change. However, for social change to take place, each individual must take responsibility for their own actions and be the change they wish to see in the world. This is the stance that Mfundo takes. To have the kind of courage to challenge patriarchal masculinities that Mfundo possesses, a man needs to reflect on himself and the type of a man he wants to be. The environment where he grew up gives him fertile ground for such reflection. He asks himself the extent to which he appreciates the principles of gender equality, human dignity, and respect for all people. He also considers the type of relationship he wants with his partner, children and friends, a relationship that will represent these values, and the way in which he can establish such a relationship.

The fact that at that very young age Mfundo disapproved of these patriarchal masculinities and wanted to be a different man and father when he grew up, coupled with Sindiso’s rebellion against the tyrannical fatherhood that was demonstrated by his father at the beginning of the narrative, foreshadows the death of a dictatorial father and the emergence of a new man which both happen as the narrative unfolds. The new man is portrayed as more present in the lives of his family members and more receptive to egalitarianism.

Mfundo emphasises how uncommon masculinities outside of these two constrained boundaries are. He does not provide any examples of fathers who do anything other than repeat these typical behaviours, such as being extremely domineering men who

use their position of authority to manipulate their wives and children or abusing alcohol to forget about their problems. This explains why the idea of a new man that he demonstrates, is viewed with suspicion by both men and women in the narrative. The deeply entrenched ideologies of how masculinities and femininities should be enacted make it difficult for them to see things from a different perspective.

After moving in with Slindile, having fathered their child, Nomazizi, their utopia crashes to the ground, throwing him back to the disorientation that he experienced as a child, when he struggled to identify the qualities of a good man or father. His altercation with a famous musician who takes an interest in Slindile costs him his career as a trumpeter, and he ends up being a stay-at-home father while his wife, Slindile, is the breadwinner of the family. As a renaissance man, Mfundo is unperturbed by the socio-economic success of the women around him. He is less competitive, more selfless, and more co-operative.

Even though Slindile is a medical doctor, her mother is a dermatologist, Buhle, his sister is an accountant, and his mother is a retired teacher (2010:40), these facts do not perturb him in any way. In his own estimation, with all the effort that he puts in ensuring that he takes proper care of his daughter as well as household chores, Mfundo regards himself as a good man and father. He wants to make sure that his daughter grows up in a world that affords young women freedom and an array of opportunities to grow and fulfil themselves in environments that are free from fear or experiences and expectations of violation which is perpetrated by the very people who are supposed to protect them. He poses as a new man who wants to alter the narrative as he challenges the establishment by Barker et al. (2017), that high unemployment levels among black men presents a serious threat to their self-esteem and manhood, which culminates in violent behaviour.

At first, Slindile takes pleasure in Mfundo's activities at home and boasts to her friends about having a devoted at-home partner. However, their relationship is strained by the protracted nature of having a househusband. Slindile complains to Mzilikazi about it and requests that he pushes Mfundo to get employed. Her concern and annoyance about Mfundo's unemployment are brought on by their friends' opinions and derision of the househusband. They refer to Mfundo as Slindile's wife (2010:54), and Buhle

claims that Mfundo is a parasite who is draining Slindile's finances. Both Slindile and Buhle reverberate Barker et al.'s (2017) claim that women equate a man's inability to support his family with failure and they are notorious for shaming and taunting men who are unemployed.

Although Mfundo embraces masculinity and fatherhood in a more caring and close-knit way compared to the men in his community when he was growing up, he is nonetheless under pressure from society because he is not enacting the patriarchal norm. He is not able to demonstrate masculine power, which is associated with the breadwinning role, thereby offending the traditional expectations of fatherhood. These characteristics feminise him and earn him harsh judgement from Slindile and the society at large. He shares his disappointment with the reader as he reflects:

Did remuneration really matter? Was not the most important thing that I fed my little girl her first meal, I saw her off to bed at night, and made some quality time to play her the trumpet or watch *Teletubbies* with her? It was important to me that I taught Nomazizi to crawl, watched her when she took her first step and heard her when she first said 'Dada'. Why then was society in general and South African society in particular crueler to me because I was a man who chose to stay at home? (2010:55).

Barker et al. (ibid) maintain that a new man acknowledges his feminine side by showing emotions. As a human being, it breaks Mfundo to receive harsh judgement from Slindile and his community, instead of being encouraged in the good work that he thinks he is trying to do. This suggests that unlike the traditional heterosexual man who always puts on a brave face to avoid being associated with weakness even under harrowing circumstances, Mfundo acknowledges that alongside being a man, he is also totally human and will respond to pain just like any other human being.

Due to a decline in job opportunities, of which Mfundo is a victim, many fathers are unable to fulfil the traditional expectations of fatherhood. In such circumstances, the inability to carry the shame of being a failed father might drive a man away from his children. This is mainly because of the breadwinner role that the society has approved as a yardstick to define and measure a "real man" (Richter & Morrell 2006). It is

because of these traditional stereotypes that men find little self-esteem in the private domain since they do not conceptualise or support the idea of being homemakers.

As indicated earlier, the absence of the father figure in the lives of his children plays a significant role in compounding the problem of violence. This suggests that society needs to redress these traditional stereotypes and allow fathers to explore other avenues which will enable them to contribute meaningfully to the lives of their children. If South African society continues embracing these problematic stereotypes which drive fathers away from their children, it might find itself reproducing generations which will be more immersed in violence, especially with the state of South African economy which seems to be gradually dwindling away. As fewer men find lucrative employment, new conceptualisations of masculinity will need to confront this challenging impression of a breadwinner role among males.

By staying at home and taking care of his daughter, Mfundo challenges and transcends the traditional stereotypes which define successful fatherhood and masculinity as the ability to occupy the public sphere of work, far away from the feminised domestic spaces. His determination to be a present father to his daughter, in his own way, suggests that men should stand strong and not allow patriarchal obstacles or tribulations to stand in their way towards establishing sound relationships with their children and achieving egalitarianism.

Because of his failure to enact the traditional notions of fatherhood, Mfundo's relationship with Slindile grows sour as she begins to relate to him in a more condescending and infantilising manner. When Mfundo asks for money to prepare for their daughter, Noma's birthday, Slindile snaps, "I am tired of having to carry the financial burden in this house all on my own. I must take care of you, take care of me, and take care of Noma. It's like I have two children in the house" (56).

The way in which Slindile responds to Mfundo's househusband status indicates that women play a crucial role in the construction of masculinities. Being part of the society that measures successful masculinity through the lens of a breadwinner role, Slindile has relegated Mfundo to the level of a child, after having constantly reminded him that he must find a job. When Mfundo gets drunk and gets involved in an accident

while driving Slindile's car, she cannot wait to attack him for his joblessness and his inability to buy himself even one underwear (2010:70). Mfundo shares his humiliation with the reader thus:

Not only was she talking down to me although I was a head taller than her, she poked me in the chest as she spoke and ended up by slapping me in the face. I mean really, really slapping me. As though I were a child. I saw red (ibid).

Though it is normal for couples not to see eye to eye, it is always encouraged that they resolve their problems amicably. Masculinity and fatherhood are complex concepts that do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of the social setting and are highly informed by the socially approved and dominant discourses of what it means to be a man and a father. Though all genders are equal according to the constitution, laying a hand on her husband is perceived as extreme; it strips off Mfundo's dignity as a father, especially since they are raising up Nomazizi who must grow up respecting them both. Moreover, as responsible parents who want to bring up a responsible child, they are supposed to protect her from experiencing violence.

As the society encourages fathers to be involved in the lives of their children, the mistake of underrating the real and prospective interest and impact of fathers who are non-resident, have limited resources, or are unemployed must be avoided at all costs. Underestimating their potential may lower their self-esteem and create a distance between them and their children. This can pose a serious drawback to the fight against the scourge of absent fathers which has been proved as one of the factors contributing to violence.

Regardless of their socio-economic status, men should be afforded an equal opportunity as women to contribute to the lives of their children by taking part in the ongoing, daily upkeep and maintenance of a human life. This is in line with the representation of fathers in the early Drum magazine of the 1950s as captured by Clowes (2008), where black South African men were portrayed as having strong social and emotional connections with their families, through being actively involved in domestic matters, household chores and childcare. This suggests that the traditional

notions of masculinity and fatherhood as well as the stereotype that portrays men as not interested in children and ill-suited for parenting are a façade that deprives men of the one most fulfilling and lifelong contribution that they can bring to their children's lives.

Encouraging men's participation in their children's lives may facilitate men's own growth and bring them happiness and gratification (Barker et al. 2017). Wanner makes this evident in the novel as Mfundo happily announces, "I was enjoying the Mfundo Domestic God role, and I did not want to get out of it" (2010:55). As a new man, Mfundo is not ashamed of working for gender equality openly and publicly. He aligns himself with the constitution and he is convinced that he is on the right track when he establishes a bond with his daughter, a bond that is not hinged on his economic status.

It is important to understand that fatherhood is an evolving concept which needs to be understood in time and context. From a hetero-masculine perspective, Mfundo's stance insinuates that the breadwinner role is gradually becoming marginalised, giving way to the provider and care-giver role, which is not necessarily tied to gender. Also, as more mothers have occupied that public sphere that used to be the preserve of men, fathers should be more involved in their children's lives. This means that the society should shift from motherhood and fatherhood and move towards parenting if we want to address the scourge of violence. As Slindile scoffs at Mfundo's contribution in the house, Mfundo wonders:

It was not as if I was not doing anything. Dammit, she never had to hire a baby-sitter because I was there. I knew more of our child's habits than she did. When Sli was home and Noma fell and hurt herself, it was to Dada and not Mama she went to, to kiss it and make it better (2010:56-57).

Barker et al. (2017) argue that the gender socialisation of children is positively impacted by men's active participation in caring. Fathers who are actively involved in their children's lives are more likely to raise sons who are involved and gender-equitable fathers, and daughters who have more flexible ideas on gender equality and a higher sense of equality in their relationships (ibid). Mfundo's bond with his daughter, which is stronger than Slindile's as the mother, is trying to address Richter

& Morrell's (2006) outcry on father absenteeism in most black South African families. He is trying to pose as a role model to other young fathers, and to demonstrate that being a present father in the life of a child is not necessarily hinged on economic support. The fact that he goes to the extent of begging Slindile for the sake of their daughter after being unceremoniously thrown out further testifies to this.

Having fathers who are actively involved in the lives of their children is a positive sign as this move not only benefits the father, but also makes a significant contribution towards gender equity as it integrates men into families, creating a gender-neutral and egalitarian society, where roles and identities become interchangeable. The characterisation of Mfundo suggests this. His determination to be present in the life of his daughter, as well as his contribution towards household chores, both match up to Morrell's (1998b) version of the "new man" as opposed to the traditional man whose sole responsibility is to provide economically for his children.

Ironically, focusing on the economic aspect to the detriment of others culminates in absence, which has devastating consequences in the life of a child. Reverberating Morrell (ibid), Richter & Smith (2006) suggest that among the resources that a father can provide in the life of his child is human capital, which comprises of skills, knowledge, and traits that foster achievement. Coupled with this is social capital, which focuses on family and community relations that benefit the child's cognitive and social development. She also suggests financial capital, which centres around money and income. All these play a significant role in the holistic upbringing of the child, and none must be underestimated.

This suggests that a man's capacity to be an actively involved father in the life of the child cannot only be measured by the amount of money that he brings to the table as there is a lot more to offer. By highlighting Mfundo's unpleasant experiences as a househusband, Wanner challenges the reader to reflect on the authenticity of the constitution which vouches for gender equality, yet men like Mfundo, who try to uphold this receive harsh judgement because they fail to live up to the traditional expectations of fatherhood.

In concert with Nkosi (1998) who is concerned with the resocialisation of men, Wanner underscores the fact that rather than focusing on the emancipation of women only, men also need to be liberated from the traditional heteropatriarchal stereotypes that push them to violence, sexism, and under-parenting. They need to undergo a healing process which will liberate them from the impossible responsibilities and expectations that the society places on them. Among these is the need to be always strong, to be providers, leaders, and winners at any cost, as well as the need to hide their emotions.

5.3.3 The pervasiveness of tradition in contemporary relationships

The narrative introduces Tinaye Musonza as a Zimbabwean economic refugee who comes to South Africa to look for greener pastures and is desperate to get South African citizenship. He meets a woman called Grace, and they start dating though Tinaye does not love her. His intention is to marry her as a ploy to keep his legal status in South Africa, in case his contract expires, and he loses his job. While still trapped in that loveless relationship, Tinaye meets Slindile after she breaks up with Mfundo, and they fall deeply in love. He decides to leave Grace for Slindile, but the woman informs him that she is pregnant, ensnaring him in a web of annihilation that requires him to weigh his options wisely.

The pervasiveness of traditional gender roles becomes explicit when Tinaye discusses Grace's pregnancy with his father whom he regards as the epitome of Shona culture. His father persuades Tinaye to marry Grace, the mother of his unborn child, not Slindile, the woman he loves. His argument is that by marrying a woman with another man's child and rejecting the mother of his own child, Tinaye would be committing a serious offence against the cultural mores. However, just like Mzilikazi and Mfundo, Tinaye is prepared to challenge the traditional discourse of fatherhood, as he intends to stay with Slindile and raise Nomazizi together with her.

Morrell (2005) argues that a father's failure to recognise the child might have detrimental effects as it leaves the latter without any connections to the clan or family. Furthermore, it might deprive the child a chance to inherit from the father, something which may undermine the security of the child (ibid). This is attested to by Malose Langa (2020) whose investigation of the conceptualisation of manhood among black

township adolescent boys revealed the importance of ancestry in the well-being of a person. These boys alleged that the reason why their lives were ridden with challenges was that they were not connected to their ancestors. This might be associated with absent fathers which results in the children inheriting their maternal identity and family rituals.

In concert, Mfecane's (2018) study highlights the devastation associated with an unstable paternal background which motivates black people to search for their biological fathers. One of the most often cited motivations given by his informants for starting a search for one's biological father or his kin was the desire for them to carry out *imbeleko* on their behalf because they felt it could improve their lives and open doors for them to overcome some of their long-standing personal struggles. Alcoholism, drug addictions, childlessness, miscarriages, lack of discipline, unemployment, and subpar academic achievement were among the examples of these. *Imbeleko* is a ritual which is performed by the paternal family with the intention of introducing the newborn baby to their clan, their elders, as well as their ancestors. Usually, the umbilical cord is buried on the ancestral grounds, a goat is slaughtered, and the elder who is responsible for communicating with the ancestors calls the baby by its name while presenting it to them.

In Mfecane's study, individuals frequently believed that these personal catastrophes were the result of using the "wrong" surname or not having the "proper" identification. Since the ritual provides access to ancestral protection and direction, it is believed that ritual acquisition of right identification is a prerequisite to behavioural change and a hassle-free life. From this African perspective, the relationship between the child and his biological father cannot be underestimated since it carries crucial cultural connotations. As indicated earlier, traditional fathers are more concerned about preservation of the blood line since it ensures growth and continuity of the family name. As a microcosm of the bigger society, an intact family, comprising of the elders, young adults as well as children, where principles and societal values are inculcated and modelled, can be seen more as an anchor which provides stability to the society. Arguably, through this traditional lens, Tinaye's father's insistence that Tinaye marries Grace might be justified.

Though the cultural importance of establishing a strong bond between father and child cannot be underestimated, Morrell (2005) makes a u turn and discursively argues that in terms of determining fatherhood, biology is not as important as giving love and support. Quoting Miller (1997) he argues that changes in the family structure that have been perpetuated by socio-economic challenges which impacted negatively on men's provider role; disease which resulted in child-headed households; gay and lesbian parenting as well as female headed households; have all necessitated that society looks at fathering from a different perspective.

This disintegration of the traditional family unit has necessitated the shift from the significance of the biological father to the social father in the life of a child. A social father is defined by Nathane and Khunou (2021) as a male figure who lives with and or takes care of the child or children who are not biologically his. Such men might be either in the process of adopting the children or are involved in a romantic relationship with their mother (ibid). With the changes in the socio-economic and cultural spheres, it is normal to have fathers living separately from their children or fathering outside marriage. This holds true for Tinaye. He loves Slindile and Nomazizi to the extent that he would do anything to be with them. His love for her drives him overboard as he starts doing things that he had sworn never to do as a man. He reflects:

We drank, ate, talked, and I even changed her daughter's diaper before she went to bed and read her a bedtime story. Whatever love potion Sli had put in my food was working like a charm, because I had never ever done that for any woman. I used to call the domestic when Tinashe messed herself when she was a kid. In fact, I had never even considered having to change my own child's diapers when I finally got round to having one (2010:186).

By highlighting the bond between Tinaye and Slindile's daughter, Wanner is trying to show the role of social fathers and the impact that fatherhood has both in their lives as well as the lives of the children that they are fathering. By characterising Nomazizi as a baby girl, and Tinaye as a social father who changes the baby's diaper without any evil intentions, the novel is trying to highlight that not all social fathers are the same. It challenges the blanket approach and the stereotype that describes social

fathers as a menace around children, especially girls, since they perceive them as objects of sexual molestation.

The pressure and the coercion that Tinaye receives from his father make him decide to follow tradition as he eventually marries Grace, leaving Slindile with a broken heart. Emphasising the importance of culture his father asserts, "How will you explain that you have married a woman with someone else's child while leaving the mother of your own child? In our culture we don't do that" (2010:206). Tinaye and Grace's is more like a marriage of convenience since Tinaye does not love her. Later, he regrets this decision as Grace gives birth to a still born child while he remains trapped in a loveless marriage while trying to do the right thing. He keeps wondering how exciting his marriage with Slindile could have been if he had followed his heart.

Though the narrative does not trace this couple's life after the birth of their still born child, it is evident that Tinaye has been resentful of being a father to Grace's child from the onset. He feels that his rights as a man have been downplayed when Grace decided to sideline him when planning the pregnancy. It is worth noting that loveless relationships and marriages of convenience can propagate violence. This is evident in Mzilikazi's parents' marriage which loses its spark and turns into a marriage of convenience when Mzilikazi's father is drawn to an educated and employed woman in Johannesburg, while Mzilikazi's mother keeps his household running with very little involvement and appreciation from him. She suffers emotional abuse at the hands of her husband who keeps throwing derogatory comments at her. When Mzilikazi's mother has had enough of the abuse she snaps, "Mntungwa, kusemakhaya la. Don't try to make me like your town woman. You were happy enough with the way I was the whole time" (2010:88-89).

The same can be observed with Lerato and her unemployed boyfriend in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008). The physical violence that he subjects her to proves that he does not love her anymore. What keeps them together is her salary that he demands from her every month end and beats her in the most gruesome manner when she refuses to give it to him. As an adult, Tinaye was supposed to have the final say about his life, not to be dictated to by his father as if he was a child.

When looking at these three young fathers who attempt to change the paternal narrative in *Men of the South* (2010), the pervasiveness of traditional gender roles is clearly discernible. They silently exist alongside these young men's attempts to carve a new trajectory of fatherhood which is characterised by democracy and egalitarianism. When Mfundo becomes a successful musician later in his narrative, he acquires a kind of atonement that makes it seem unlikely that one day he could be completely content to be a stay-at-home father. The same can be observed with Mzilikazi, who is afraid of the stigma associated with coming out as a gay man in his rural village of KwaMntungwa in KwaZulu-Natal. There is also Tinaye, who, out of respect for tradition, forces himself into a loveless marriage with Grace while his heart yearns for Slindile. These young fathers demonstrate that fatherhood is a complex concept and that there is no universally agreed-upon style of fathering. Since none of the three is completely idealised or condemned, it suggests that fatherhood can be enacted in diverse ways. Their dilemmas indicate that these young men are squeezed between traditional expectations and embracing the new man.

5.3.4 Embracing power-balance in the familial sphere in *The Madams* (2006)

In an attempt to enact masculinity and fatherhood in a manner that promotes gender equality, Mandla, Thandi's husband in *The Madams* (2006) problematises the binary between masculinity and femininity. He gradually moves towards crossing the inflexible barriers that separate men's and women's roles in the private sphere. As he actively participates in the household chores, sharing the responsibility equally with his wife, he takes tentative steps towards relinquishing the advantages men enjoy from women's emotional and physical labour in the home.

As a proud wife, Thandi announces, "I am fortunate in that Mandla is a 'renaissance man' who shares the housework and cares for Hintsu" (2006:8). However, despite being a renaissance man, Mandla's growth is held back by the traditional gender roles as he expects Thandi to demonstrate emphasised femininity when his family and friends come to visit. He does not want to be ridiculed for taking a feminine and supposedly subservient role. The representation of Mandla's masculinity shows a

scenario in which traditional male behaviours are gradually disappearing and newer masculinities are difficult to emerge due to conflicting cultural ideas, the mindsets of the elder generation, and culturally naive relatives. This setback frustrates Thandi as she reflects:

Unfortunately, this is only true when none of his relatives or his macho, mooching friends from ekasi are visiting. When they are around, I have to play my 'womanly role' of cooking, cleaning and going to buy beer for 'the boyz'. I have to clean up any beer they've spilt and disappear to read Hints a bedtime story. I hate that Mandla and I have to do this role-playing for an audience we do not even like, but as he says, "You don't want them to say you gave me korobela, do you? Frankly, when my hands feel as if they are not part of my body from chopping vegetables, cooking, and washing dishes, I really couldn't care less, but I understand his point ... because I know our people (2006: 8-9).

By sharing the power with his wife, Mandla wants his son, Hints, to grow up in an environment that upholds egalitarianism. Through his egalitarian actions he challenges the patriarchal masculine belief that power is about domination and control, and that men naturally have and should enact power over women. He wants his son to know that power does not necessarily imply control and domination, instead there are other more constructive ways to think about and use power. He demonstrates that harmony and happiness in the household are centred around two aspects, love and power sharing.

Ratele (2022:71-72) argues that familial crises in black communities, especially those associated with GBV, emanate from the different ways in which girl and boy children are socialised. Since these two categories are born different biologically, the different ways in which they are socialised exaggerates these differences. While girl children are taught to love physically and emotionally, boys barely receive this kind of socialisation from their fathers. Instead of exposing them, they are discouraged from associating themselves with these qualities as they are associated with weakness (ibid). This implies that while one half of the society is socialised into acknowledging the importance of loving and caring, the other half is deprived of this.

Ratele (2022) goes on to say that a lot of grown men never discover the reciprocity that should define love. It was perhaps expected that they would acquire it in their boyhood, but regrettably, this is untrue. As they transition from boyhood to manhood, they carry the emotional scar of feeling unloved or being loved inadequately when they compare themselves to their sisters. The irony is that these two highly polarised groups with different principles and values will be expected to settle down and operate in a manner that is meaningful and in line with the stipulations of the constitution. When fathers have failed to show love to boys, these boys are expected to become loving men when they grow up. Ratele (ibid) faults men's violence on the need for affection which results from their socialisation that is different from the girls'.

In opposition to "power over" which characterises most heteropatriarchal relationships, where men feel entitled to dominion and control over women and other marginalised groups, Mandla demonstrates the possibility of replacing "power over" with "power to" and "power with." As his son's role model, he demonstrates the beauty of sharing power with his wife. In the same manner, modelling a healthy and gender sensitive masculinity will equip not only Thandi but also Hintsa with the power to challenge unjust treatment of women and other marginalised groups as he grows up.

Barker et al. (2017) indicate that encouraging men to be more involved in parenting can also be a crucial step in putting an end to men's violence against women because there is evidence that involved fathers are less likely to violate their partners. This suggests that engaging fathers in modelling peaceful behaviours is essential to breaking the cycle of violence. Wanner's characterisation of Mandla attests to this claim as he demonstrates that violence is not the only way to solve problems between couples. When Thandi confesses to having cheated, as a way of getting even with Mandla who had also cheated on her, he does not resort to violence. However, because cheating is glossed over as *ubusoka* or "real manhood" when done by men and frowned upon when done by women (Dlamini 2018), Mandla gets angry with Thandi when he finds out, yet he had failed to understand what made it difficult for Thandi to forgive him when he cheated. Regardless of the circumstances in which he finds himself, Mandla opts to move out rather than solving their problem with violence.

Barker et al. (2017) allege that most of the perpetrators of violence either witnessed it or experienced it themselves when they were growing up. Mandla's decision to move out rather than solving their problem with violence demonstrates maturity and selflessness as he prioritises protecting Hintsa from experiencing it. Just like Mzilikazi and Mfundo in *Men of the South* (2010), Mandla is keen to embrace the new man, yet he is held back by traditional expectations, especially in the presence of other people, which keep reminding him about the way a "real man" is expected to behave.

Ratele (2022:243-247) raises critical issues about the way in which children, especially boys, are socialised after birth. He argues that though biology might be important in a person's make-up, the role of culture, as one of the things that one inherits from his or her progenitors surpasses the genetic inheritance as it extends beyond the confines of one's home, community, or even country. He points out that there is a lot more that parents can pass on to their progeny. Among these, he highlights the parents' beliefs about gender norms; attitudes; beliefs; relations; and power. He claims that parents are a source from which children learn about masculinity and femininity, what being a boy or girl means, and what men and women can and cannot do. If this is the case, he asserts that children can also inherit a loving form of masculinity, as it is portrayed through Wanner's young fathers. Parents can play a significant role in imparting notions about democratic masculinity to their children, just as they currently do with traditional gender norms. New traditions of masculinity are transmissible, just like any other custom.

As Wanner's new men demonstrate, it is preposterous to raise a child for the future, yet equipping him or her with the attitudes, values and principles of the past, especially where the issues of masculinity are concerned. Ratele (ibid) strongly suggests that boys' and men's need for love be addressed as a matter of urgency. This will help to eradicate the violence ingrained in our lives from history. Love-filled cultural masculinity manifestations need to be fostered. Whether it is the elder or younger generation, one generation has the power to change the course of events (ibid). Whatever generation leads the shift, society must adapt if it is to foster love in boys and men and reshape masculinity into more compassionate expressions of self.

5.3.5 Transformative masculinities challenging the “bro code”.

In *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), Wanner portrays Anant as a foil to his colleagues since his perception of manhood differs significantly from theirs. Unlike his colleagues, Anant embraces a transformative type of masculinity as he supports women’s struggles for gender equality and emancipation. He queries Oupa and Andile’s misogyny as they build their sense of worth as men using the crutch of the man as the provider. In response, they call Anant a stauncher feminist than the POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse) women, when he does not agree with their theories about how masculinity and femininity are constructed. In jest, Oupa claims that Anant's wife, Nazli, has possessed him with a love potion. Though the allegation may seem light-hearted, it betrays Oupa's concerns about the evolving gender roles that Anant's perspectives and Nobantu's pursuit of her goals hint at.

When Andile shares the pain and the inconvenience caused by Nobantu’s unceremonious departure, instead of taking sides with him, Anant breaks the “bro code” as he forces him to see reason and stop playing victim. Though Andile is his friend, their friendship comes secondary as he prioritises living by the values of equality, dignity, and respect for all as enshrined in the constitution. When Andile accuses him of taking Nobantu’s side, Anant sternly responds:

Hey, man, do you want me to be honest with you or not? [...] Right [...] You married Nobantu in her first year of university when she hadn’t even experienced life as you and I knew it then. You were ready to settle down, she was just starting out. In spite of that, she stuck by you and supported you even when you quit a well-paying job to venture out into something that none of us were really sure about. Nobantu is an intelligent woman. It’s understandable that she would get tired of being nothing more than the woman you want at your beck and call. The wonder is that she didn’t leave your misogynistic ass a long time ago. Would it hurt you so much if you gave her the type of support that she has given you throughout your marriage (2008:137-8).

Like Mandla in *The Madams* (2006), Anant is portrayed as a symbolic character who believes in sharing power equally with women and other marginalised groups. He

challenges Andile's perception of women as irrational creatures who belong to the private sphere of the home. He believes that just like men, women have the right to develop to their fullest potential and that instead of being viewed with suspicion, their endeavours should be selflessly supported by men. As he shakes Andile out of his state of stupefaction he asserts his stance thus:

You have a chance to redeem yourself. Now is the time to show that you support her. If she succeeds, then you get to share in her success – after all, most of the country already knows her as your wife. If she fails, then you get to be there for her, as she has been there for you through all the ups and downs we've had at MAPAMO. [...] Are you listening to yourself, man? Andile, my friend, understand this, her venturing out, the whole business thing ... it's not about you, bra. This is about Nobantu's needs. So what if people think you can't look after her? Both you and she know better, and the past fifteen years are proof of that. Right now, your lack of support means that you might end up with a broken marriage. On the other hand, support will earn you a loyal wife (2008:139-139).

Similarly, Mxolisi, the only male employee in Nobantu's team shows unwavering support to Lerato when she is abused by her boyfriend. He openly condemns the boyfriend's behaviour as cowardly and unmanly as he snaps, "Has she pressed charges? [...] No? No? Why not? Why didn't she press charges? What type of animal beats up a woman?" (ibid:131).

The same attitude towards the protection of women against abuse is portrayed by Vuyo, Nosizwe's boyfriend in *The Madams* (2006). Like Mxolisi, he assists in settling Lauren comfortably at Nosizwe's house after Lauren has been severely beaten up by Mike, her husband. Being disgusted by Mike's behaviour, he plays a pivotal role in persuading the reluctant Lauren to press charges against Mike. The narrative captures it thus:

He brought a mirror and showed her face. She shivered at the first sight of herself – seeing the bruises that were fast becoming blue-black, the cut on the eye, the loose tooth. Then he did what we had not managed to do. He managed

to get through to her by destroying the only defence she had for going back home to Mike – the ‘father of my children’ defence (2006:143).

He shakes Lauren out of her stupor by telling her that if she goes back and Mike kills her, her children will be left without any parent because she will be dead, and Mike will either be dead or in prison because if he killed Lauren and evaded the law, then he, Vuyo would kill him. Through these characters, Wanner highlights that in the contemporary South Africa that is notorious of violating women and other marginalised groups, men can stand against misogyny and abuse of patriarchal power, even if it means that one will face the opposition of the majority. Also, as Andile begins to see reason in what Anant advises him to do in *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008) as he confesses, “Maybe I have seen the error of my ways” (ibid:152); and when he says to Nobantu, “Sabotaging your business is the last thing I want to do. You are obviously good at what you are doing, and I was wrong to ever try to discourage that” (ibid:178), Wanner underscores a gradual shift from oppressive patriarchal power structures to a more democratic society that is willing to embrace egalitarianism.

5.3.6 The non-aggressive heterosexual male in *London Cape Town Joburg* (2014)

To be regarded as a “real man”, one must display macho behaviour as far as the standards of hegemonic masculinity are concerned (Morrell 2001). Even though some men disagree with the dominant manner of doing things, their actions are nonetheless constantly evaluated in light of these standards of masculinity. This kind of individual is Martin O'Malley. Zuko Spencer is his thirteen-year-old son. Zuko spends a lot of time with Martin's brother, Liam since he is so close to him that he thinks of him as his own father. Martin and Zuko's mother Germaine fight on the eve of Zuko's birthday. Zuko is forced to flee and take sanctuary in his uncle Liam's home as a result. Zuko is raped by Liam, and he tells his father about it with the hope that he will do something about it. Clowes et al. (2013) maintain that the father's job in the family is to protect and provide for his family. After three days, Martin is still reluctant to approach Liam. Zuko starts questioning his father's masculinity as a result. Confrontationally, he tells him

that his mother would have acted promptly if he had told her instead. This highlights the part that women play in modern family relationships.

As indicated earlier, traditionally, a boy child is expected to associate with the father. Conversely, Zuko's confidence in his mother suggests that it is not only the father who plays a meaningful role in the life of a boy child. To develop a child holistically, both parents should pool their resources together so that where one parent falls short, the other one comes in.

Zuko feels that he has been betrayed by his father's peaceful nature, which, under these circumstances he defines as "weakness". What ensues from this is that Zuko commits suicide by slashing his wrists. This makes Martin query his own masculinity himself. As a man, as a father and a husband, who had vowed to protect both his wife and child, he feels that he has failed both Zuko and his mother as he reflects:

From the time we were aware of Zuko's conception, we had done everything together. We attended antenatal classes, we laughed, bought stuff together. She gave birth at Queen Mary's Hospital and I stood by, supportive but hating myself for putting her through so much pain. I had promised myself silently that I would never let Germaine go through such pain again. And yet here she is. Going through what must surely be pain worse than childbirth. When Zuko was born, we were ready and prepared to be parents but nothing, absolutely nothing, prepared us for this. The loss of our child at so young an age. His death, at his own hands. His death which I could have prevented had I been a better father. His death on his birthday (2014:8).

Martin's inaction is influenced mainly by the feeling of powerlessness when he compares himself to Liam. First, since Liam named him CEO of his company, he feels indebted to him. If he confronted him therefore, it might cost him his job. Secondly, Liam is a renowned politician with a lot of connections. If Martin pressed charges, he could simply arrange for strong legal representation to defend himself. Martin's situation is made even worse by the fact that he has no money left after falling for the scam of his biological father, Martin Mtshali. Thus, he might find it challenging to arrange legal counsel. Wanner paints a picture of Martin as a vilified, passive,

heterosexual man who is typically the epitome of what it means to be a desirable man, especially in contemporary South Africa where violence is becoming a serious concern. This is suggested by the fact that, in a case as serious as Zuko's, he does not prioritise violence.

When Germaine first meets Martin, she describes his personality and brand of masculinity as one of those "salt-of-the-earth" men, according to her, who picks his women carefully (2014:50). He is more attracted to women who are assets to the society. This is made clear when he turns down his friend Sufyian's offer to set him up with "cheap" women. This suggests that he is not the promiscuous type who sleeps around or who enjoys one-night stands; he is a proponent of shared commitment. Contrary to the prevailing hegemonic notion that a man's number of women is one of his indicators of masculinity (Langa 2016; Pasura & Christou 2017), Martin rejects the idea of promiscuity. When he falls for Germaine, he makes it formal and informs his mother. This suggests that he takes their relationship seriously. He does not conform to the mould of an overindulgent sexuality.

Even though Martin identifies with this particular brand of masculinity, as a person he is nevertheless susceptible to distractions. He starts to remember how much he loved his ex-girlfriend Soraya when he finally sees her after a very long time. Gugu, his professional helper, is another diversion later in the story. Regardless, Martin perseveres through both diversions and dedicates himself solely to Germaine. This implies that Martin is the kind of man, possibly a rare kind, who respects women and thinks that a man should only commit to one woman.

In addition, Wanner's portrayal of Martin demonstrates that he is not misogynistic or sexist. He is adamantly against the objectification of females. Martin threatens to beat Sufyian up for trying to talk him out of getting married by referring to women as bitches. As indicated earlier, he is very supportive throughout Germaine's pregnancy. In the labour ward, Martin is even present to hold Germaine's hand as their son is delivered. He makes a promise to defend Zuko with everything when he is born. That explains why he is so upset with himself when he ultimately fails Zuko.

In an effort to shield Zuko from the racially hostile environment in London, Martin tries to persuade Germaine that moving to South Africa would be a good idea so that Zuko may grow up surrounded by a lot of black people who look like him. To support this notion even further, he informs Germaine that his family will be there to assist them raise Zuko in the best possible way if they relocate to South Africa. This becomes an unpleasant irony, though, because later in the narrative, Liam, one of these dependable family members, drives Zuko to committing suicide by raping him.

Wanner's argument in this case is that even this "ideal" man, Martin, who is kind, peaceful, truthful, gender-sensitive, and so forth, has flaws that could even be viewed as negatives. Because of his unwillingness to respond to his brother's brutality towards his son, most likely by violence, which is generally considered as the characteristic of tyrannical and directionless masculinities, Martin might end up losing his wife. What she had expected from him as a man was to be more aggressive or outright violent, especially where their young and defenceless child is concerned. The argument that Wanner is trying to make is that there is no perfect form of masculinity as suggested earlier in her other texts.

In addition, there is no template of fathering that can address all the challenges that both fathers and their children get exposed to in their daily lives. What is of importance is that fathers improve on their presence in the lives of their children. Whether it is economically, socially, or emotionally, children, both boys and girls must be assured of an open and transparent relationship both parents. Both parents must create an environment of trust where children can share their insecurities, frustrations, aspirations, and dreams. As the scholarship has indicated, this might assist in addressing the scourge of violence which has marred the country.

5.4 Concluding remarks.

Building on the previous chapters which explored different versions of masculinity and gave a detailed account of the different forms of violence, their source as well as the role they play in the construction of black South African masculinities, this chapter suggests alternative modes of being to the black South African man. The vast and rapid changes in the socio-economic as well as political climate of the country has

challenged and undermined certain cultural beliefs and practices which had been engraved into the psyche of South Africans and normalised. The chapter makes abundantly clear that as one of the social constructions, hegemonic masculinity also needs to be reconceptualised. South African society needs a paradigm shift from the power and control that men are endowed with, to embodied gender equality as the lived experience of women and girls. This shift will allow men to negotiate other ways of becoming “real” men that are sustainable and do not infringe on the rights and dignity of others. As observed in this chapter, it is the perceived loss of power and control that culminates in violence by males.

As Wanner demonstrates through the househusband in *Men of the South* (2010) and the renaissance man in *The Madams* (2006), who are unperturbed by the success and upward mobility of women in their lives, change is possible if the society can embrace the ideology of gender equality. However, Wanner also demonstrates the dilemma experienced by this new man in his attempt to embrace equality. He is subjected to harsh judgement from both men and women, as he is not acting like a “real man”. It is imperative to note that even women have been thrown into the same ambivalence as men. While some are impressed by gender equality as it has opened opportunities for emancipation, others remain loyalists to the traditional gender order. They scoff at men who are trying to embrace change. Despite their socio-economic as well as education status, they conflate “real manhood” with money and hold the belief that men should prove their manhood through the mastery of the breadwinner role.

This suggests an urgent need to resocialise society to examine gender subjectivities from a different perspective. The new democratic order has created legitimate space for men to embark on reflective and introspective journeys, which, when used wisely, can assist in entrenching more constructive ways of being a “real man”. It is worth noting that men cannot achieve this alone, they need support from women.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This study set out to explore different versions of black South African masculinity as depicted in Zukiswa Wanner's novels, as well as the role of violence in their construction. It demonstrated how her portrayal of these different versions critiques the conventional ideas of masculinity, especially at a time where globalisation as well as socio-economic and political influences play a pivotal role in shaping them. Based on this, the study noted that these different masculinities respond differently to the historical as well as the prevalent socio-cultural circumstances. There are versions which respond to these circumstances (gender equality) through violence, while others look for more peaceful means to solve their problems.

Guided by the intersectionality theory at macro level, this work examined how race, as the most influential factor, intersects with various socio-economic as well as political aspects in the construction and performance of black South African masculinities, and how these constructions benefit or hinder men in their performance of masculinity. Since violence has been identified as one of the most critical issues that have attracted scholarly attention globally and is central to this work, the study delved into the idea of dominant masculinities, how they are maintained, and the ways in which males use their power over women and other vulnerable groups. Additionally, it examined more closely the several viewpoints that may be utilised to study masculinities and how those perspectives impact men's self-perception, especially with regard to women.

Drawing on the work of Starck and Luyt (2010) who contend that the uncertainties, insecurities, and anxieties about the post-apartheid socio-political transformation are projected, negotiated, and defended in different ways, the study observed that dominant masculinities choose violence as a means of regaining their masculine power and dignity. They believe that women's emancipation has rendered them obsolete, deprived males of their authority and dignity, and reduced their manhood.

As Frosh & Baraister (2008) and Langa's (2020) psychosocial theory demonstrated how dangerous the phallic challenge can be to a heterosexual male, the male characters in this study demonstrated a strong resolve to safeguard their male ego,

even if it meant using violence against their partners. This resonated with Gqola's (2015) fear factor theory, which claims that men use violence against women to put them in their proper place.

In contrast to hegemonic masculinities that saw the liberation of women as a threat, the study also observed that some men are willing to accept the idea of a "new man" in response to the constitution and changing socio-economic landscape. This is the type of man that works towards egalitarianism and recognises the equality of genders. He challenges these conventional ideas of masculinity in light of the variety of fresh options made possible by the post-transitional socio-economic and political environment. This gives such a man room to choose a non-hegemonic masculinity that promotes gender equality and power sharing. The study examined the societal attitudes towards such characters, and highlighted the ambivalence they experience as they seem to be torn between the traditional and the contemporary notions of masculinity. Their ambivalence stems from the deeply engraved traditional stereotypes which hold the dominant masculinities in high regard, thereby subjecting any deviation from these to harsh criticism.

From this stance, it can be deduced that the transition from the apartheid regime, which was premised on patriarchal ideologies, to the democratic regime which emphasised equality, was quite jagged. We see that in Wanner's texts men were not afforded convenient spaces to shift their mindset and resocialise themselves in a manner that embraces power sharing. They had to figure out new ways of defining masculinity on their own.

In an attempt to problematise violent and patriarchal masculinities and to challenge the stereotype that associates all men with violence, the study took a closer look particularly at the dominant and problematic masculinities. The intention was to establish the source of violence around which these masculinities are constructed. As it follows the history of violence during apartheid and how it permeated the minds of black South African men, the study emphasised intersectionality from a sociopolitical standpoint. It observed that heteropatriarchal men hold power over marginalised groups, and that authority is constantly exhibited via various acts of violence. It looked at how violence is sustained and viewed by both men and women from a cultural

standpoint. The findings corroborate the psychosocial theory of Langa (2020) and Frosh & Baraister (2008), which holds that males become less manly when they are unable to complete the role of breadwinner and typically resort to violence as a form of retaliation. Given that women have equal power with males under the constitution, it is noted that heteropatriarchal men see women as a challenge to their control. Due to its ability to allow women to assume roles that were previously reserved for men, this power threatens the gender order. Males find themselves helpless as a result of this, together with the significant shift in South Africa's socioeconomic environment that has left some males unemployed. Violence is used to make up for the loss of power.

The study also looked at the centredness of GBV around money, as suggested by Ratele (2022). It observed that male characters responded violently to money related issues, whether it was available or unavailable. One could argue that the lack of it emasculates the man because it prevents him from fulfilling the provider function, which is one of the primary traditional duties that defines a man as a "real" man. He frequently directs his resentment and annoyance towards the woman, particularly if she is self-sufficient. However, its presence tempts him to take a domineering stance, particularly if the woman depends on him.

To probe deeper into the issue of violence, the study examined the different forms of violence and its effects on the victim, challenging the restricted definitions of GBV, which hold that violence only merits attention when it is physical. Despite the equally terrible results, it has been noted that because these kinds of violence are subtle, both society and the victims themselves denigrate them. With reference to Brodie's (2020) work, the study highlighted that one of the reasons victims devalue these types of abuse is that, because GBV has become more commonplace, the South African legal system typically does not handle the horrific cases of GBV with the gravity they merit. Because of this, women are reluctant to report violent occurrences they experience for fear of secondary victimisation as seen in the texts under study. It is of crucial importance that both sexes receive enough education regarding GBV. The public needs to understand that violence of any kind is never acceptable or usual. Additionally, it is recommended that from an early age, boys should be resocialised

into egalitarian lifestyles. This can be achieved by educating them about socioeconomic shifts which must be understood from the perspective of gender equality.

The study also acquainted us with the role played by female characters in the construction of masculinities. It demonstrated that just like men, the attitudes of women towards gender equality differ significantly. On the one hand, there are those who believe that to be regarded as real women, they should subscribe to emphasised femininity. These women have been portrayed as victims of a heteropatriarchal socialisation which normalised and naturalised the subjugation of women. The study emphasised how these women's autonomy and ability to confront oppressive patriarchal practices have been taken away from them because of the normalisation of their status as men's subordinates. They have been conditioned to neglect their own potential and to voluntarily accept their position of servitude. The study also established that contrary to popular belief, even the educated and socio-economically affluent women fall victim to this indoctrination. Despite their socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, they believe that they require men to be complete human beings. Their sense of worth is determined by their service to men, particularly in validating their masculinity. This means relinquishing their existential freedom along with their rights.

With reference to the works of Beauvoir (2011) and Knowles (2019), the study highlighted that because they have the option to confront the injustice directed towards them, women who remain silent about their oppression are complicit in their own subjugation and may encourage the reproduction of the abuse. It was also observed that some women might demonstrate complicity not because they are genuinely dedicated to the service of men but because they want to extort money from them, using the traditional male-provider stereotype to manipulate them. It was established that men get frustrated by these stereotypes because they feel that their traditional expectations have been negatively impacted by the shifting socioeconomic landscape. As suggested by Frosh & Baraister's (2008) as well as Langa's (2020) psychosocial theory, this leaves them with a thwarted sense of self-worth which they

typically make up for with violence. Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that the conflation of manhood with material possessions might impact negatively on the new man who is looking for alternative methods of demonstrating responsible manhood under strenuous economic circumstances. This might delay the transformation of masculinities which might provide a solution to the scourge of GBV that has marred the country.

The study also demonstrated that there are those women who challenge the traditional heteropatriarchal stereotypes that still view women from the perspective of subservience and inferiority in relation to men. These women are determined to subvert the oppressive patriarchal structures, fight for their existential freedom, and encourage egalitarianism. Through these characters, Wanner illustrates that women are responsible for their own emancipation. By opposing the ingrained stereotypes that submit them to male authority, they can liberate themselves from the shackles of male domination. From this, it can be deduced that women must be educated about the dangers of believing in abusive relationships and encouraged to claim their agency. As much as women avoid speaking up in fear of secondary victimisation, as suggested by Gqola's (2015) fear factor theory, they should be encouraged to do so. Though their fear is justified, keeping quiet might perpetuate the abuse and deprive them the opportunity to get support. Future research should come up with strategies to create genuinely safe spaces for women to enjoy their existential freedom and to speak up about abuse without fear of secondary victimisation.

Having scrutinised the different types of masculinity portrayed by Wanner's characters, as well as the role of violence in their construction, the study explored and suggested alternative modes of being a "real man" in contemporary South Africa where unemployment and job losses are rife. The study demonstrated that under the circumstances, certain cultural practices and ideas that have been ingrained in South African culture and normalised over time have been called into question and undercut by the country's large and rapid changes, and hegemonic masculinity, being a social construct itself, requires a reconceptualization. This has necessitated a shift from the control and power that men are believed to be traditionally endowed with, to more

egalitarian forms of masculinity where power is shared equally with women and other marginalised groups.

Through the new man, the study demonstrated that change is possible if the society can embrace the ideology of gender equality. This speaks to Connell's masculinity theory which claims that as a socially constructed entity, masculinity is flexible and can adapt to any context if the situation warrants. Likewise, this finding also aligns with Butler's performativity theory which argues that masculinity is not innate, it is only a performance. However, the study also established a concern about the new man. It demonstrated the dilemma experienced by this new man in his attempt to embrace equality. As much as change is something that contemporary South Africa desperately needs, the ingrained traditional gender stereotypes render it difficult to achieve. The new man is subjected to harsh judgement from both men and women, as his actions are perceived to be at odds with what is expected of a "real man".

Not to be overlooked is the fact that women have experienced the same ambivalence as men. There are many who support the established gender order, while others are pleased by gender equality because it has created prospects for liberation. Those who subscribe to traditional gender roles treat men who want to embrace change contemptuously, especially where the man-provider stereotype is concerned. Even affluent women hold onto this belief. Regardless of their educational and socioeconomic background, they believe that men should demonstrate their manhood by being adept at providing for their families and associate true manhood with money.

Based on these findings, there seems to be a pressing need to resocialize society so that it can view gender subjectivities from a different angle. A genuine space for men to go on contemplative and introspective journeys has been established by the new democratic order. This can help them in considering more positive approaches to being a "real" man. Change is possible. Culture does not exist in a vacuum, it is made and upheld by people, and it can also be changed by people. It is impossible for society to operate meaningfully in the present, while simultaneously embracing the cultural beliefs of the past. Under such circumstances, a discrepancy is inevitable. To support the constitution and educate society against misogynistic and patriarchal tendencies,

numerous NGOs are running campaigns to address GBV, but statistics are escalating daily. It is also important that interventionists seriously consider Blade Ndzimande's concern about the socialisation of boys into men. However, it is equally important to remember that men require the assistance of women to accomplish this.

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