

GENDER, GAMES AND LANDSCAPE

In

NJABULO NDEBELE'S

THE CRY OF WINNIE MANDELA

By

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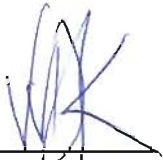
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and that all the sources used have been indicated by means of reference and bibliography; and that it has not been submitted to any other university for any other degree.



V. Van Dyk

Dated: December 2004

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my husband Corrado and all of my children, for the sacrifices they have made, so that I could pursue my dreams.

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Chapter One

Introduction

If we multiply the schemes through which we frame our literary analyses, it may be possible to escape the confinement of binaries that regulate most of our systems of value. The images on which we build our criticism are made of shifting sands; by exploring the site of our critical self-production, we can more quickly recognize the covert, treacherous biases of class, race and gender.

(Higonnet 1994:210)

Issues affecting women have been highlighted for many decades in the Western world by the feminist movement. In South Africa, black women have been victims of multiple forms of oppression, they have been severely marginalised and under-represented in literary circles. A historical analysis of the ontology of these women shows how patriarchy has systematically subjugated women and imposed on them the traditional roles of homemaker, childbearer and so on. Patriarchy though is not a phenomenon exclusive to the African context but a social construct of both western and eastern civilizations as well.

African culture has played a phenomenal role in the virulent

brainwashing and the indelible erosion of identity in women.

Colonialism resulted in a further displacement of African women, they took on the role of slave and servant in the colonial arena.

Apartheid, with its racist laws, was a regime that displaced women and alienated them from normal relationships with the men in their lives, as is evident in Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (2003), which henceforth shall be referred to as *The Cry*.

Ndebele undertakes a journey from the early Classical Greek period, through the landscape of pre-and-post colonialism in South Africa, to expose the unrelenting oppression of women in both the global context and the local context. This dissertation focuses on issues of gender, games, identity, exile and landscape in *The Cry*. Chapter Two covers the theories that will be used to analyse the issues in the text. This writer has chosen to assimilate an eclectic selection of theories including postmodernism (PM), feminist theory, post structuralism, post colonial theory, post-Marxist theory, Darwin's theory of evolution, and some aspects of psycho-analysis. Chapter Three includes a detailed historiography of events surrounding the writer's ontological world, beginning from the time of his birth to the

present. Chapter Four is an analysis of feminist theory and African womanism, and how the text unknowingly imbibes the fundamental philosophies of these theories. A detailed analysis of the key female characters is undertaken, including the four prototypical working class women: Mannete Mofolo, Delisiwe S'khosana, Marara Baloyi, Mamello Molete, and Winnie Mandela. Chapter Five focuses on the 'games' played in the text: by post modernism, sex, gender, language and so on. Chapter Six is a deliberation on the landscape of the text, touching on the physical, sexual, political, social, private versus public, psychological landscapes that have configured the identities in the text. The concluding arguments will form Chapter Seven.

In discussing issues relating to any subordinated group of people, this writer believes in avoiding the establishment of binaries that entrenches the use of a "One" and an "Other", however this becomes problematic when engaging in issues relating to feminism, post-colonialism and the apartheid context. Essentialism entrenches opposition and nullifies progress. This dissertation resolves to overcome such polarities of thought and to encourage a spirit of

assimilation and transformation.

By analyzing the contextual, historical and situational factors surrounding the creation of *The Cry*, that have entrenched the establishment of the binaries of 'self' and 'other' (women and other, European and other, African and other; colonialist and other and so on) and exposing the social and psychological conditioning inherent in such a context; it will become apparent that it is not the archaeology of differences that should be the focus of inquiry but the assimilation of differences of time, class, gender, race, political and theoretical perspectives that induce one to realize that the 'self' and 'other' are actually reflections of each other that demand scrutiny and resolution.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Assumptions

When I started writing, it was with the notion that art was an act of self-expression. But I realized that it was something else : it was an act of knowledge through self-confrontation. But it is a self-confrontation that takes place within the community of people who emerge out of one's pen, as it were. I realized that self-expression was not the essence but merely the end product of art. (Ndebele 1994:161)

This chapter defines and outlines a discursive approach to literary analysis, and how it varies from the traditional approaches of the past. The history of South Africa is steeped in issues of displacement, and the shattering of racial identities, on many levels. Reading of a text that focuses on such a landscape, must invariably draw on the colourful ontological space that predates 2002, the year in which events in the text unfold.

This thesis draws on an eclectic theoretical framework, focusing on post-structuralism and postmodernism (PM), feminism, psycho-analysis, evolutionary theory, postcolonial theories and some elements of post-modern Marxist theory. *The Cry* is written from a masculine perspective, trying to understand the psyche of the "other".

Long ago, back when the world was young – that is, sometime around the year 1958 – a lot of artists and composers and other people who wanted to do beautiful things began to look at the world around them in a new way.

(Higgins in McHale 1987:101)

Higgins believed that prior to 1958, artists were preoccupied with cognition and questions like "How can I interpret this world? What am I in it?" , whereas the post cognitive questions since 1958 have been: "Which world is this? What is to be done? Which of my selves is to do it?" Higgins believed that 1958 saw the advent of postmodernism (McHale 1987:9). Lyotard (1984:79) has deliberated that:

"A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged by applying familiar categories to the text."

Postmodernism, then, saw a paradigmatic shift in ideology and production, from a predetermined structuralist mode, to a more fluid and flexible formation. Linda Hutcheon (1989:2) indicated that postmodernism de-naturalizes some dominant features of our way of life. Umberto Eco (in Rosso 1983:1) has written that postmodernism is "the orientation of anyone who has learned the lesson of Foucault,

Thus PM fiction can be seen as self-conscious and self-contradictory which highlights issues and simultaneously subverts them.

Postmodernism seeks to 'de-toxify' our cultural representations and their undeniable political import (Barthes in Hutcheon 1989:3). It is difficult to separate the 'de-toxifying' impulse of PM art and culture from the deconstructing impulse of post structuralist theory – the idea of 'discourses' and the political context is inescapable.

Postmodern aesthetic experimentation should be viewed as having an irreducible political dimension. It is inextricably bound up with a critique of domination.

(Wellbury in Hutcheon 1989:4)

PM can be viewed as a rebellion against an Old Order, a change of mood as events in the global social, political and economic spheres, imposed a shift in perspective and representation. The question that should resound in a reader of *The Cry* is :

Why does Ndebele use a postmodernist theoretical framework to structure his text? The following exposition is merely speculation as to the possible reasons for application of such a mode.

Postmodern tendencies have their roots in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in his criticism of Cartesianism, as the foundation of modernity. The Cartesian assumption showed a radical split between the knowing subject and the inert object of knowledge, which lead to a world where the detached superiority of the scientist became the model and grounds of all existence. Modernity was suffocated by its insistence on logic, science and structuralism (Waugh 1992:2).

'Civilizing modernity' was linked to a model of industrialization and the expansion of multinational capitalism, which was evident in South African society during the nineteenth, and twentieth century. This, in turn lead to the entrenchment of a hegemonic culture, dominated by Western patriarchal thought, whose unconscious aim was the homogenizing of language and identity (Richards in Docherty 1993: 463). This hegemony eventually filtered into the peripheries of the world, namely, into the Third World and previously colonized countries like South Africa.

In South Africa, western modernization took its root in the

bureaucratic apparatuses of state and educational institutions. In 1948, the National Party won the elections and established the system of "Apartheid". They rationalized the reasons for this system, with pseudo-scientific backing, biblical pronouncements, and social theories that separate development of the races would result in a more manageable political framework and harmonious race relations.

With regard to knowledge and literature production, the 'centres' dictated the norms while the 'margins' became a kind of 'cultural mimesis'. Literature in South Africa was dictated to by Western modes like the realist novel and thereafter, by protest literature exploring oppression but primarily still using realism. Furst (1992:9) asserts that critics of realism tended to regard realist writing as:

Too transparent, too readily intelligible, too "readerly", to use the term coined by Barthes, in his dichotomization of texts into relatively straightforward "readerly" and the more demanding and exciting, irreducibly plural "writerly".

Realist novels by writers like Paton and Gordimer, had a definite form and semantic substance, based on an ontological setting with purely fictional characters that focused on epistemological questions

that were concerned with knowledge and interpretation of the South African situation, whereas PM's concern has an ontological bent focusing on nature of being and existence. The writer in the realist novel was not an overt entity who asserted his presence within the ontological world of the text. In the postmodern world the writer is allowed some autonomy or rebellion in narrative production, away from the traditional western dominance of realism towards a more flexible framework in the ilk of magical realism and the fantastic.

PM aligns itself with "challenging the very concept of any monological or univalent structure signification" (Richard in Docherty 1993:467). Postmodernism states that all previously privileged points of view have been declared void, so too the distinction between the 'centres' and 'margins'. It offers an opportunity for the colonized South African psyche to forge a space for re-appraisal of issues affecting previously marginalized subjects. According to Richard (in Docherty 1993:468):

It is adorned with ciphers of plurality, heterogeneity and dissidence, confirming Lyotard's observation that postmodernism 'refines our awareness of difference'. The stress is placed on specificity and regionalism, social minorities and political projects which are local in scope, on surviving traditions and suppressed forms of knowledge.

Richard (in Docherty 1993:468) is espousing that postmodernism allows the oppressed in society to finally be given representation, that cultures that were marginalized, could now become the focus of a renewed scrutiny. This is the very enterprise that Ndebele seeks to reveal in *The Cry*. He examines the oppressed Black South African women's perspective, trying to decipher why they wait for and love men who are absent for some reason or another, referring to this as an "absence without duration" (Ndebele 2003:1).

Although postmodernism has no definite semantic substance, because it is a discourse that is being constantly reinvented, reconstructed and *re-presented*, some defining characteristics can be outlined. Below Lethen (1986:233) has developed a spatialized representation of literary history showing modernism on the left with the contrasting postmodernism on the right.

<u>Modern</u>	<u>Postmodern</u>
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Presence	Absence
Genital	Polymorphous
Narrative	Anti-narrative
Metaphysics	Irony
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Construction of a world-model	Deconstruction of a world-model
Ontological certainty	Ontological uncertainty

A PM text is composed of “multiple, overlapping and intersecting inventories and multiple corpora and a plurality of constructions”(McHale 1992:3). Thus the postmodernism of Umberto Eco will differ in some respects from Salman Rushdie due to the features Lethen has isolated under postmodern. As Lyotard (1984) postulates :

Art knows no bounds because it knows no rules, it is forever working to find new rules by which something entirely different can be understood as art.

Postmodernist fiction allows a writer total creative freedom and power. He operates as “a demiurge with quasi-divine properties”, as espoused by Sir Philip Sydney, during the sixteenth century (in McHale 1987:27). William Gass (1972:36) declared that “authors are gods”. In PM narratives, the author is no longer content with remaining in the background, s/he exercises the freedom of

creation by thrusting himself or herself into the narrative, as a fictional voice but this foregrounding of the active presence of the author in PM narratives is coupled with a strong sense of the author's limits, thus it serves to subvert the 'god-like' ideology of authorship.

In *The Cry*, the narrative voice interacts with the reader, drawing one into a dialogue with phrases like : "Let's begin with the blurb..." (Ndebele 2003:1) or "Do you remember Penelope...." (Ndebele 2003:1). Ndebele represents himself, yet it is not the real Ndebele, but a fictional replicated persona, whose sole claim to autonomy and representation is in and for the text. Since the work of fiction has an audible fictive creator or narrative divinity, the text, in effect, becomes an *artefact* , designed to be subversive and self-reflective.

McHale (1987:27) refers to the implementation of a *heterocosm* that exists in some PM works. This refers to the appearance in fictional worlds of individuals who *have* existed in the real world. In *The Cry*, it is the appearance of Winnie Mandela, places like Johannesburg, Soweto, ideas about love and waiting and exile – these are not

merely 'reflected' in *The Cry*, but 'incorporated' into the story. They "constitute enclaves of ontological *difference* within the otherwise ontologically homogeneous fictional heterocosm" (McHale 1987:28). In other words, there is definitely some sort of interpenetration between *The Cry* and the real world.

For the purposes of understanding, the concept of *fictional worlds* can be used. According to Umberto Eco (1979:234), the world created by PM fiction cannot be seen as another world, but that these self-contradictory constructs are subversive critiques of worlds – anti-worlds, rather than proper worlds. Eco chose to call them *subworlds* while others like Thomas Pavel (1975:174) prefer *narrative domains*. Fictional worlds and the real world would inevitably overlap as entities, events, places are 'borrowed' from the real world.

In *The Cry*, Winnie Mandela is a prototype – the actual being from the real world, who is imported into the fictional world. Penelope, the noble wife of Odysseus, is a prototype from Homer's *Illiad*, and she migrates from eons past into 2002, to interact with the fictional characters that Ndebele has created. So in PM texts, entities

can migrate across the “semi-permeable membrane that divides a fictional world from reality and also between two fictional worlds as well” (McHale 1987:35).

Whenever we recognize a relation between two or more texts or between specific texts and other genres or periods, we can refer to these as *intertextual zones*. Within this zone, one is at liberty to ‘borrow’ characters. McHale (1987:34) calls this *transworld identity* while Eco (1979:234) refers to it as “*transmigration of characters from one fictional world to another*”.

PM fiction occupies a specific fictional space – *heterotopia* – a concept which McHale (1987:44) borrowed from Foucault (1970:xviii). Heterotopia is a space in which there are a number of possible orders that exist separately, in a dimension without law or geometry. In *The Cry*, the writer’s fictional voice seems to be in control, he independently constructs the worlds of the four descendants and their individual dimensions, but bringing them together changes the dynamics. In his introduction of the *ibandla* (a gathering of women who are waiting) (Ndebele 2003:42), the

fictional voices then demand more autonomy and recognition than Ndebele had previously accorded them.

Ndebele (2003:35) declares :

They strain at the writer's leash, wanting to assume individuality of character. But the writer must hold on to the leash, and hope it won't choke them; that they will learn to enjoy the movement of the leash and the hand that holds it.

Ndebele, like many other PM writers, employs the use of *heteroglossia* which implies that different repertoires of stylistic features, different situations and uses of language are employed. Halliday (in McHale 1987:166) calls this *registers*. This refers to the interweaving of different registers in *The Cry* which results in a plurality of discourses, allowing a confrontation between different ideologies and different world views . In most conventional works, there is the authority of a single voice but in experimental PM, there is a "plurivocal range of viewpoints" (Hassan 1975). In *The Cry*, this is achieved through a *polyphony* of voices in the text, namely, the fictional author's voice, the voice of the four descendants and Winnie Mandela's, voice. Yet other voices come through, like that of Penelope, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings.

In *The Cry*, the background of white oppression and apartheid is deliberately awarded marginal focus, but the reality of the situation is seen through the everyday activities of the descendants.

Ndebele 1986 (in Le May 2000:19) spoke of:

a need to change from the rhetoric of oppression to that of process and exploration...

Post-protest literature should probe beyond the observable facts, to reveal new worlds where it was previously thought that they did not exist, and to reveal process and movement where they had been hidden.

Ndebele, despite the passage of time, stays true to his convictions, that literature must probe new frontiers to analyse past wrongs.

The effect of white domination and colonization can be seen operating in *The Cry*, when the text is disrupted by the discourse on the specialized ritual of baking of scones and the serving of tea (Ndebele 2003:37). It is unusual for South African postcolonial works to marginalize issues of race and oppression but the overriding theme of PM fictions is a revisionist approach to history and historical fiction. It is also an illusion-breaking art which deliberately shatters aspects of "reality" by foregrounding the ontological

structure of texts and fictional worlds.

PM fiction is often described as being "*discontinuous*", unlike most realist texts which seek to have a definite structure and continuity. Examining the structure and form of *The Cry*, reveals chapters that vary considerably in length. The third descendant is accorded ten pages while the fourth descendant barely receives two pages of coverage. PM texts deliberately try to shatter all the norms of regular storytelling, preferring to engage in a reinvention of physical form and representation towards an aesthetics of transformative art and literature. Ndebele (1986:143) has always asked for a "rediscovery of the ordinary" and he consistently prods the reader to leave all their preconceived notions of art and literature outside the text, and walk into a new experience of women, sex, games, relationships and much more.

Around the time of the postmodern paradigm shift, an intellectual revolution was underway in France in the sixties, initiated by a group of philosophers which included Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault. They were

engaged in fields encompassing history, psychology, literary studies and many other fields. They saw language as being formative, that language was not just a means of communication but “makes” or “constructs” our world (Jefferson and Robey 1995:112). This is encompassed by the words of Derrida that “there is no outside the text” This intellectual revolution was given the name “poststructuralism”.

Poststructuralists believe that everything is constructed by how we name things in the world and the ways in which we use language in stories and texts. All parts of *self* (comprising our conscious, unconscious, morals, values etc) and the *world* (comprising our histories, myths and so on) are constructed by language. An important aspect of post structuralism is *discourse* which was first associated with Wittgenstein’s linguistic philosophy and more recently with Foucault.

Discourse is language in use and controlled in society by various systems of power. Foucault’s work indicated a shift from *archaeology* to *genealogy* – or from a structuralist attempt to analyse discursive

formations that influence history of the human sciences, to a Nietzschean project, whose aim was to challenge and subvert all operative notions (truth, reason, history, origins, objectivity) (Norris 1993:257). Foucault argued for a new discursive regime, one in which language and representation defines the very limits of thought. In other words, he wanted us to acknowledge that “truth is just a nominal predicate, a token of the prestige enjoyed by a particular discourse” (Norris 1993:30). Hence nothing exists beyond the prison house of language. Norris (1993:32) outlined three basic tenets of Foucault’s genealogy which are contestatory:

1. All truth-claims are intricately bound up with relations of power and knowledge.
2. The subject is nothing more than a figment of discourse, a transient ‘fold’ in the fabric of this or that system of representations.
3. These insights are sufficient to refute any argument based on ‘enlightened’ notions of reason, self-knowledge or emancipatory interests.

For the purpose of this thesis, some of Foucault’s expositions, mentioned earlier, can be hotly debated, especially by the severely oppressed black majority in South Africa during apartheid or by the

feminist movement as well. Subjects are deemed as being mere localized points of intersection of various discourses, a real Nietzschean or Deleuzean rhetoric of forces, affects and power/knowledge differentials (Norris 1993:30). Foucault has been criticized for engaging in a blatantly bleak and deterministic model.

Due to criticism from many quarters, Foucault, in his later writing, voiced reservations about this genealogical approach as it seemed to lack conceptual resources that sought to understand how subjects engaged in a process of self-determination that results in a “jointly cognitive and ethical endeavour which allows them to achieve something other than a passive acquiescence in the codes, conventions or sexual mores of their time” (Norris 1993:32).

People in the real world are capable of active, self-shaping and volitional thought and conduct – they are not merely automatons shaped by discourse alone.

The Cry comes across as a poststructuralist text in the way it is structured. It is an intricate web of oral and western literary

traditions which allows for a flexible interchange of chronology, context and narrative consciousness which is reminiscent of such works. Ndebele draws on classical Greek discourse in relating the story of Penelope and Odysseus and then opens up an African discourse, covering an extended time span beginning in the pre-apartheid industrial period up to the present. The language is interspersed with African words and phrases which draws attention to the artifice of the language itself.

The narrative voice of the story shifts between the consciousness of five women and the sympathetic fictional author's voice. The text is interspersed with snatches from various discourses like dialogue, a letter, a recipe, historical documents, TRC documentation and autobiographical material – which Herstein-Smith (in Andrews 1990:23) calls *natural discourse*. Natural discourse serves as an authenticating device, to remind the reader of its difference from fictive discourse (Flockemann 1990:4). Natural discourse serves as documentary evidence in the fictional narrative and is used to “buttress the fictive claims” (Andrews 1990:27).

The voices of the women in the text are representative of the black world. There is no overt binary opposite white world, though the white world is given representation by the use of natural discourse, demonstrated in the recipe of scones and in the tea drinking rituals (Ndebele 2003: 37) adopted from the English colonialists, or the interrogation of Winnie Mandela by Major Swanepoel (Ndebele 2003:61). Njabulo Ndebele (1986:143) argued for a move away from a reductionist view of political conflict which emphasizes racial conflict and focuses only on heroic figureheads like the Mandelas. He espoused retelling the stories of history through the common people - the ordinary, working class. He insisted that this retelling must show how these oppressed people have survived, and the extent of their potential power. Thus in *The Cry*, Ndebele uses the fictive voices of four prototypical working class black women to project a subversion of the traditional paradigm of romanticized apartheid freedom fighter-hero versus the oppressor and instead he focuses on the experience of these ordinary working class women.

Throughout space and time, the female sex has been viewed as a lesser species. Aristotle declared that "the female is female by virtue

of a certain lack of qualities" while St Thomas Aquinas believed that woman was an "imperfect man". Sophocles insisted that "silence gives the proper grace to women". Issues affecting women have been highlighted for decades in the western world resulting in the feminist movement. In South Africa, African women have, since colonization, been viewed as aberrant and inferior. Njabulo Ndebele makes reference to this early nineteenth century depiction of African women in the dedication of *The Cry* :

For Sara Baartman, who endured the horrors of European eyes, was desecrated beyond her death and finally returned home, to rest.

Saartje Baartman, a dead black South African woman, was exhibited to fascinated western European audiences of the nineteenth century. She was portrayed as the "*Hottentot Venus*". She was seen as an anthropological curiosity, depicted as a stereotypical "other" by her physical difference. Lewis (1996:95) explains that:

Baartman ostensibly captured the essence of black women's 'deviance': (hyperdeveloped sexuality and correspondingly undeveloped humanity), and confirmed the European viewer's sense of Self as normative, human, civilized. Her physiognomy and sexuality were projected as the incarnation of primitiveness, the antithesis of nineteenth century superiority.

African women, exemplified by Baartman, thus became an overtly lesser “other”. In examining the existence of the black South African woman, the social, political and cultural historiography must be thoroughly investigated. South Africa became the locus of colonialism early in the seventeenth century, settled by a range of European colonizers from England, Portugal, France and Holland. For this reason, this thesis will need to look at *The Cry* from a postcolonial perspective.

Postcolonial writing defines itself, often by an anti-imperialist discursive strategy. This can take a dual path – *abrogation* (denial) and *appropriation* (Ashcroft et al 1989:9). In many instances, postcolonial writing defines itself by arresting the language of the colonizers and re-placing it in a discourse adapted to the colonized space. In South Africa, the oppressed needed to make their voices heard and in the Black Consciousness Movement, they used English to write poetry, articles and stories as a reversal of the hierarchy of colonialism, nationalism and apartheid. Anti-hegemonic African discourse thus sought to cast the African in a positive light, in

opposition to the other.

This binary opposition of Empire/Other is a power dynamic that continues to rage in different forms between the 'centres' and 'margins', the 'First World' and 'Third World'. With the launch of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and his focus on the Oriental and the Other, attention finally fell on the appalling effects of colonial discourse on the colonized persona. Others like Ngugi wa Thiong'o drew attention to the Negro and the Other, while feminism's interest was Women and the Other. In the evolution of the oppressed psyche the realization and outcry against the oppressor is bound in a relationship of essentialism of the One and the Other. This creates a bifurcation and an inversion of the status quo. The oppressed becomes the One and the oppressor the Other. For progress to occur, there must be acceptance by both parties of their role in the oppression. There must be an acceptance of some 'cross-culturality' and an end to the myth of a cultural purity.

Colonialism and Imperialism resulted in a total subversion of black people's role in society in South Africa. They were rendered

“invisible” and “silent” by their domination and subjugation. Ralph Ellison (1952) in his book *Invisible Man* explored the role of a black man’s invisibility in a white man’s world:

*I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.....when they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me..... that invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come into contact. A matter of the construction of their **inner** eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality.*

If the black man was invisible, the black woman was relegated to an even more inferior status, both by the white colonialists, as well as by her own culture. This is the history and ancestry of the women Ndebele portrays in *The Cry*, displaced in their black culture as lesser creatures by their own men, displaced even further by their race, gender, class and even more so by apartheid itself. The South African black woman can be regarded as one of the most discriminated against entities in history. These women had little access to education and whilst in European circles the feminist movement began in the late nineteenth century, in South Africa, black women were far too marginalized in all spheres to know about

such a movement. Their everyday reality became a matter of survival, railing against the numerous injustices that were perpetrated against their sex and their race.

Njabulo Ndebele has vehemently denied to the press that he had written a feminist novel, saying "I have been at pains to say this is not a feminist novel". Kennedy (2003:2) raised two pertinent questions : What is a feminist novel? Why would Ndebele deny writing one? She defines feminism as *a philosophy based on the recognition that we live in a male dominated culture in which women remain unacknowledged and where women are forced into sex roles, which demand that they be dependent, passive and nurturing.*

Kennedy argues:

a feminist book raises questions about issues pertinent to women and deals with them in an empathetic way, and sorry, whether Professor Ndebele intended to or not, he has written a very feminist book, and may find himself an unlikely and reluctant hero of the women's liberation movement. (Kennedy 2003:2)

Ndebele then may not like the term feminism, because it creates a frightening image of radical feminism, who refused to shave their

legs and sought to be rather obnoxious and asexual.

Why has feminism through time attracted such bad press? Initially it was probably being reported on by males, but every social movement goes through a process of evolution. Feminism went through some radical paradigm shifts. Elaine Showalter (in Modleski 1991:4) mentioned "the lunatic fringe of radical feminism" at the turn of the century who labeled sperm "a virulent poison" and advocated sexual abstinence as a political goal. The seventies was the period of the *gynocritics* who sought to develop new models based on the study of female experience ushering a move away from the angry or loving fixation on male literature.

In the recent decades, feminism has evolved in leaps and bounds, considering masculinity in reading male texts as inscriptions of gender and renditions of sexual difference. Tania Modleski (1991) indicates that changes in the attitudes in male circles are currently discernible :

*A body of male criticism supportive of the feminist project **is** beginning to develop, and the criticism I have found most useful in thinking through my own subject is the kind*

*that analyzes male power, male hegemony with a concern for the effects of this power **on the female subject** and with an awareness of how frequently male subjectivity worked to appropriate 'femininity' while oppressing women. (1991:6-7)*

Ndebele, though a reluctant bearer, is a writer who seeks to address issues relating to women from the position of a fictive asexual narrative voice similar to an impartial god-entity, and this dissertation will draw on feminist theory in its analysis of women's issues in the text.

Feminism has established itself as one of the most vociferous of the many postmodern discourses due largely to its critique of western knowledge in an emancipatory mode (Hennesy 1993:2). Most feminists shy away from accepting a postmodern perspective, but Hennesy disagrees. She contends that feminism and postmodernism have a lot in common.

Feminist deconstructions of the binary oppositions which shape the dominant representations of difference (man-woman culture-nature, reason-body) certainly intersect with postmodern critiques of western metaphysics. (Hennesy 1993:3)

Many theorists like Ebert, Giroux, Nicholson, Fraser have expanded on the role of feminism in the extension and critique of postmodernism by primarily engaging in how social differences can be historically or hierarchically constructed. Resistance postmodernism, a term that Teresa Ebert coined, argues that social structures like patriarchy and racism **do** continue to impact on people.

Feminism, PM and poststructuralist theories have been greatly influenced by Foucault. Kate Soper 1993 (in McLaren 1997:3) has indicated that it is not clear why Foucault is given so much attention from feminists, seeing that he had little engagement with the feminist movement compared with Derrida and Lacan. Foucault's deconstruction of power frees feminism from rigid conceptions like patriarchy, racism or heterosexism. By seeing power as everywhere, it allows feminists to look at power relations between different role players and even how women can be subordinated by other women.

Foucault can be criticized because he was writing about his theory of discourse from the perspective of a man and his understanding of

power comes from the already accepted social, political and psychological gender conditioning of the male viewpoint. Ndebele too has been conditioned by certain social, political, cultural and gender perspectives and his lenses would inherently be coloured by his unique perception of events.

Feminist writers can imbibe some of Foucault's wisdom into their theory but analysis of women's experience, since the beginning of time, suggest that men did and still have the power, and that this exercise of power can be regarded as domination backed by force. This kind of domination cannot simply be seen as a product of discourse, as it must also be as seen as 'extra discursive', incorporating wider realities than those of discourse. Foucault has been criticized for being too androcentric, overlooking the varying impact on men and women. In an interview with Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, Foucault commented:

The Greek ethics were linked to a purely virile society with slaves, in which women were underdogs whose pleasure had no importance, whose sexual life had to be orientated toward and determined by their status as wives, and so on. (Foucault in Rabinow 1984:344)

Foucault, therefore, excused his lack of interest in women's issues because, since antiquity, women were marginalized and had no real sexual power. Foucault (1986), in the introduction to *History of Sexuality*, sees the *Self* created by discourses such as the Christian confessional, psychoanalysis and the accepted conventions of sexuality. By incorporating some of Foucault's reasoning, pertaining to knowledge and power, and the influence of certain discourses on the development of the present psyche of women, the reasons for the actions of the four descendants and Winnie Mandela, in *The Cry*, can be better understood. Ndebele prods the reader to conduct a revision of women's reasons for continuing in relationships with men who blatantly disrespect them.

It is the belief of this writer, that in the course of human history, the male of the species has looked on women as a mere inconvenience. Darwin's Theory of Evolution was a major setback for the plight of women, as they were cast as biologically and intellectually inferior. Darwin argued that "the child, the *female*, and the senile white" all had the intellectual features and personality of the "grown-up Negro"

(Bergman 1996:3).

This view dominated the western world for a long time, and even in the present climate, there are many who still look on women as a 'lesser man'. As long as different groups focus on issues of power, there can be no middle ground, as Franz Fanon (1967) declared :

The only means of breaking this vicious circle that throws me back on myself, is to restore to the other, through mediation and recognition, his human reality...the other has to perform the same operation as action from one side only would be useless, because what is to happen can only be brought about by means of both.

Darwin's theory can be adopted by social studies in the evolution of social processes. Feminism, colonialism and racism, must advance through the usual stages of social evolution:

1. social conditioning by the oppressor.
2. abnegation on the part of the oppressed.
3. increasing awareness of the oppression.
4. protest.
5. violence.
6. revolution.

But as Fanon (1967) emphatically declares, there can be no resolution for the oppressed and the other, if acknowledgement is not forthcoming from both parties. Resolution, which follows

revolution, must lead to an integration between various systems of thought, between different groups of people, races, cultures and genders, all agreeing to disagree within a hybrid social universe. These different social and ideological groups will still struggle for hegemony but there will always be anti-hegemonic discourses allowing for resistance to any form of domination.

Chapter Three

Historical Background

Ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied.
(Said 2003:5)

In this chapter, the ontology of the writer and his socio-political, historical and cultural context will be investigated to place the literary product in its proper perspective. A writer is shaped and configured by the direct and indirect institutions and discourses that converge upon his consciousness. This chapter will place Ndebele in his physical landscape, and examine how external factors of the South African pre-colonial and postcolonial period impacted on the course of his life. As Edward Said (2003) very succinctly puts it:

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society.
(2003:10)

Njabulo Ndebele was born on 4 July 1948, an inauspicious year in the historical development of South Africa considering that it was year

that apartheid became entrenched in the landscape of South Africa. The forties was also a catastrophic journey in the history of humankind, as World War II came to an end. This heralded the demise of the Nazi onslaught. The world was still reeling from the bigotry and racism of this anti-Semitic regime and the holocaust that was perpetrated in the name of advancement. In 1948, the same year the National Party gained power in South Africa, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

One of the major achievements of the U.N. was the adoption by the General Assembly, 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration state that :

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

(Grolier 1992)

It is appalling, then, that in such a climate, the National party was allowed to systematically oppress and dehumanize the black majority in South Africa. Marks and Trapido (in Green 1997:45), in their analysis of politics, race and nationalism in South Africa, explain that apartheid was a response to late nineteenth century industrialization,

imperialism and British race-patriotism. Wolpe (1972:454), a political analyst, commented that " racial ideology in South Africa can be seen as ideology which sustains and reproduces capitalist relations of production".

New ethnic identities emerged around 1910 when the state was being constructed as a single entity out of British colonies, the conquered Afrikaner republics and African kingdoms in the region. (Marks and Trapido in Green1997:44)

What is evidenced in this account, explains Green is the "plural within the singular" (Green 1997:44) but far from uniting the various groups, it accentuated the differences between them.

This unification did not lead to single pan-South African, pan-ethnic nationalism was the outcome of a history of regional divisions, the racism and social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century and specific political-cum-class struggles which were being legitimated by the discourse of nationalism. (Marks and Trapido in Green 1997:45)

Afrikaner Nationalism sought to accentuate the differences between the races, with its segregation policies, in keeping, firstly, with their Afrikaner, politico-religious doctrine (Price in Lester 1996:109).

Secondly, the National Party wanted to secure white supremacy and economic privilege. Thirdly, and of paramount importance, the National Party's agenda was to elevate the Afrikaner community into a position of social and economic dominance over the English

community (Lester 1996:109). Verwoerd (in Rangoajane 1999) is quoted as saying:

*The policy toward the natives...is not an effort to exploit the difference between the races, this is not an effort to stir up hostility towards one another, an effort to divide and rule. As the nations of the world each on its own territory accomplishes its national development, so the opportunity will be given to the various native groups to accomplish their own development in their own territory. To each of them, from tribal chief to the ordinary native, the chance is being given to accomplish a fair and reasonable development within its own **national** group. (1999:56)*

In this light, apartheid was glorified and continued to divide the country for the next forty-eight years. Njabulo Simakahle Ndebele was born into this tumultuous context, in Western Native Township, in Johannesburg, to Nimrod Ndebele (a teacher) and Regina Makhosozana (a nurse). Ndebele spent his early years in relative contentment (Wilkinson 1992:147). Being the progeny of educated black parentage, he was exposed to books, music and culture from an early age. His father was a talented writer and playwright in his own right (Mabogoane 1993:13). The family moved from Western Native Township in 1952 to Nigel, when his father was

transferred to Charterston High School as principal.

This is the place of Ndebele's early childhood, where he played and started school. In later years, the memories of this period would dominate the setting of many of his short stories in *Fools and Other Stories* (1983). While Ndebele was blissfully enjoying his young life, many new laws and developments were instituted by the National Party government that would radically alter the course of his existence.

In 1949, the African National Congress Youth League was formed where Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo were elected on to the national executive. The 1950's began with a stayaway, when the Suppression of Communism Act was passed. During 1952, the Defiance campaign began, with bus boycotts and mass protests, resulting in the drawing up of the Freedom Charter in 1955.

Sophiatown, in Johannesburg was a dynamic mixed race area that became a symbol of protest in the townships and was later popularized in literature and the arts.

In the 1950's the *Drum* generation of African writers like Can

Themba, Casey 'Kid' Motsisi, Todd Matshikizo, Nat Nakasa, Henry Nxumalo, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Bloke Modisane gave a voice to black urban culture. Contrary to western feminist beliefs, that black women were a mere intersection of patriarchal discourses, with no overt claim to resistance, Lodge (1983:139) speaks of the "unprecedented level of women's mobilization against African men's pusillanimity, influx control and land mobilization and land rehabilitation", during the 1950's. Women became the major source of resistance to many race-related restrictions during apartheid, especially the Pass Laws. The Women's Defence of the Constitution League, later known as Black Sash, was formed in 1954, to demonstrate against the Pass Laws and other apartheid structures. It was also set up to assist Pass Law violators with representation and help (Library of Congress Country Studies 1996:1).

In 1950, the Group Areas Act was introduced. Segregated neighbourhoods were not an unusual spectacle in South Africa's colonial history. The Native Land Act of 1913 was one of the earlier legislative means of separating the 'natives' and illegally possessing their land. In fact from the 1920's, many laws saw segregation

entrenched in the South African landscape, like the 1923 Natives Act (Urban Areas Act) and 1920 Housing Act that paved the way for an apartheid structure. The Durban Indian-African Riots of 1949 provided the official pretext for declaring separate zones of the city for occupation by the different race groups.

Beginning in December 1959, the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress directed campaigns against the Pass Laws. A protest campaign in Sharpeville, in 1960, turned violent, resulting in the death of sixty nine Africans and 180 injuries, most of whom were shot in the back by government forces. The Sharpeville Massacre marked the end of peaceful resistance to apartheid. The African National Congress's *Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)* began its campaign of sabotage. The MK leadership was captured at Rivonia, leading to the eventual imprisonment and exile of many ANC stalwarts. The 1960's was a decade of oppressive "silence" followed by the active 1970's. The 1970's initiated a paradigm shift in resistance politics and government reaction to such resistance which assumed a 'spectacular, catastrophic' turn with the Soweto Riots and the ensuing

violence and ruthless killings, that were perpetrated by the state apparatus and by the freedom fighters.

With the arrest and imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and others, some looked to Winnie Mandela – the abandoned wife, to seize the cudgels and take up the cause. She was an inexperienced, young woman, unaccustomed to this sudden thrust into mainstream protest politics. She bravely became the surrogate champion of the liberation struggle. Nelson Mandela may have been issued a prison sentence but Winnie's struggle was a far greater one. She was a wife, forced into exile from her husband. Filled with the burden of the sudden, overwhelming demands thrust upon her, she went on to indulge in questionable and highly controversial antics. Her exploits were reported in all the major national and international newspapers.

Ndebele grew up reading about this fascinating yet enigmatic woman, so vilified by some and so revered by others. On writing *The Cry*, he gets to explore the historiography, tabloids, propaganda, facts, letters, biographies, rumours and legal

meanderings to understand the heart and soul of this enigmatic individual. His focus though is not on her, but on the lives of four ordinary working class women, who lived and worked in obscurity, through the absence of their husbands.

Ndebele mentions that during the 1960's, those Africans residing in Duduza were moved by the government to a new area called Charterston Location as that the area was re-zoned for the "coloured" population. The Group Areas Act had an alienating effect on the different race groups, in their design and locational strategies. African townships were generally located far from the eyes of the white bourgeois areas. Ndebele, in an interview with Lindfors (1990) had this to say on the issue :

The racist authorities, realizing that the white suburb was expanding towards us, decided to relocate us to where they would not see us, miles away from the city centre and places of work. So they drove us away from the place, redesigned it, tarred all the streets, lit all the streets, installed water, sewerage facilities, refurbished schools and recreation facilities, and then invited the so-called 'coloureds', people of mixed descent to live there. (1990:48)

Ndebele grew up in a multi-lingual environment, speaking several

languages including Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, English and Afrikaans. His dreams of a great education were dissipated by the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Prior to this, most African schools fell under the auspices of the church or mission schools, affording them a good quality education. This Act forced most of the schools to close down and transferred administration of African schools to a Central Department of Native Affairs. This enabled the state to unilaterally devise, modify and manipulate syllabi and regulations to disempower African students. F.H.Odendaal, the administrator of Transvaal province is quoted as saying; "*We must strive to win the struggle against the non-white in the classroom rather than lose it on the battlefield*" (Thompson in Lester 1996:109).

When St. Peters Anglican School, in Rosettenville, Johannesburg was closed down by the state, Ndebele's parents sent him off to Swaziland, to attend St.Christopher's Anglican School. The school had a progressive environment, with many extra-mural activities like committees, clubs and even a newspaper, that allowed Ndebele's creativity to develop (August 1991:39).

During his time at St.Christopher's, he was exposed to the literary work of many writers like Lewis Nkosi, Nat Nakasa, T.S.Elliot, Dante and an eclectic mix of other writers, which lead to an excellent development and appreciation of English literature. He began writing at the age of fifteen, while still at St.Christopher's, showing an interest in poetry writing. His initial attempts were in Zulu, eventually crossing over to English because he believed there was "no sustaining literary culture in Zulu" (Lindfors 1990:41). His interest in the English language continued when he finished high school.

Ndebele became an exile at a very young age. He was a child of apartheid, born in the very year of its inception, and exposed to its harsh realities. Apartheid was a spectre that shaped and engineered his existence like an invisible puppeteer. The concealed threads of apartheid's tentacles, stretched into all aspects of his life, dictating the choices he made and his resulting psyche. Ndebele, like many other South African students in exile at St.Christopher's, chose not to return to South Africa to pursue his tertiary education, when he matriculated in 1966. He believes that those educated outside of South Africa were more politically conscious and wanted to escape

this limiting, problematic world.

While Ndebele was educating himself, in exile, a great deal of literary and political activity was developing in South Africa. Ndebele (1994:41) explicated: "*The history of black South African literature has largely been of the representation of spectacle.*" Under the oppressive social, political and economic conditions of apartheid, this was an understandable reaction. The 1950's saw a flourishing of spectacular and fantastic stories in *Drum* magazine which focused more on the urban experience. The end of the 1950's saw the emergence of exile protest literature, following the banning of the African National Congress, and the Pan-African Congress. This protest literature revealed the ugliness of the apartheid state. Writers of this period included James Matthews, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Alex La Guma, Can Themba, Webster Makaza and many others (Wilkinson 1992:154). Ndebele read many of these writers' work while still at St. Christopher's.

He enrolled at the University of Lesotho in 1969 to read for a Bachelor of Arts degree covering English literature,

Sociology, Philosophy and other related subjects (Lindfors 1990:36).

While still at university, he met and married Mpho Malebo, a social worker, in July 1971 (Galenet 2000:1). He completed his first degree in 1973. Ndebele spent a short while teaching English and Mathematics at a high school and then went on to Cambridge University to read for a Masters degree, taking with him his wife, Mpho, and his young son. On returning to Lesotho in 1975, he took up a position in the Department of English, at the University of Lesotho (Lindfors 1990:50).

While Ndebele was busy earning his degrees during the 1970's, the winds of change were beginning to blow through the South African literary landscape and political consciousness. The mere acceptance of the status quo of the earlier decades was slowly being eroded. A spirit of revolt was taking root with the rapid rise of the Black Consciousness (BC) movement.

Having had its roots in the United States of America during the sixties with people like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the BC philosophy found favour with dissatisfied students. BC in South

Africa rejected the hegemony of white, Western ideology and resulted in the development of a new literary style by black writers. BC called for a revival of all things essentially black, like traditional African oral poetry, exemplified by Oswald Mtshali's *Sound of a Cowhide Drum*. Ndebele came face to face with the reality of the South African situation when a cultural group called "Medupe" visited the University of Lesotho. Their use of drumming with oral poetry recitals was designed to create pride in the African legacy. Ndebele first heard Ingoapele Madingoane reciting *Africa My Beginning* at this time.

BC was obviously just a phase in the social evolution of the oppressed South African's odyssey. BC served a valuable purpose, to awaken in the African a renewed sense of pride in self as a worthy entity. It also attempted to arouse a consciousness and dignity in their African heritage. BC intersected with the narcissistic myths of *negritude* and its belief in challenging White cultural supremacy when people like Fanon, Memmi and Cabral asked for re-definition of what it meant to be "black". Chapman explains:

Black had to be stripped, accordingly, of its negative connotations in a European sign system where it designated the 'other', the dark shape, the evil figure and charged with positive, radical potential. (2003:328)

But theoretically, as long as there exists the 'one' and the 'other', social evolution will stagnate. For this reason, it is the belief of this writer that BC was an ephemeral yet necessary structure and ideology because it presented a much needed opposition to unravel the undermining effects of colonialism and apartheid's political emasculation and oppression of black people. BC was an important step in the reclamation of black pride and dignity after the political oppression of the past. This renewed African pride entrenched the 'self' and 'other' phenomenon and created further distance and divisions between the different role-players.

The BC movement found a spokesman in Steve Biko, the first president of the South African Students Organisation (SASO).

Marxist commentators in South Africa insisted that the BC movement had little following among the peasants and workers, but was popular among the petty-bourgeois leaders and students (Chapman 2003:326). Black writing produced by BC ideology tried to launch

itself into micropolitics, pedagogy and theatre by deconstructing the binary of “physical” versus “moral” coercion Pechey (1994:157). On June 16, 1976 students protested against their inferior Bantu Education, and having to be taught Afrikaans which was seen as the language of the oppressor. Steve Biko was detained in 1977, and battered to death in mysterious circumstances while in police custody. Pechey (1994:157) espouses the view that Black Consciousness was a way that young intellectuals of the Black majority sought to ‘existentialise and detotalise the struggle against “internal colonialism” and whose *locus classicus* was Steve Biko, who is quoted as saying : “ the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the *mind* of the oppressed” (Biko 1988:108). BC leaders believed that change began with an intensive re-examination of what it meant to be black in the postcolonial context. As a result of Biko’s death, many student activists fled into exile.

During the seventies, Ndebele also kept abreast of political and literary developments in South Africa by reading issues of *Staffrider*, *The Classic*, Sipho Sepamla’s *S’ketsch*, *Contrast* and *New Coin*.

He also read literary works by Sente, Sepamla, Mzamane, Gordimer, Stephen Gray, Phil du Plessis, Mtshali, Mphahlele and Mafika Gwala. Ndebele, in an interview with Lindfors (1990:39) speaks of being lost in the grind of teaching, researching and meetings and of not being actively involved in any independent endeavour. The appearance of Ayi Kwei Armah at the University of Lesotho in 1977, was an invigorating presence who stirred Ndebele's creativity (Lindfors 1990:39). He was also in touch with Mphahlele, who encouraged him to go to Denver to complete his studies. He eventually capitulated and went on to complete his doctorate in Philosophy, English and American Creative Writing at the University of Denver (Lindfors 1990:40).

While in Denver, Ndebele completed and perfected some of his short stories, which were eventually published as *Fools and Other Stories*, in 1983. Most of these stories adopts the perspective of a young boy, observing his world. The book won the Noma Award (1983), the Sanlam Award (1986), and the Mofolo-Plomer Prize. Ndebele expresses gratitude for the writing of *Fools* as he believes it

records the “most lasting images of Charterston Township” (Lindfors 1990:35). He also spent time at Yale University researching the history of black South African literary theory. While at Yale, he began work on a novel and wrote a children’s story *Bonolo and the Peach Tree*, which was short-listed for the M-Net Book Award in 1992.

During the 1980’s Ndebele wrote many essays and delivered papers against the sloganeering and purely superficial nature of protest literature. These were eventually printed in a volume in 1994 called *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary*. In his essay *Turkish Tales* for which he won the Pringle Award, he explains :

*In societies such as South Africa, where social, economic and political oppression is stark, such conditions tend to enforce, almost with the power of natural law, overt tendentiousness, in the artists choice of subject matter. It is such tendentiousness which can most easily be interpreted as ‘taking a position’. One major effect is that the writings probing into the South African experience has been largely superficial. This comes from the tendency to produce fiction that is built around **surface symbols of the South African reality**.* (1994:27)

Ndebele questioned whether such writings could be called art or

literature, as it was a mere report or dissemination of information.

There was no reader transformation. Ndebele believes that art and literature must be critical yet empowering. He explains further:

*The truth is that the average African writer, working under an information ethos which for him or her has habituated a tradition of rigorous analysis and interpretation, produces an **art of anticipated surfaces** rather than one of processes.....as a result little transformation in reader consciousness is to be expected since the only reader faculty engaged is the faculty of recognition. (Turkish Tales 1994:32)*

In the 1980's, South Africa fulfilled the vision that Fanon held for Nigeria some twenty years ago.

The violence of the colonial regime and the counter violence of the native balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity.
(Fanon in Lester 1986:135)

The 1980's were a decade of massive insurrection and mobilization on the part of the black masses. Together with sanctions and disinvestment, and the continued pressure from the international community, it was only a matter of time before the National Party relented. Eventually Nelson Mandela was released in February 1990. This day marked the beginning of the end of the National

Party and white supremacy, in South Africa. The National Party government tried desperately to hold onto power but the violent uprising in all areas between the ANC and Inkatha supporters was overwhelming the country. The interregnum period was one that assumed apocalyptic proportions, with conflict and strife tearing the country apart.

During the 1980's, Ndebele returned to Lesotho and was employed as Professor of Literature and Head of the English Department. In 1984, he became Dean of Humanities and eventually assumed the position of Deputy Vice Chancellor in 1987. In the same year, he was elected President of Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) (Wilkinson 1992:155). On Nelson Mandela's release, Ndebele was ready to reclaim his rightful place in the South African landscape of change.

However, re-entry into South Africa proved more difficult than he had assumed. South Africa was still under NP rule and Ndebele and his family were placed on the visa and entry stop list, many years earlier. Ndebele's appointment to the University of Western Cape

was in jeopardy. After a countrywide petition from academics, writers, churches, trade unions, universities and political groups, the ban was revoked. Eventually he was granted a temporary work permit to enter, and in 1991, secured a post in the Department of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand. Frank Meintjies, (in Sorour 1990) COSAW secretary, at the time, commented:

The government twice refused his application because they feel threatened by his views on the new South Africa and the fact that he believes African culture should not be dominated by that of the minority.
(1990:4)

During the interregnum period, Ndebele was caught in the middle of the turmoil and politics of the day. During 1992-1993, he was made vice-rector of the Western Cape (Galenet 2000:1). This was followed by a stint as vice-chancellor of the University of the North, between 1993 and 1998. This appointment was surrounded by much controversy (Amupadhi 1997:5), involving a funding scandal (Ngobeni 1999:2-3) and allegations that he ran the university like a "spaza shop" (Ngeni 1996:II). Ndebele was not prepared for the massive upheavals among the student body on the campus. The

student body accused Ndebele of being too slow in implementing transformations and effecting change in the management structures at the university (Garson 1995:13). Ndebele eventually resigned from the University of the North. He served as Resident Scholar at the Ford Foundation Headquarters in New York in 1998. During the nineties, he was also involved in the South African Broadcasting Policy Project as a task team chair in 1997 (Galenet 2000:1).

Ndebele's portfolio is long and comprehensive, from being on the board of directors in a brick factory, to Chairman of the HSRC, to *Weekly Mail* board of trustees and much more. Eventually in July 2000, he was appointed vice-chancellor of University of Cape Town, a position he currently holds. Ndebele also holds many Honorary Doctorates from Universities of Natal (SA), Chicago (USA), Vrije (Netherlands) and Soka (Japan) (Galenet 2000:1).

Ndebele is an eminent academic who has never let his political affiliations influence his opinions and decisions. In July 1986, he accused the Grahamstown festival of being a racist symbol stifling the voices of what he called "the oppressed African majority" (B. Ronge

1986:7). In 2000, he questioned the whole hype surrounding the “African Renaissance”. He argued:

*There are many kinds of African identity, and no one single essentialist definition.....
I am an old enemy of slogans and unearned labels
the African Renaissance is not an ideology, it is not
a series of rules by which this continent can be made
into a success. It is the ability to recognize positive
trends and to push them forward.*

(Hadland 2000:4)

Ndebele has contended that part of apartheid’s power was its ability to reinforce stereotypes and simplify perceptions. The challenge to both the intellectual and the relatively new democracy is to rejoin what apartheid has torn apart. He is emphatic that South Africans need to break down stereotypes, explode myths, humanize marginalized communities (Hadland 2000:4). Ndebele has often repeated that there “is a need to change from the rhetoric of oppression to that of process and exploration” (Le May 2000:19).

Ndebele has achieved this very aim in *The Cry* when he reveals “new worlds” in his caricature of the fictional South African black women in the text. Ndebele felt the burden of being in exile from one’s native country and the feeling of disconnectedness it induces. Although

exile has many advantages, like being able to distance oneself from the situation at hand, and critically assessing conflict without becoming consumed in the 'one' and the 'other' stance that was perpetuated in the apartheid context there still remains a overriding need to reclaim one's place at home.

Ndebele, by his physical exile, has a sensitive understanding of the exile that women endure. They are forced into an internal exile, denying their free selves. Women thus become creatures with a fractured sense of 'self' and 'love'. It is quite apparent then, why Ndebele has chosen to explore the many myths surrounding the marginalized black "feminine" community and to challenge the paradox of gender bias in South African society, in his intuitive handling of *The Cry*.

Chapter Four

GENDER, IDENTITY AND EXILE

*At the edge
Of a world
Beyond my eyes
Beautiful
I know Exile
Is always
Green with hope_____*
*The River
We cannot cross
Flows forever*

Samuel Menache (1986:27)

In this chapter, there will be an evaluation of issues affecting gender, identity and the concept of exile in *The Cry*. A discussion on Western feminism, African feminism and womanism is a necessary precursor to understanding gender relations in the text. Analysing gender in the South African context, demands an overview of postcolonial theory and the effect of colonization, race and apartheid on the 'other'. Ndebele's use of postmodernism is a fitting device, to show the fragmentation of the feminine spirit.

This chapter will endeavour to uncover the techniques used from the postmodern paradigm to represent the oppression of women. Ama Ata Aidoo (1977) used an experimental fusing of poetry and prose in

her book *Our Sister Kilroy*. She has declared that there is a need for black women to be represented in ways that challenge the norms of Western production. Ndebele has successfully used the PM condition to refashion and *re-present* black women, almost holding up a mirror for women to reflect upon their decisions relating to love, sex, empowerment and a myriad other valid issues.

The concept of gender is an ambiguous concept in theory – some writers define gender as biological sex, while others see gender as a cultural attribute. For the purpose of this dissertation, the definition used by Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) seems appropriate:

***Sex** is understood as a person's biological maleness or femaleness, while **gender** refers to non-physiological aspects of sex, a group of attributes and /or behaviours, shaped by society and culture, that are defined by society and culture, that are defined as appropriate for the male sex or the female sex. Gender is not a given at birth; only the actual biological sex is. Gender identity then begins to intervene through the individual's developing self-conception and experience of whether he or she is male or female.*
(1997:16)

Women have been in spiritual exile in our patriarchal culture for a very long time. They have been cast as a 'lesser' other, in Western, Eastern and African discourse by religion, language, culture and

literature. In the modern world, the influence of the Judeo-Christian and Pauline doctrines have embodied women as the fallen “Eve” who was responsible for the demise of humankind. Since then, women have come to be subjugated by patriarchal systems of thought, control and ideology. Ndebele in *The Cry* explains :

*Society is that human entity created by **men** with **compliance** of women. Men have made the laws and prescribed conditions for breaking them with impunity as long as they benefited from the situation.*
(2003:3)

Ndebele, then, is fully aware of how patriarchy has established rules unilaterally for women. Society has been **created** by men, and has unwittingly become a tool of mastery with which women are subordinated. Ndebele has transposed Penelope from Homer’s *Illiad*, and imported her into his text, a situation common in PM texts. This transmigration of a mythical figure from the Western world is however depicted as someone who has much in common with African women. This universal application of women’s oppression exposes to the feminist discourse that there is much commonality for different cultures and societies. Ndebele explains that women are “doomed never to be trusted, and then finally subjected to **total**

control...she becomes a thing-person without agency" (2003:4).

As is a common thread in most PM discourse, time in the text is fluid and adaptable. In *The Cry*, Ndebele (2003:3-4) advances swiftly from the Ancient Greek period, to the sixteenth century . He quotes from Beldesar Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*:

For since women are very imperfect creatures, and of little or no worth compared with men, and since of themselves they were not able to do any worthy thing, it was necessary, through shame and fear of infamy, to put a curb on them which would give them good quality. And it was chastity that seemed more needful for them than any other quality, in order for us to be certain of our offspring... (2003:4)

Ndebele conducts a historical analysis of the oppression of women, during successive periods, alluding to reasons for the treatment of women in the modern period. From his focus on the sixteenth century European context, Ndebele migrates through the semi-permeable membrane of time and space, to the South African context, to investigate the plight of black women during the colonial occupation, through the industrial expansion and the discovery of gold and diamonds.

He introduces the first descendant of Penelope from this period –

Mannete Mofolo, a rural woman, whose husband leaves his family behind in Lesotho, to become a migrant worker on the mines of Johannesburg. Time is flexible as Ndebele thereafter proceeds to the pre-apartheid period. The second descendant of Penelope is introduced as an East Rand township dweller. She is Delisiwe S'khosana, an educated domestic science teacher, who is paying for her husband's medical education in Scotland. Ndebele's third descendant hails from the apartheid period. She is Mamello Molete, educated at the University of the North, who is abandoned by a husband who flees into exile, and later becomes a political prisoner. The fourth descendant is Marara Baloyi, a woman in the apartheid period, whose husband is constantly unfaithful. Ndebele also allocates a large portion of the text to Winnie Mandela. At first the Four Descendants of Penelope play a *game* during which they share an *ibandla* session with Winnie. Winnie is finally given a chance to respond to the *ibandla* and try to answer their questions.

Ndebele shows the evolution of women's status in society, beginning with Penelope who had very little power, to sixteenth century women who were totally subjugated, advancing to the late nineteenth to

early twentieth century, to investigate the status of rural women. His other characters belong in the twentieth century and to the urban context. The text terminates in the twenty-first century in the year 2002 with a gathering of all the women in the text including Penelope, Winnie, Mannete, Delisiwe, Marara and Mamello. Ndebele's focus is on how and why women love and wait for men who are absent.

Ndebele has been very insistent in declaring that *The Cry* is not a feminist project. It is the belief of this writer that Ndebele's refusal of a feminist label lies in the negative representation of feminism, in both the Western discourse and African discourse, over the last few decades. An analysis of some of the possible reasons for Ndebele's dissenting opinions would perhaps be in order.

According to Femi Ojo-Ade (1983:79), feminism breeds the hate and bitterness that underlies women writers' complaints about male chauvinism, 'extremism' is the 'hallmark' of their feminism (Makuchi Abfah-Abbenyi 1997:16). Emecheta has alluded to the fact that some African women see feminism as a form of imperialism with a

woman's face, an imperialism that has come to dictate views about African or 'Third World' women. Madhu Kishwar, in her essay, "Why I do not call myself a Feminist", assesses the women's struggle in India. She explains:

The general flow of ideas and of labels is one way – from west to east, in the overall context of a highly imbalanced power relation. Feminism, as appropriated and defined by the West, has too often become a tool of cultural imperialism. (1990:2-8)

Aihwa Ong seems to echo the same sentiments as Ojo-Ade and Kishwar. She explicated:

*When western feminists look overseas, they frequently seek to establish **their** authority on the backs of non-Western women, determining for them the meanings and goals of their lives. If, from the feminist perspective there can be no shared experience with persons who stand for the 'other', the claim to a common kinship with non-Western women is at best, tenuous, at worst, non-existent.* (1988:79-93)

Western feminists believe it is their privilege to empower women from the Third World, but what they fail to realize is that, before feminism became a movement with a global political agenda, African women, both theorized and practiced what for them was crucial to the development of women, although little terminology was used to describe what these women were already doing and still continue to

practice (Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi 1997:13). Some evidence of this is the Women's March to the Union Buildings in South Africa, on August 9, 1955.

Many African women, like Chikwenye Ogunyemi, have substituted the word 'feminism' with the word 'womanism'. Trin Minh-ha, in an interview with Pratibha Parmar (1990:65) insists that 'Third World' women must refuse labels "because it is crucial to keep open the space of naming in feminism." So Africans have to modify this term if they, like Ndebele, refuse to be labeled "feminist". This is especially crucial as African women do not separate one form of oppression from another, they do not highlight certain issues and marginalize others.

Meese (1990:65) agrees with this view of African women and argues that the struggles against racism, classism and sexism must be simultaneous rather than serial. This writer will draw on a synthesis of both African and Western feminist discourse, to discuss issues of gender and identity.

According to Luce Irigaray (1993:37), women are subject to the Darwinian model, and the Pavlovian model. The former follows the principle of 'survival of the fittest' and the struggle of being stronger than one's adversaries. The latter refers to social conditioning, by the use of patriarchal ideologies and norms and values. This social conditioning results in a form of 'cultural amnesia' for women. It is necessary to conduct a review of how women have come to acquire this 'amnesia' if one is to understand why the women in *The Cry* allow the men in their lives to treat them so unfairly.

Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's (in Easthope and McGowan 1998:30) concept of *hegemony* and the influence of a ruling group, the domination of women can be explained:

The supremacy of a social group (male), manifesting itself in two ways – 'domination' and as 'intellectual moral leadership'. A social group (male) dominates antagonistic (females) groups which it tends to liquidate or to subjugate.

Hegemony, then, specifies ideology, as ways a ruling group, bloc, class or sex must rule by winning consent. Louis Althusser analysed ideology, as functioning across a range of institutions like religion,

education, family, law, political parties, trade unions, media, culture and so on. Male hegemony has achieved its status, by dominating these ideological state apparatuses. Women's identities have been influenced by patriarchal culture and social and ideological indoctrination. The advent of industrial capitalism and modernism, further entrenched the domination of male-centred enterprise so that they controlled the wealth and the power in society.

In *The Cry*, it is the male of the species who goes out to find work in the mines, can aspire to become a doctor, or become involved in political protest and business. Women in the text, begin by occupying a lower status while they still 'wait' for their 'absent' husbands. However, when they are faced with the realities of their situation, they cease control of their destinies – Delisiwe opens up a spaza shop, Mannete also opens up a rural store, Winnie Mandela may have let power consume her, but she also gained prominence through the sheer force of character and survival.

Luce Irigaray (in Felman 1993:22-23) draws on Derrida's critical deconstruction of Heideggerian metaphysics; which is premised on

'logocentrism', that is, the *presence-to-itself* of a *centre* (known as God, Origin, Source, Truth, Being or Reason). This centres the world and subordinates all other elements of the same ontological system, in a hierarchical manner. Thus the 'metaphysical logic of dichotomous oppositions which dominate philosophical thought (presence/absence; being/nothingness; truth/error; same/other; identity/difference)' is a subtle mechanism of hierarchization, establishing a valorization of a 'positive' pole and a repressive subordination of all 'negativity'. Thus women have become theoretically subordinated to masculinity and is regarded as '**his** opposite, **his** other, the negative of the positive, and not in her own right, different, other, otherness itself' (Felman 1993:22-23).

This phallagocentric economy is emphasized in *The Cry*.

*Modernism, in its ever-expanding global manifestation took its own form in South Africa. It took the form of massive **male** labour migrations to the mines and factories in South Africa. In the process the entire subcontinent witnessed massive human movement....imperialist hunger for labour, men from all parts of Southern Africa left on voyages of discovery to Kimberly (the Diamond city) and Johannesburg (the Golden city). (2003:5)*

*Freedom, these days, often comes at you as dominance.
It may be declared seductively to conceal subjection.
'Free speech', 'free markets', 'free access', 'free passage'
'free information', free this, free that, according to the
specifications of a white man's history of desire and
dominance.* (2003:47)

Imperialism and capitalism combined with the quest for modernism and entrenched patriarchy in the South African landscape. It was an economy that dictated roles for men and women. In *The Cry* Ndebele explains the role of a man in the colonial period: "*A **man** has to take care of his wife and children. A **man** has to feed his family, buy them clothes, and build a decent house for them* (2003:8)". A woman's role is cast as that of a nurturer, mother, wife:

*She thought warmly and protectively about the
mafao she had prepared for him. He will eat on the
way whenever he gets hungry, the clothes in his
suitcases were clean. So was his blanket. He will
be warm until the sun comes up, well on his way.
The halo of her memories will keep him from danger.*
(2003:9)

Foucault, earlier in his career, explained that ideology and science combined into a single conceptualization of discursive and social practices as the operation of 'power/knowledge'. Foucault's procedure has the advantage of making visible the work of ideology, at intimately lived levels of (feminine) experience, that had previously

remained unchallenged (Easthope and McGowan 1998). Foucault's theory of discourse is a valuable tool that feminists can use to scrutinize the oppression of the past, but with caution. Foucault, as was mentioned previously, saw the individual as a mere intersection of multiple discourses; however, extra-discursive factors like free will and self-determination have been overlooked. Although women have often been portrayed as disempowered, powerless creatures, at many junctures in history, in *The Cry* the power and resolve of women is discernible. The four descendants, together with Penelope and Winnie Mandela, demonstrate the extent of their inner strength, as they overcome the loneliness and pain of abandonment and 'going it alone'. They are victorious at the end of the text, they have reclaimed their power.

Through history, sexual difference has been women's greatest enemy and also her greatest weapon. Women have often used sex to exercise power. Felman declares :

Sexual difference is at once what separates and what attracts and brings together human beings, it draws us toward each other, even while it estranges, threatens, and divides us. (1993:2)

Simone de Beauvoir (1949:2) has commented in her book *The Second Sex*, that 'one is not born a woman, one becomes a woman'. Society sets certain parameters for women's accepted behaviours. Surpassing the difference of culture, language and race; women have through 'difference of body' become the 'second sex'. In *The Cry*, a woman is expected to be strong yet chaste. Lejone Mofolo thinks: "Mannete is a strong woman. She will yield to no temptation; this mother of his children" (2003:10).

Women's lives have been dictated to by social rules. She has to be morally virtuous and steadfast in character. Her life and actions are under constant public surveillance. She is judged according to the pre-determined social, religious and cultural norms of her time. Her identity is thus constructed and monitored by the external world. Throughout *The Cry*, the descendants speak about the vigilant eye of society:

Penelope: (2003:2) *Ah!....Somebody has married our much-courted queen. The heartless creature! Too fickle to keep patient watch over the great house till her lawful husband should come back!*

Mannete: (2003:12) *At the same time, she contemplates the limits of her independence as she sees the eyes of her rural neighbours on her.*

Delisiwe: (2003:18) *Of course the world will always know the mother of the child, for a woman never escapes the messages of her body. In her loneliness she hears the endless noises of questions from an entire township turned detective. She carries with her, the noises, until they fill her ears with the sensation of a head being held under water*

(2003:46) *The newspaper I was exposed to was **social gossip**. It shames you without destroying you.*

Marara: (2003:31) *Proof of infidelity is the aim of society's interest in the life of a woman who waits for an absent husband. If they cannot find the proof, they will invent it.*

From the preceding extracts, it is obvious that women's identities have been shaped by patriarchal society, which has dictated to women what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable. Mary Maboreke (1991:228-229) describes gender-based relationships in black South African women:

Africans, in general and African women in particular, identify themselves through a maze of relationships; namely; mother to so-and-so; daughter to so-and-so; wife of so-and-so etc; in which so-and-so is always a a man. African women are never viewed as separate individuals but rather as appendages of a man.... African women feel this powerlessness when removed from the family wheel, and so attach themselves to the

family organism even more tightly....Societies such as ours are tightly structured, stratified, hedged in by prescriptions, by the primacy of the communal good over individual rights and interests. (1991:228-229)

A similar explanation is given by Thandabantu Nhlapho (Coullie in Daymond 1996) :

The African value system does not perceive women as separate entities but always as adjuncts to the family. A woman's personhood is lost in the group much more than a man's is subsumed under the the so-called community principle. (1991:120)

What is made quite clear, is that women's communal identity, in African culture is given priority over the individual identity.

Ndebele has explored many issues affecting the 'feminine', in *The Cry*, one of which is 'naming'. Mamello explicates : "*Its me. Mamello Molete, aka, Patience Mamello Letlala, aka Patience Molete, aka Mamello Patience Molete, aka Patience Letlala-Molete, aka.....*

(2003:65). Mamello is forced into a nervous breakdown when her husband informs her that he is never returning to her. This demonstrates how women come to fear change, especially after a considerable period of waiting and expectation. Florence Stratton (1990:120) has tried to explain the embodiment of women in male-

dominated society:

Whether she is elevated to the status of a goddess or reduced to the level of a prostitute, the designation is degrading, for he does the naming, whereas her experience is trivialized and distorted...

(1990:120)

Stratton is trying to elucidate that women have been named and categorized according to masculine rules and agendas. If a woman is beautiful, she holds a position of influence and elevation, only because the male of the species has determined these boundaries.

Aspects of women's identities then, are counterfeit, because the layers of oppression are buried really deep. To understand the development of the historical traces on a woman requires an archaeological excavation, into the entire pre-and-postcolonial historiography, that has configured the black South African women's psyche. There is an even greater imperative for these women in the post-apartheid context to conduct a thorough inventory of the traces of concealed, subliminal oppression by the multiple agents of their subjugation, like colonization, patriarchy, race, sex, class.

Ndebele has chosen to write about all of these situations affecting women in the global context, and also the bewildering South African situation, not just on a whim, but to engage the reader in a dialogue about the question of women, to impel a critical revision, on the part of the reader, of one's own interaction in the subordination of women.

Ogundipe-Leslie (in Gqola 2001:12) has characterized African women, as those who metaphorically carry six mountains on their backs. By this, she draws an analogy between 'the burden of women's workload and oppression' and the 'six mountains'. This situation proves remarkably true in *The Cry*. Mannete Mofolo, when she is abandoned by Lejone Mofolo, has to shoulder the burden of raising her children and becoming the sole breadwinner (2003:85). Delisiwe S'Khosana, works to put her husband through medical school in Scotland, while single-handedly raising her two children, over a period of twelve years (2003:14). Mannete Molete waits for ten long years for her husband to return, first from exile, and then from prison (2003:20). Marara Baloyi is left alone for most of her life

to care for home and family while her husband philanders and squanders away their savings (2003:30).

'Sex' is also a highlighted issue in *The Cry*. Ndebele explores the notion of faithfulness in a partner. He explains, "A wife must be eternally faithful to her husband" (2003:2); women are 'sexual merchandise.....primal male fear is the uncertainty whether his child is really is'(2003:3). The only reason Penelope has gained a position of prominence in Greek mythology is because she is the "ultimate symbol of a wife 'so loyal and true'" (2003:2). Castiglione inferred that men have subjugated women to "be certain of our offspring" (2003:4). Jacques Lacan speaks of gender as determined by one's position as subject or object of desire, that "*as is true for all women... the problem of her condition is fundamentally that of accepting herself as an object of desire*" (1982:68).

Lacan has highlighted the role of sexuality as one of the most obvious defining characteristics separating men and women.

Rosalind Coward (1983:285) has explained that:

*Women's subordination is secured because identity is constructed as **sexual identity**, and sexual identity is the mechanism by which men and women combine in a unit that subordinates woman.*

In *The Cry*, all the women have, through **cultural amnesia**, a term borrowed from Luce Irigaray (1993:41), become involved in an unspoken collusion with the men in their lives. Ndebele, as the narrative voice, interrogates the lives and actions of Penelope, Winnie and the Four Descendants, to determine their reason for waiting for their absent spouses. He refers to this waiting as "*a postponement without duration*" (2003:15), "*that space without dimension*" (2003:14), "*absence without duration*" (2003:6), "*endurance without consolation*" (2003:6), "*indeterminate space of waiting*" (2003:6). He explores the possibility of women remaining faithful, during that long absence.

For some of the women, this was possible, like Penelope, Mannete, Mamello and Marara; but for Delisiwe and Winnie, their need for love and sexual intimacy was too overpowering as Delisiwe indulges in two affairs, one with her son's friend and another with

Themba and becomes pregnant with Themba's child (2003:17).

Winnie too gives in to her need for love and intimacy by engaging in affairs, two of which is alluded to in the text – that with Dali Mpofu (2003:44), and Peter Magubane (2003:75). Ndebele explores the psyche of a woman who, while waiting, decides to take a bite of the forbidden fruit.

When you are waiting, you know the meaning of desire: the desire to be the only woman (even in an illicit relationship); the desire for secrecy and the pleasure of remaining uncaught; the desire to prolong intimate moments beyond time and circumstances, when in the midst of stolen moments the public persona completely disappears and you feel truly freed ... (2003:44)

Both Winnie and Delisiwe know the loneliness of a very long separation from their husbands; for Winnie it was twenty-seven years and for Delisiwe it was fourteen years. The burden of waiting and the scrutiny of society can be a huge encumbrance. Ndebele explains why Nelson Mandela's image was never tarnished by gossip or infidelity:

Your husband trained himself to live without you and retained his transcendent dignity. Prison protected him and transformed him into a saint. He had no women flaunting themselves before him. You had countless suitors: men willing to risk life in the abyss between fame and perfidy. (2003:44)

Nelson Mandela retained his aura of purity by his exclusion from society through incarceration, which afforded him unfair advantage over Winnie.

Ndebele, through the character of Delisiwe, explores the sexual act, from a feminine stance, and how the penis becomes a weapon of suppression and oppression:

'Ukufeba'. Fucking. Botekatse. What a word!
*Every language has it. It evokes a purely physical
 act between a man and a woman. A one-night
 stand. A quickie. A tsa-tsa. A rape. Sex without
 commitment. A trivialized act of rampant pro-
 creation carried without ritual. A strong physical
 inclination for a man to pump away and expel sperm
 and release a desire outside of constraint. Spent of
 sperm, he rises and walks away buttoning
 up, a machine suddenly without value.*

(2003:45)

Ndebele explains that the 'walking away' of a man leaves a woman feeling used and abandoned, 'longing for the legitimizing, reassuring gestures of companionship' (2003:45). The same emotions are associated with a woman who is left behind while her husband goes off to find adventure, work, study, indulge in an illicit affair, flee into exile or become a political prisoner. They leave behind a woman who

has become accustomed to a certain kind of loving and intimacy. On departing for a considerable period, 'an absence without duration', the woman is left pondering the relationship, longing for affirmation of some sort. In most cases, none is forthcoming, and the woman feels abandoned, a 'used object' (2003:45), but one who is trapped within the confines of a marriage and the all-pervading spirit of restriction placed on her world. The wife who is left at home is expected to behave like an automaton, and to learn to exist without sex. Ndebele (2003:46) explores this notion:

*Sometimes, of course, a woman desires a fuck. I have felt sometimes that I used the fantasies of being in love to justify the real desire for a fuck. It comes from a deep feeling of **disconnectedness**. Perhaps many women who wait know this feeling.*

Ndebele, through Delisiwe, explains to the reader that women also feel the compulsion of sexual desire, but history has made black women especially believe that they do not have the right to declare themselves free to embrace their sexual desires openly, without being typecast a 'bitch' or a 'whore' by the male fraternity and the omniscient eye of society.

Delisiwe bitterly explores the reason for women clinging to a dead

relationship. "*Why does a woman cling to a relationship that brings her pain and doom? It must have something to do with her intimate exposure to someone she senses does not value that intimacy.*"

(2003:49). Ndebele reveals a great truth in the simplicity of his assessment. Women value intimacy with a man, on a very different level to a man. Once she has allowed him into the intimate circle of her sexual self, she establishes some emotional connection to him. This is not the case for a man – he could indulge in sex as an act of self-fulfillment, with no emotional attachment. A woman feels compelled to prolong her pain because if she lets go, she feels cheapened and exposed. In other words, she would rather punish herself than acknowledge that the man felt nothing for her.

African women are further subordinated because of the African culture and traditions. They are relegated to an inferior status, in a culture that demands fertility and respect for the extended family (Clayton 1988:4). In *The Cry*, Mamello is unable to have a child and when her husband is released from prison, he abandons her to marry a white woman, with whom he has a 'coloured' child. Mamello feels

that her husband refused to return to her because of her sterility. In the African context, a woman's greatest value is her ability to have children, without this power she is regarded as a useless entity and cast aside for a new wife in the largely 'polygamous' culture.

Luce Irigaray(1993:46) challenges this notion of phallogratic self-centredness. She explains that it is an anomaly that "*women, who have given life and growth to the other within themselves, are excluded from the order of the same which men alone set up.*"

Irigaray explodes the myth of man's so-called superiority, by her argument that women give life and being to the 'other', yet this 'other' grows up and is expected to preside over her life.

Raymond Williams (1969) described an exile as: "*absolute as the rebel in rejecting the way of life of his society, but instead of fighting it he goes away*"(1969:89). He goes on to explain that the self-exile:

*could, if he chose, live at ease in his society, but to do so would be to **deny his personal reality**. Sometimes he goes away, on principle, but as often he stays, yet still, on principle, separate.....There is great tension in this condition, for theoretically, at least, the self-exile wants society to change, so that he can start belonging to it..* (1969:90)

It is the view of this writer that most women, irrespective of race or culture, have been forced into self-exile by the dictates of phallogocentric societies of the past, and in some instances, in the present. Subjugation forces the 'other' into exile, if the self is under threat from the hegemonic forces. In the case of women, her status as the 'lesser other' with relatively insignificant value, has pushed her into the shadows. The free woman weighed down by her oppression has fled into internal exile. It is imperative to understand the inducement that resulted in the free woman disappearing into the shadows of her inner country. What are some of the factors that have buried a woman's identity, leaving behind a submissive, consenting individual that has condoned denigration and disrespect at the hands of colonialists, husbands, language and culture?

Women due to her biological sex and difference of body is embodied as a receptacle for a man's pleasure. She is regarded as a desirable body to be dominated by the phallus. This phallic principle, the commanding erect penis has assumed immense power. The field of psychology has analysed the differences of bodies and how they construct identity. Sigmund Freud has drawn on sexual difference in

explaining the development of the differing male and female personalities. Even in literature, the pen is a symbol of an erect penis, previously according men only the privilege and the intellect to write and create.

The constant bombardment of these powerful masculine symbols in our culture, has forced women to retreat into themselves as an act of self-preservation. Phyllis Chesler has analysed the link between women and madness:

Women, more than men, and in greater numbers than their existence in their general population would predict, are involved in 'careers' as psychiatric patients....For a woman to be healthy she must 'adjust' to and accept the behavioural norms for her sex even though these kind of behaviours are generally regarded as less socially desirable....The ethic of mental health is masculine in our culture.
(1973:68-69)

Women, due to their self-imposed exile, have displayed symptoms of schizophrenia, madness, depression and psychic fragmentation, more so than men. Women, in the past, were culturally impotent (without a penis) and politically castrated. Yet in all of this male-dominated discourse, there seems to have been a deliberate 'amnesia' in operation – the uterus or 'womb' is a far more powerful symbol than

an erect member. The womb is a place of sanctuary and protection for the developing *male* or *female* foetus, yet because the womb was a part of the 'other', it was given little representation. Sigmund Freud (in Felman 1993:1) in an explanation of the psyche of women had this to say:

*The great question that has never been answered and which I have not been able to answer, despite thirty years of research into the feminine soul is, **'What does a woman want?'***

A person in exile finds it difficult to find the correct words to vocalize their deeply entrenched fears and insecurities. Black women, especially, have been silenced for a prolonged part of human history, because of her capacity for emotion, love and devotion. These qualities are regarded as 'weaknesses' by masculine culture, yet 'logocentrism' and religion demand such love and devotion from all of humankind. When the woman in 'exile' finally speaks, she is marginalized by masculine culture as 'radical' or 'troublemaker'. Helene Cixous (extract from *Sorties* 1986) explains (in McGowan and Easthope 1998).

*When 'the repressed' of their culture and their society come back, it is with an explosive return, which is **absolutely** shattering, staggering, overturning with a force never let loose before on the scale of the most tremendous repressions, for at the end of the Age of the Phallus, women will have been either wiped out or heated to the white-hot fire throughout their **deafening dumb history**, they have lived in dreams, **embodied but still deadly silent**, in silences, in voiceless rebellions.*

To reclaim one's identity requires such an outcry, as Cixous explains, a revolution of one's whole thinking and being. This emergence from exile of the liberated female occurred in western feminism decades ago. For African women, they are still in the process of claiming their independence. Different societies evolve at different paces. Western feminists have tried to accelerate the development of African women but they fail to grasp that African women do not have to overcome the mere difference of sex and class, but they have to traverse multiple obstacles like sex, race, class, culture. Each African context is not homogeneous but is a minefield of difference, where survival is a greater hurdle than feminine liberation. Many of these African women still exist in exile from their liberated selves.

Postcolonial theory has emphasized the extent to which cultural

identities have been created by colonization. Edward Said (2003) is one of the most noted theorists to show how identities of the colonized were shaped by colonialism. Comaroff and Comaroff explain:

The essence of colonization inheres less in political overrule than in seizing and transforming 'others' by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing and interacting with them on terms not of their choosing, in making them into pliant objects and silenced subjects.
(1991:15)

They explain how literature, language and interaction changes the identities of the colonized without any overt display. Spivak, in discussing the wider role of the human subject in history explains:

That which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language and so on. Different knottings and configurations of these strands, are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances. (1988:341)

Postcolonial women make use of multiple identities. Minh-ha (in Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi 1997:32) contends that the gender-as difference is a story that places a woman in exile, as insiders and outsiders in an arena of negotiation:

The moment the insider steps outside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out.

Both Spivak and Comaroff and Comaroff, allude to the role of colonization in the production of a colonized subject. This can be made relevant to the feminine subject as well. She has been the template on whom a matrix of differing discourses have been focused. For this matrix of varying configurations to be undone and deciphered will require a very painful and invasive excavation. "Woman" has been defined by her biological sex. In *The Cry*, all the female characters live out their existence unquestioningly, feeling compelled to follow the dictates of culture and society. They strive to be better wives, mothers, lovers, breadwinners, freedom fighters, daughters-in-law, because that is cultural and ideological indoctrination. It takes Ndebele's PM *ibandla* to open up a dialogue for the women to re-acquaint themselves with their true selves and to probe the internal conflicts raging within them with regard to self, society, morality and sexuality.

An inventory of all the literature, viewpoints, theories of feminism and womanism dictates that some resolution must be achieved on the issue of gender, that is not further divisive but allows for synthesis between the sexes, while still respecting the differences.

Teresa de Laurentis (in McClintock 1991) urges for:

*A subject constituted in gender to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations, as subjects en-gendered in the experience of race and class, as well as sexual relations; **a subject, therefore, not unified, but rather multiple**, and not so much divided as 'contradicted'. Gender is thus the representation of changing social relations: **it represents an individual for a class. The subject of feminism is one whose definition or conception is in progress and cannot be found in identity alone** but rather in the politics of alternative social, political and communicative forms, in political practices of self-representation that illuminate the contradictory, multiple construction of subjectivity.*

(1991:229)

The identity of gender, race, class cannot be analysed from a homogeneous psychology of identity alone, because there are multiple differences among women themselves (like sexual preferences, religion, level of education, poverty...). Stuart Hall (1994:394) elucidates that cultural identities should not be regarded as constant and eternal:

*Cultural (Gender) Identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they **undergo constant transformation**. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power.*

Renee Green (in Bhabha 1994:3) used architecture literally as a reference, to display and displace the binary logic through which identities of difference are constructed:

The Attic	Stairwell	Boiler Room
Heaven	Liminal Space	Hell
Higher	Pathway between Higher And Lower	Lower

The stairwell is the connective tissue between higher and lower, black and white, man and woman, public and private, past and present, internal and external, psyche and social. This stairway or interstitial passage prevents identities from 'settling into primordial polarities' but opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that 'entertains difference without an imposed or assumed hierarchy'.

Focusing only on difference leads to divisions, but if one embraces a

borderline or 'in-between' position, there is a confluence of hybridity, where there is no 'one' and the 'other', but 'one' and 'one' existing within an egalitarian framework of multiple identities.

Chapter Five

Games: The Postmodern Condition

It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices – historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self which cuts across symbolic systems while using them.

Michel Foucault (1984:340)

Literature is a game with tacit conventions; to violate them partially or totally is one of the many joys (one of many obligations) of the game, whose limits are unknown.

Jorge Luis Borges

This chapter focuses on the aspect of games in the text. Since the text is being read as a postmodern treatise, it becomes essential to conduct a thorough investigation of the postmodern condition and the 'games' played on all frontiers, both in and through the text.

Games are played at various levels: at the level of PM theory, fiction, language, type of narrative, characters, gender, sex, psychology, marriage, infidelity, political systems and so on.

"Games are engagements for amusement or leisure, often involving more intellectual skill than physical activity" (MS Encarta 2003).

Literary games are common in PM texts and demand a critical overview in the context of "*Cry*" because Ndebele often mentions games in the text. It was Eric Berne's *Games People Play* (1964) that first drew attention to the way 'games' are played by people and discourses in society. It is possible to describe literature, especially PM fiction as a 'game'. Hutchinson (1983:4) quotes Johan Huizinga's definition of 'literary games':

It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space, according to fixed rules.

Hutchinson explains that the reader may be drawn into a literary game of which he remains totally oblivious until he suddenly realizes the significance of certain details. Literary games are also self-conscious in nature, and break away from the norms of realist writing. Hutchinson (1983:13) quotes the concepts 'writerly', rather than 'readerly' used by Roland Barthes, to describe such texts. The aim of a 'writerly' text is "not to encourage *passivity* on the part of the reader, but rather to draw him fully into the process of 'reading' that he actually participates in the production of the text".

Ndebele uses "myth" as a game, with which he mesmerizes the reader. Employing myth as part of a text provides the writer with a way to prefigure the basic plot for the reader. In *The Cry*, Ndebele uses the myth of Odysseus and Penelope, as a prefiguration. Here he begins a short retelling of a small part of this ancient myth, which he uses as a framework that covers the text. Penelope is used as a 'universal' model on which his game is constructed. The characters that Ndebele creates are all derived from his discussion of Penelope, and they become known as the Descendants of Penelope. How does myth become a game in a literary text? The role of myth is to entice the reader into a "speculative situation" (Hutchinson 1983:75) that once established "the reader is increasingly drawn into the search for further mythical allusions and into the quest for relevance".

Wolfgang Iser (1972:293), employed a phenomenological approach to the reading process when encountering myth:

As we read, we oscillate to a greater or lesser degree between the building and breaking of illusions. In a process of trial and error, we organize and reorganize the various data offered us by the text...We look forward we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their non-fulfillment we question, we muse, we accept, we reject...

Hans Blumenberg (in Cornell 1993:108) provides an insightful view of the use of myth in story-telling:

Myths are stories that are distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation. These two characteristics make myths transmissible by tradition: their constancy produces the attraction of recognizing them in artistic or ritual representation as well as their variability produces the attraction of trying out new and personal means of presenting them...Myths are not like "holy texts", which cannot be altered by one iota.

Myth is an important way in which the feminine achieves significance in *The Cry*. Significance is myth's capacity to provide symbols, images and metaphors (as in the characters of Penelope and Odysseus) that gives us an inspirational and shared environment. "Myth's constancy allows us to recognize ourselves in the great mythic figures of the feminine and to engage with them as touchstones for a feminine identity" (Cornell 1993:109).

The story of Penelope runs through the text, and the reader is constantly trying to draw parallels between Penelope and her African Descendants. This game is ongoing until the PM effect transmigrates Penelope into the year 2002 and she is brought into the text, a living character who interacts with the Four Descendants and Winnie

Mandela, at the conclusion of the text. This game shatters all conventions and is a game of surprises.

Ludwig Wittgenstein elucidated that words are like tools. They serve different functions at different junctures. This lead Wittgenstein to coin the concept of “language games”, and to conclude that people play different language games. Many modern philosophies legitimize their truth-claims on the grounds of ‘metanarratives’ which are widely accepted stories about knowledge and the world. Lyotard (in Klages 2003:3) argued that in PM, these metanarratives no longer work to legitimize truth-claims. He surmised that with PM, people are constantly developing new ‘language games’ – that do not make claims to absolute truth but celebrates ever-changing relationships.

Creating a work of fiction is an intellectual game that is enacted in the mind of a writer. This writer brings into the process of text creation unique experiences, interpretations and expectations of history, circumstances and language. Ndebele was a product of a time and a system that impressed upon him the need to question the

norms of society and of literature production. Creating order out of chaos in the South African context is absurd, making sense of the carnivalesque apartheid legacy calls for a new approach that fully embraces chaos and disorder at its core.

The modern period had to give way to a new paradigm of thought. Each paradigmatic theory imposes a different set of operating principles. Postmodernism, as a literary theory, was established as an alternative to modernism, where the rules of engagement were fundamentally about order, rationality and rationalization and creating order out of chaos (Klages 2003:1). Modernist societies therefore rely on continually setting a binary opposition between 'order' and 'disorder'. In western culture, this disorder becomes the 'other', thus "non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-hygienic, non-rational" (Klages 2003:2)... all become part of disorder and have to be obliterated.

PM writers sought to enter the game of fiction to shatter all rules, to question the binary contrasts of modernism and to establish a new game which embraced multiple realities and possibilities. Brian

McHale (1987:5) suggested that there was a shift in the dominant tendency of twentieth century fiction, because the modernist novel of this period was concerned with epistemological questions (dealing with knowledge and interpretation). McHale suggests that this epistemological concern has given way in the PM epoch to an ontological concern, which focuses on nature of being and existence.

The ontological character of PM novels is concerned with creating autonomous textual worlds (Connor 1997:131). In the PM game, writers themselves disagree about concepts and terms; Umberto Eco (1979:234) calls these worlds *subworlds*, while Pavel prefers *narrative domains*, and McHale prefers *ontological worlds*.

Linda Hutcheon (1989:14) uses the term *historiographic metafiction* to reflect on works of fiction which knowingly reflect on their own status as fiction, foregrounding the positionality of the writer and the whole act of writing, as disrupting the conventions of the novel.

They accomplish this, by taking as their 'ostensible subject, characters and events from known history' (Hutcheon 1999:), subjecting them to filtering, distortion and fictionalization, to produce

a fictional clone. Hutcheon indicates that the purpose of this fiction is to expose the fictionality of history itself. Since all known history can only be transmitted by words and representations (oral or written), history then is writing and amenable to fabrication. Thus there can be no true history; history is a language game played by the chroniclers.

PM allows writers reflexivity to create their own virtual worlds, within which they are the game-masters and they set the parameters for their worlds. In *The Cry*, Ndebele has produced historiographic metafiction. He has imported into his text well known characters from history like Penelope and Winnie. Baudrillard explained that there is no original, only copies or *simulacra*. Ndebele has used such a virtual reality characterization in his text - Winnie is a mere simulation for his Four Descendants to interact with. Ndebele draws on actual historical documentation and historical evidence. As the *quasi-divine* creator of this unique ontological world, he is at liberty to play games in this subversive universe, where he is the puppeteer. He tugs at the reader, to embrace this game of illusion with: "*Do you remember...*"(2003:1); "*Let's ponder further...*"

(2003:3); "*Let's consider...*"(2003:5).

In Part One of the text, Ndebele proceeds to create the ontological world's of each Descendant, noting that each is from a different historical setting and period. Each Descendant is briefly described in relation to 'waiting' for the men in their lives. Even at this point, Ndebele is playing with both the reader and the characters when he names Descendant One as Mannete Mofolo, and Descendant Three as Mamello Molete; deliberately leaving the second and fourth descendants nameless. The point of doing this, is to make apparent to the reader the artifice of text creation, to direct the reader and the characters that this ontological world is arbitrary.

In Part Two, the real games begin. Ndebele succinctly says: "*Each is an illustration of thought, they all seem to be struggling to wriggle out of the cocoon of thought, seeking to emerge as fully-fledged beings*"(2003:35). The reader is made aware that the writer is the master of this subversive game, upsetting all previously held notions of fiction. You know that the characters in this universe are mere illustrations of Ndebele's imagination, whom he is importing from

across the space and time continuum, into an *ibandla*. The boundaries of the material world are annihilated, the concrete becomes the abstract, and conventions become contentious. Order, temporality and spatial dimensions are thus displaced.

Ndebele explains in *The Cry* that his characters have the freedom to travel in space and time, having access to a variety of information sources:

The intangibility and randomness of imagination permit them absolute mobility. In this universe our descendants travel wherever they want, taking whatever shape they want, listening to whatever wanders into their ears. In these random journeys they take, they are subject to one requirement: to resist the urge to break out of the confines of thought into full desire. (2003:35)

The Second Descendant and Fourth Descendant now begin to 'strain at the writer's leash' (2003:35) and 'demand names...' (2003:36).

This kind of device is constantly interrupting the readers processing.

It is deliberately unsettling, so that within this literary game, the reader does not fall into a state of acquiescence and approbation.

You are in a simulated universe and your interaction and awareness is necessary to keep this game effective.

Ndebele has now established the rules of his game, his fictional

characters have enormous autonomous will, but they are still 'illustrations' in his thoughts. Ndebele draws on African cosmology and the concept of *ibandla* to allow his characters to vocalize their thoughts, giving a representation to the world of the 'other' - this severely marginalized group, who was systematically subjugated by multiple forms of oppressive institutions.

Delisiwe S'Khosana is the First Descendant to be represented. The *ibandla* travels through time and space into her home, where Ndebele describes a portrait of her educated parents and herself as an infant. Through Delisiwe's history and interaction with the *ibandla*, Ndebele uses *natural discourse* to address other wider issues. The tea-drinking ritual with Delisiwe's father and the scones recipe, prod the reader to play a guessing game of what is being referred to. Ndebele is not spelling out the historical background, but with the subtlety of language games, he is able to draw attention to the wider socio-political history that has shaped these 'borrowed etiquettes and rituals'. Delisiwe states : "*What I've just said about him (her father) is not a judgement, but the description of a small*

*part of family life within a **broadier social history***"(2003:38).

This 'broader social history' is that of colonialism and apartheid. These world systems can also be looked at as a game: of monopoly, that was enacted upon the lives of the unsuspecting colonized. The European powers played a game of domination, believing they were intellectually more advanced than the 'natives' inhabiting the colonies. Like a game of chess, the 'natives' of Africa, America and Australasia became mere pawns in the imperialist game. Postcolonial theory has uncovered how the colonized 'other' was tyrannized, subordinated and exploited. In *The Cry*, Ndebele exposes how the colonial faculty through it's hierarchies, capitalism and modernity, has affected the lives of these working-class women. He traces the sordid colonial quest into South Africa:

Forced off the land by colonial laws, designed to satisfy imperialist hunger for labour... expansion of South African economy led to growth of professions. An army of teachers, civil servants, priests could be deployed from one post to another across the land. (2003:5)

Every South African life, black or white, has been impacted upon by colonialism or apartheid. It is this 'imperialist hunger for labour' that

has resulted in the various settlement and labour laws for blacks in South Africa. The games that politicians and industrialists played with the lives of the working class and the different races, in the past, reach out into the future, having a ripple effect on the development of group and individual psyche and identity. This group psychology is evident in *The Cry* when Mamello chastises her husband for abandoning her to marry a white woman. She writes:

"Has it been worth it? To sacrifice me at the altar of non-racialism? Did you have to give me up to have a rainbow family: you, your wife and your Coloured child?" (2003:24). This kind of situation would be totally ridiculous in an ideal political system where race was not the only defining factor of our humanness.

Apartheid played mind games with all its citizens, conning everyone into believing it was really unacceptable to marry or have sexual relations with anyone of another race. These beliefs have become so entrenched in the South African psyche that it manifests itself in this racist display by Mamello and millions like her, who were victims in the vicious mind games that the apartheid state played with its

people.

Life itself is a game! One is born into a race, a class, a family, a socio-economic-political context, not of one's choosing. Life thus is a game of chance, dominated by free will on the one hand and the interplay of multiple factors of ideology, race, class, context, on the other. In South Africa free will and self-determination was subordinated by external forces. The life of the black masses became a struggle for survival, in a western capitalist culture whose underlying ideology was 'the survival of the fittest'. Those with the material and intellectual force could dominate the masses. This is the might of capitalism, as it swept through the world, playing monopoly games with the lives of people.

Baudrillard (1975) mentions the exclusion of ethnic and linguistic minorities from signification, the rigorous focusing of sexuality around genital sexuality and the family, the remorseless domination of women and the constructed and sustained invisibility of youth, age and the unemployed. He says that in all of this "capitalism crosses the entire network of natural, social and cultural forces, all languages

and all codes" (Baudrillard 1975:138).

Lyotard argued that totality, stability and order are maintained in modern societies by "grand narratives" or "master narratives". These are stories a culture tells itself about its practices and beliefs. It is a kind of meta-theory or meta-ideology, that is, a story that explains the belief systems of a culture. PM critiques grand narratives as they serve to mask the contradictions and instabilities that are inherent in any social organization or practice. PM rejects "grand narratives" in favour of "mini-narratives" which explain local events, rather than large scale universal concepts (Klages 2003).

The Cry is such a mini-narrative. It is not a long book, it has a length of 123 pages, short compared to many other novels. It focuses on a local issue, that of black women in South Africa who wait for husbands. The text is situational, provisional, contingent and makes no claim to truth, reason or stability. The text does not follow the usual designation of fictional texts which are divided into chapters, rather it has two parts. Sections of the book range in length, from being really short and concise, to being rather long and detailed,

once more showing no conformity or rigid conditioning.

The text is often punctuated with quotations from factual documents like letters, recipes, autobiographies. Ndebele plays a game of 'hide and seek', exposing one to a snippet of 'true' evidence from the 'real' world and thereafter allows his characters to interact with it. He offers the reader glimpses into a factual world, and then draws one into an ontological universe where these 'truths' are questioned and interrogated. Mamello, during the game, questions Winnie after an extract from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Commission finds that Lolo Sono was abducted by members of the MUFC on 13 November 1988 and was taken to the home of Ms Madikizela-Mandela where he was severely assaulted. The Commission finds that Madikizela-Mandela had knowledge of the assaults.....The Commission finds further that Lolo Sono was killed by Mr Jerry Richardson, a close confidant of Madikizela-Mandela...
(2003:64)

The actual findings by the TRC is given above, and thereafter, Mamello interrogates this version of events and the fact that Winnie escaped conviction on any of her escapades. "Justice Stegmann", says Mamello, "went on to declare you a calm, composed, deliberate, unprincipled and unblushing liar" (2003:65). Winnie's life comes

under scrutiny by the *ibandla*, but since it is done within the confines of a textual game, by imaginary characters, in a simulated world, the knowledge can hold no 'truth-claims', but becomes functional to help us learn about life and how this knowledge can be used for personal growth.

Throughout *The Cry*, Ndebele introduces 'language games', bringing in words from different Southern African languages into the text. Some of these words include *ibandla*, *zintombi*, *ntombi*, *ukufeba*, *dipadi*, *sana*, *Bizo* and many others. Ndebele, it is certain, would have expected foreign readership, and that these readers would not understand these words. Ndebele was making a statement by including this hybrid form of English in the text. He has already determined that the characters have a certain amount of free will and within their universe, such hybrid language is the norm. Inclusion of the African language in the prose, highlights the language issue in the postcolonial situation. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:8) explained that "language, any language has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture". Ngugi was insistent that Africans write in their own language. Others like Chinua Achebe,

wrote:

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit African surroundings.
(in Ngugi 1986:8)

Ndebele seems to have assumed a similar position, with regard to language and hybridity in *The Cry*. Gabriel Okara's (1963:15-16) position is definitely the same as Ndebele:

Some may regard this way of writing English as a desecration of the language. This is, of course, not true. Living languages grow like living things... There are American, West Indian, Australian, Canadian, and New New Zealand versions of English. All of them add life and vigour to the language while reflecting their own respective cultures. Why shouldn't there be a West African or Nigerian English which we can use to express our own ideas, thinking and philosophy in our own way.

Ndebele uses a blend of various Southern African languages including Sotho, Xhosa and Zulu in *The Cry* to indicate the rich and diverse variety of people and indigenous languages, and the subversive purpose is to illustrate the far-reaching powers of the English imperial machine. In an interview with Bernth Lindfors, Ndebele explains his stance on writing in English:

All in all, this problem of language should not be allowed to cloud the real issue: the need for freedom. It would be tragic the day South African writers started wrangling over which language people had to write in. Rather, we should create conditions in which people would feel free to write and speak in whatever language they wish. (1990:45)

In *The Cry*, Ndebele feels compelled to give representation to the authentic terms of endearment like *sana*, *mfanyana* and other such terms, to expose the nature of African women and give some representation to the working class hybrid English spoken in South Africa.

The greater part of *The Cry* is dominated by a game that the Four Descendants play with Winnie Mandela. After they form the *ibandla*, they decide to include Winnie in their *ibandla*. They devise and choose different means by which to conduct a dialogue with her. This dialogue can take a written or oral form. Delisiwe chooses to play this game using a technique of questioning and interrogation. Mamello chooses to play this game by writing a letter to Winnie. Marara chooses a conversation, that is more a monologue. Manette's conversation is like an older woman talking to a younger person.

During this game, factual data is drawn into the fictional heterocosm, but the four fictional descendants get an opportunity to vocalize the impressions of the masses. They judge, question, cajole, implore, castigate, chide, rebuke, reproach as millions of South Africans had, on hearing of Winnie's actual antics.

Manette comments on this game that the *ibandla* is engaged in:

*You play this game as if you've been playing it
all your lives. Maybe you have. Maybe we all have.
Painful games you've been playing....
Perhaps the only game I can play is with myself,
not with you. My game is a test of how to
express my silences. Thoughts that lived without
a voice. (2003:78)*

Manette believes that women have been engaged in such a game for most of their lives. Black women especially have been living in silence and subjugation for most of their natural history. For most of these women, race became the principal signifier, and gender issues were relegated a back seat. Dorothy Driver argued :

that the axis of race often or generally takes experiential priority over the axis of gender should not be disputed, but what should be addressed is the way the experience of racism is used to occlude the experience of sexism (in Bazilli 1991:91).

Ndebele is aware that black history in South Africa severely marginalizes women and this text, although a work of fiction, serves to create a space for articulation by women of their everyday struggles that have remained fossilized in history. Zeleza (1997:82) writes: "*writers of history in Africa are predominantly male and sexist in so far as their texts down-play the important role women have played in all aspects of African history*".

Sex is regarded as a major game that is played between men and women. Ndebele discusses at length the role of sex, marriage and infidelity in this game between the sexes. Ndebele discusses how a subsequent marriage vindicates a woman:

*Once accorded the legitimacy or protection of
of a next marriage, the woman is instantly
forgiven her past sins. The moral premise
of her new marriage is the illusion of her past
virtues.* (2003:3)

Ndebele shows how social laws restrict women in their sexuality, by determining for them, through the institution of marriage, their only possibility of legitimacy. Ndebele explains the tenuous position of women: "*She is trapped in a social law: a woman must show unwavering fidelity to her husband whoever he is*" (2003:3).

He continues to call marriage a "*game of illusion*"(2003:3). Marriage and fidelity are proven to be such, in the text. All the Four Descendants are abandoned by their husbands, for another woman. The sanctity of marriage is worthless if a husband is absent for long periods. Absence creates the space for infidelity. Delisiwe conducts two affairs with *mfanyana* and Themba, to forget her loneliness. Her pregnancy in her husband's absence seals the doom of her marriage. On returning, he looks upon the bastard child and leaves her. She later on discovers "*abortions of his foetuses by Scottish and French girls*"(2003:52). This imposition of a double-standard for men and women, with regard to sex and infidelity, is highlighted by Ndebele. Delisiwe's husband has had numerous affairs while he was in Europe, but his reaction to her infidelity is absolutely astounding.

The investigation of the game of sex is also undertaken in *The Cry*. Delisiwe begins an affair with a young friend of her son's. He becomes quite abusive. She explains:

There was on his face, whenever he looked at me, unveiled contempt. It was his having slept with me, and then coming at me whenever he wished to demand of me to 'give' him, had turned me into an object he possessed. (2003:49)

Ndebele uses this relationship to show the different ways men and women view sex and relationships. Both Delisiwe and the young man understood it was all about a physical need. Delisiwe though, still approached the relationship with emotional attachment, while he saw her as a possession and a sex object, that he need not respect. This is a sexual game that is played out in millions of homes all over South Africa, because men believe sex is their right, and not a privilege. Delisiwe takes back her power when she stops being afraid and stands up for herself:

Mfanyana, stop right there, you little monster! Get out of my house, and don't ever come back. Go out and tell the whole township from the rooftops: the **magogo** I've been fucking has had enough of me! You're mean and nasty and cruel and are dead to me. Tell them you'll never again come into my house to piss into your chamber pot, and that if you ever return, you'll find me waiting with a sword to slice away your erect penis and fling it onto the roof for the crows to devour. (2003:49)

Ndebele explores the games questionable soothsayers and shamans, play with the lives of unsuspecting believers. Mamello quotes an

authentic case of a Kwakuit Indian called Quesalid, who became the greatest shaman in his quest to discredit shamanism. "Gifted at what he knew to be fraudulent, Quesalid nonetheless acquired a reputation as a healer" (2003:56). When Mamello experiences a breakdown, she is referred to a *sangoma* who conducts a host of rituals to help her get her already married ex-husband back. Obviously the *sangoma* is merely playing a rather devious game of pretend. Winnie also takes the form of the Quesalid factor, by believing "she owned the struggle" (2003:61). She spent so much of her time trying to discredit the vicious apartheid regime, that she herself became a vicious dictator, who played games with the lives of the unsuspecting working classes. Winnie is accused of "kidnapping children, gruesome beatings and torture of children; disappearances and deaths, assassinations; defamations and denunciations; intimidation and terror" (2003:62). Ndebele writes:

...you became answerable only to yourself. It was the Quesalid factor that kicked in. You exposed others in order to mask your own vulnerabilities. The exercise of power meant wielding it at the expense of others. You were seen as acting like one with the power to declare someone a sellout... You seemed to love the children ...the more you terrorized them into your care.
(2003:62)

Eventually, Winnie played the game with the same tactics the evil apartheid structure used. In the liberation game, the liberator became the oppressor. Ndebele is very aware that in the fight for freedom, and eventual victory in the South African context, the game of corruption continues, the leading political party has changed, masks have switched, but the power struggles and deception will continue. Ndebele exposes an important element of human nature - in exploring Winnie's rise and fall he is able to unmask the schizophrenic nature that oppression and suffering, coupled with loneliness and alienation from oneself, has on the psyche of a person who is suddenly entrusted with tremendous power. This power dynamic is invasive in all areas of our lives, between different countries, religions, ethnic groups, races, classes, genders and political parties.

Chapter Six

Landscape

*Contemporary approaches to landscape have highlighted the previous lack of **problematization** of the landscape and the significance of space and place to human activities, imaginations and identities. Landscape, in earlier studies, was regarded as mere backdrop or setting in which human dramas took place, and failed to adequately address how notions of place and space are mediated through relationships, histories and spiritualities. (Prigge 2003:1)*

South Africa has a rather complex history, with regard to space and place issues within the wider physical, socio-economic, political and psychological landscape. Since colonial intervention, the issue of place and displacement has been a rather contentious subject. For this chapter, an understanding of post-colonial theory is necessary, to decipher how forms of identity have been inscribed upon the individual psyche in the South African landscape.

Post-colonial is a term that covers all peoples and cultures that were affected by the imperial process from the advent of colonization to the present (Ashcroft et al 1989). Edward Said (1978, 2003) in his book *Orientalism*, attempted to demonstrate how prototypical

identities were shaped by imperialism. Said's work marked a move away from mere description of the material factors governing empire, to an analysis of colonial representation. The conceptions of space can be seen as a vital part of the colonizing process says Gregory:

*One important concern of post-colonialism, though by no means the only one, is an attempt to bring into focus the dispossession that the West visited upon colonial societies through a series of intrinsically **spatial strategies**... As Said makes very clear, it is impossible to conceive of colonialism or imperialism '**without important philosophical and imaginative processes at work in the production as well as the acquisition, subordination and settlement of space**'.*

(Gregory 1994:215)

It is impossible to conduct an analysis of literary work produced in the South African context without acknowledging issues of space, and the complex interaction of political and racial inscriptions of place. Lester (1996:10) explains that even by merely "fitting indigenous people into their (colonial) view of a world order and into their categories within which things exist, colonizers were already dispossessing peoples of their accustomed independence." Gregory (1994:30) elucidated:

*The incorporation of non-European 'man' into the table, the taxonomy and the grid effectively prised non-European people away from the land which they inhabited, and once they had been **textually** removed from the landscape, it was easier to do so physically (and morally) as well.*

By imposition of rigid settlement laws, beginning long before the Native Land Act of 1913, the colonizers sought to alienate the African from his own land. Colonization invariably, was, in Marxist terminology, 'domination backed by force', of a group of people, who believed that they had the power and the superiority to appropriate land from the 'Natives' for themselves, with no threat of reprisals.

Spatial distance and disharmony became entrenched in the South African landscape, when the settlement laws imposed rigid spatial distinctions between the races. This spatial distortion, lead to the creation of newly imposed identities for all races. Black people, who were relocated to the townships, developed a distinct culture and these areas became the locus of protest organization. In South Africa, the discovery of gold and diamonds changed the dynamics and appropriation of space in the landscape of capitalism and advancement. In "*Cry*", Ndebele talks of 'massive male labour

migrations to the mines and factories of South Africa' (2003:5) and of the 'imperialist hunger for labour' (2003:5) on the mines.

Landscape in South Africa was in constant flux as the major roleplayers, namely the British and the Boers fought against each other, and against the black ethnic groups, for dominance over the land and its resources. The conflict in the South African landscape has almost always been about possession of the land and its resources. W.J.T.Mitchell 1994 (in Darian-Smith 1996) explains why landscape plays such a prominent role in history and identity formation:

Landscape circulates as a medium of exchange, as a "site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity". The "semiotic features" of landscape generate historical narratives. In this sense, landscape is dynamic; it serves to create and naturalise the histories and identities inscribed upon it, and so simultaneously, hides and makes evident social and historical formations. (1996:3)

When the landscape is violently wrested from its rightful black owners, by colonizers or dictating state apparatuses, it creates an alienation of Self from the environment, because African identity and autonomy were firmly intertwined with ownership and claim to the

land. The African landscape validates the identity of the African spirit, only when pride and ownership of the land remain uncontested. Ndebele infers the unyielding nature of the natural landscape and its domination of our very existence. Ndebele uses the character of Lejone Mofolo to demonstrate how our physical landscape can change the destiny of an individual when he is forced to become a migrant worker. This environmental anomaly changes the direction of Lejone's and Mannete's entire history:

He cannot sit back and watch the world collapse around him. Drought. The deep Highlands of Lesotho have seen no rain for many years. The King has called for prayers, but God, remaining as silent as, the clear burning skies, has simply not responded. (2003:8)

Lejone is forced to leave his family behind in Lesotho to go to the goldfields of Gauteng, because of the drought. This changes the Mofolo's lives forever – Mannete loses her husband and the children lose their father to the urban jungle of Johannesburg.

Lester, Nel and Binn explain the effect of state intervention in spatial configuring:

Socially constructed differences, when reinforced by state intervention can become manifest in enduring spatial distinctions. A prime example is the removals which modern South African government inflicted on established residents in urban and rural areas.

(Lester et al 2000:)

Through the enacting of the multiple apartheid settlement laws, like the Group Areas Act and Homeland Policy, people were first segregated by legislation and thereafter effectively spatially dislocated. Through fear of the black masses, and manic desire for all-consuming control, the apartheid state unilaterally relocated millions of black people from their established dwellings to townships located on the periphery. This enforced marginalization of the black masses, on the spatial periphery of the physical landscape, was the precursor to systematic psychological and cultural denigration.

Ashcroft et al explain how one's sense of identity can be impaired by displacement:

*A valid sense of self may have been eroded by **dislocation** resulting from migration, enslavement, transportation or "voluntary" removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by **cultural denigration**, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model.*

(1989:9)

The black South African identity has been eroded by both ***dislocation*** and ***cultural denigration***. Ndebele expresses the effects of this virulent contaminant that was apartheid's spatial model of segregation and oppression. Migrant labour, forced removal to reserves and townships, cultural denigration by conscious control of language, education and other aspects of culture were some of the processes used by the so-called 'superior race' to force a fractured sense of identity to develop, in the 'other'. The effect of apartheid and its peculiar political climate, is often alluded to in *The Cry*.

Ndebele writes of " exile...internal exile of detention without trial and long sentences in jail for political resistance"(2003:5). When Mamello's husband disappears without a trace one night, she eventually discovers his whereabouts when she receives a postcard from Cuba telling her he was forced into exile (2003:20). He returns to engage in sabotage which Mamello later finds out:

He was arrested while on a military incursion and was sentenced to fifteen years on Robben Island. Ten plus fifteen? Twenty-five. I set eyes on him ten years later when he was an awaiting trial prisoner.
(2003:21)

The political landscape of apartheid was dominated by fear, repulsion and antagonism on the part of the major role-players. The white apartheid government and the stereotypical white is represented by Mamello:

*Every interaction with white people begins with the imposition of rules, **their** rules; of norms, **their** norms. They assume by some process of natural law, **their** natural law, that their rules and norms are universally applicable. Wonder is, they almost always succeed.*
(2003:54)

The political landscape is encapsulated by a series of words in the text:

This grammar began to take on predictability. It's building blocks were there: countless arrests, charges, courtroom dramas, interrogation and torture, imprisonments, detentions, restrictions, bannings, banishment...
(2003:60)

Ndebele uses the character of Major Theunis Swanepoel to embody the trauma suffered by the victims at the hands of the apartheid police apparatus. Swanepoel becomes an instrument of the cruel, unrelenting, diabolical apartheid regime. Winnie Mandela was interrogated and tortured by Swanepoel when she was detained. He is described as:

Notorious and feared throughout the land, among the oppressed, he personified the ugly underside of the pomp and ceremony of the opening of apartheid's parliament, its military parades, and all the symbols of its power: universities, science councils, magisterial opera houses, stadiums, court houses and major prisons.
(2003:61)

The physical symbols of the apartheid landscape like the courts, Parliament and police represent the repressive state apparatus used to systematically subjugate and oppress the black masses. Mamello infers that Winnie is:

"..the diamond that Swanepoel forged out of the fire of the torture chamber. This was the birth of Quesalid who knew how to thrive on fear and terror, and mastered the art of boundless justification".
(2003:64)

Ndebele takes the reader through the entire political landscape of the pre-and-post apartheid period. With the character of Marara, he explores the issues of "home and dislocation". She says:

That is the experience of victims of forced removals Sophiatown, Limehill, Dimbaza, Morsgat, Weenen... Symbols of dislocation. Mass stories of people who built homes and communities and then watched them demolished by apartheid's bulldozers. In a country where so many homes have been demolished and people moved to strange new places, home temporarily becomes the shared experience of homelessness, the fellow-feeling of loss and the desperate need to regain something. (2003:68)

The apartheid landscape with its rigid settlement laws, segregation policies, forced removals, dislocations, insidious policing strategies, changed the conception of place and belonging. Ndebele illustrates the effect of "Home and exile. Building and Demolition. Roots and rootlessness". He explains that people are given to "extremes of behaviour" in such a context. Ndebele conducts an insightful investigation into the experience of space, place, home and dislocation through the character of Marara:

Do you remember the experience of space, and the sense of distance and time through travel in the old days of apartheid? ...In traveling from point A to point B, I remember not the pleasure of movement and anticipation; the pleasure of reflecting at the end of the journey, why the journey was undertaken. What I do remember is that intervening physical space between A and B was something to endure because of fear of being stopped and having my existence questioned by the agents of oppression. (2003:68)

Marara seems to be alluding to the Pass Laws that were imposed to curtail the movement of black people into white areas. She expresses the anxiety that apartheid impressed upon the oppressed. Space became an arena of fear and contestation, it became a psychological prison. Marara continues:

It was psychological time without space. I had to endure the absence of space. Space was no longer the sense of dimension beyond the self; it had become claustrophobia of the self; the self whose existence would be challenged at any moment in any form. Travel through the landscape of apartheid was prolonged personal risk and vulnerability.
(2003:69)

This exposition reveals the split, fragmented psyche of the oppressed masses, living in dread, their authentic selves forced into internal exile. The land and physical space became 'claustrophobic', because it was the space of oppression, of unrelenting psychological trauma, a splintering of the internal landscape.

With the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the interregnum period unleashed the terrible landscape of violence. Ndebele explains:

We saw strange armies of black men terrorizing townships, hacking children's heads with machetes. We abandoned patients to their deaths in hospitals because we were on strike; we held hostage people doing their work, trashed university campuses; blocked highways; burned to death old women accused of being witches.....
(2003:70)

This transition period was a period of catastrophic violence in the South African socio-political landscape. It was the birth pangs of an emerging democracy expelling its hate, venting centuries of suppression and intimidation. The insidious erosion of black pride

and identity, the enforced dispossession suffered by the black masses, induced this destructive quest for autonomy and a sense of place and identity. Johan van Wyk (1997:) elucidated that such apocalyptic periods produces a resurgence of a "group psychology" which is apparent in mass meetings, strikes, processions by the working class asserting itself against the state, which has lost its legitimacy. Franz Fanon (1986) sought a psychoanalytic explanation for this post-colonial landscape of violence:

*The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation...The colonizers ambition to civilize the native...results in the validity of violence in the very definition of the colonial **social space**.*
(1996)

All the years of accumulated hate and dehumanization must be cathartically exorcised by this catastrophic upheaval. Bhabha commented on violence and identity among the oppressed :

*These interpositions, indeed collaborations of political and psychological violence **within** civic virtue, alienation within identity, drive Fanon to describe the splitting of colonial **space of consciousness** as marked by a 'Manichaeian Delirium'... the idea of man as his alienated image, not Self and Other but the Otherness of Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity.* (1994:43)

Bhabha tries to explain that violence in such a context occurs because of alienation of one's psychological self due to the imposed system of inaccurate beliefs about one's self worth. Ndebele explores the landscape of violence further with his extended discussion of anger :

Anger, like all emotion, can never be permanently active. It ebbs and flows...look at the monuments to the power of anger, and the anger of power: the squalor of townships versus the opulence of white suburbs; the head of Bambatha displayed as a war trophy by the civilized British; the ovens of Dachau; the CIA and its graveyard of countries; the Ku Klux Klan and its ritual of public terror; millions of anti-personnel mines buried in the ground; the church museums in Rwanda; the severed limbs of the people of Sierra Leone; the nuclear bomb and Hiroshima; the Israeli check-points.... Look at them, all over the world. Terror behind the posture of righteousness.

(2003:98)

Ndebele conducts a revision of all the anger and violence that has shaped the global landscape of struggle and terror . He indicts Winnie for starting her "own monument...the Nelson Mandela United Football Club" to violence and destruction. Ndebele explains how this "football club" assumed the "jackroller phenomenon". This was a reference to young men who became criminals by graduating from

lower levels of deviant behaviour like abduction and stealing, to rape and murder. Ndebele writes:

The jackrollers graduated into carjackers, who kill without a thought, and sell their bloody wares to buy Gucci, Nike and other such labels. Former freedom fighters regroup as cash-in-transit robbers, who specialize in depriving struggling families of breadwinners. (2003:98)

The post-colonial landscape of apartheid was one of destruction and violence, not just of a physical kind but an abrasive psychic dismemberment, undertaken by the repressive mechanisms of state.

The constant bombardment of the supposedly superior western discourses, forced further alienation of the African spirit. National identity, according to Simon Schama (1995:6) "would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular tradition, its topography, mapped, elaborated and enriched as a homeland." The land thus becomes firmly intertwined with personal identity and identification with a set of beliefs and traditions.

Ndebele does a comprehensive study of the sexual difference between man and woman, and the hereditary violence in the physiology of a man's penis. In feminist discourse, the phallus

symbolises domination and subjugation. The phallus dominated all aspects of feminine existence, from her physical body, to her cultural environment, including the literary sphere. Ndebele explicates through Delisiwe:

Sometimes they come in a queue, these fucking machines: a group of men, sometimes boys, in a gang rape. They come in a queue of erections, one after another, pumping away and ejecting sperm after sperm... In war, the penis often becomes a weapon... Fucking. That's what it is. It is a random and violent exercise in sex without the burden of consequence.
(2003:46)

A man's body is fashioned to dominate and control, and this control can take on a violent form. Mannete tells the *ibandla* that Basotho named the vagina after their country. Ndebele contrasts the woman's body to that of a man through the voice of Delisiwe:

They must have come to the primal wisdom that inside of a woman are mountains. Inside of her are valleys where the cosmos blooms. There are hillsides where pink peach blossoms and white apricot blossoms explode in spring. There are snowfalls too.... (2003:50)

A woman's sexuality and her vagina is likened to a country, and Delisiwe says that "rape is the invasion of the primal country". When a man merely "fucks" a woman, he does it with no emotional

connection, it is an invasion of a woman's intimate landscape.

Delisiwe explains to Winnie that she found peace when she stopped pillaging her "inner country". Marara explains that her promiscuous husband could have affairs because his lust was an animal craving:

Sleeping with a man is not like drinking a glass of Coca Cola to kill thirst. Maybe it was, if the thirst was overpowering. When you need something in you, and you find someone to put it in. Animals. Meaning? Men as bodies containing a mixture of chemicals. You really don't struggle to find one such body. You just hold his hand and it instantly triggers an explosion of chemical reactions: his penis starts to rise, ready to be put in.
(2003:29)

Ndebele analyses the body of women and the fact that they cannot escape their sexuality. Delisiwe becomes pregnant when she is involved in an illicit affair with Themba. She, like all women, cannot escape the signals of her body, whereas a man can. He can indulge in numerous affairs with no inherent physical evidence to indict him.

Ndebele explains: *"The world will always know the mother of the child, for a woman cannot escape the messages of her body"*

(2003:18). Whereas Delisiwe is cast as an unfaithful harlot, her husband who had slept with many French and Scottish women whom had become pregnant and aborted the foetuses, is left untarnished

because he bears no inherent physical manifestation of his escapades. For feminism, sexual difference remained a fundamental area of study. It is interesting that Ndebele touches on this aspect of feminism that has been rather contentious, considering he vehemently denies being a feminist writer.

Ndebele contrasts the agrarian landscape to the urban landscape in *The Cry*. The rural landscape is characterized as the domain of simplicity, piety, and innocence. Rural women, from the pre-apartheid period, are represented as very trusting, hardworking and simple. Mannete becomes the representative of the rural ontological world. When her husband does not return, she realizes that:

She had assumed too much and did not bother with details... She learned at that time what finally comes to the women who wait: don't ever think that things will simply take care of themselves. When he leaves, have the courage to ask for details. (2003:11)

Mannete exposes the character of rural women, in her trust and simplicity. She respected her husband too much to question him about the details of his trip. At a later stage in the text, she gives the reader a further glimpse into the inner life of a rural black women:

*"My game is a game of how to express my **silences**. Thoughts that*

have lived without a voice"(2003:75). This is a really deep insight into the lives of rural black women, in the earlier periods of South African history. They were forced into a life of service and subservience by their culture, husbands, race, class, gender and this multi-pronged oppression has buried their free self in a deep, voiceless abyss. Part of a woman's liberation is to find a way to express her pain. Rural personality is further displayed by Mannete's interaction, with the *ibandla*. The other women are all from the urban areas who have long forgotten the demeanour of rural people and Mannete quips:

*You've seen how the township types in this room
have launched into their projects. They have for-
gotten the mandatory rituals of civility of welcome.
It's the brazen way of the township.*
(2003:79)

The urban landscape is given much more representation in *The Cry* because more of the characters in the text are based in the township. The apartheid struggle also gained momentum in these townships and most modern Africans are based in these townships, in the present landscape. Lejone Mofolo, a rural dweller from Lesotho, changes when he moves to the mines of Gauteng:

His language changes. He lets into his Sesotho some Setswana words, some English words. This makes him sound definitely urban. He develops his own look, the look of knowingness. The look of having been there, that look is a mixture of many things: of abandonment of restraint, of knowing the complexities of suburban train timetable...bank accounts...restaurants... newspaper.. radio.
(2003:10)

The urban landscape is a legacy of the capitalist post-colonial enterprise. The inscriptions of the urban landscape can be seen in all aspects of African culture. It has affected the dress, language, behaviour, attitudes, habits and traditions of all urban inhabitants.

The following extracts portray the urban scene in *The Cry*:

In a bus, or a taxi, or a train, or walking through the numerous dizzying city streets that follow one another like rows of maize.. (2003:12)

In the hurly burly of a Soweto Friday evening: traffic, smoke, loud music, choir practices, wakes, parties, concerts, rape, murder...
(2003:20)

The urban landscape appears as a huge monolithic monster that subsumes everything. The individual becomes lost in the busy streets and the constant movement and noise. The urban area is also a breeding ground for multiple forms of aggression and social pathologies like rape, murder, theft. The urban has resulted in a

corrosion of African identity, which has been replaced by a split psyche. Winnie becomes the embodiment of the split psyche – she has traded in her warm rural persona for the cold, calculating urban persona, for self-preservation.

*You began to take care of your siblings. You loved them and disciplined them. You shared whatever you had. It is said that your caring and love for children was clearly evident then, and appears to have made you want to become a social worker. Then you, this girl from Bizana, went to Johannesburg, the City of Gold. It was there, while you were finding your way through the **brutal life of a huge city**, that you were thrown headlong into the arms of history.*
(2003:57)

The physical landscape is not confined to the local context: Ndebele takes the reader on a journey across the globe, from Homer's Greece, Scotland, France, Cuba, Lesotho to South Africa. He has managed to show the parallels that transcend nationality, space, place, race, culture, gender, class. The interesting focus in *The Cry* is that of women and love, and why they wait for an absent husband.

Ndebele spends a considerable part of the text focusing on the public and private landscape of the characters. When the women decide to play the "game", they choose to draw Winnie into their game. The

reason for this is Winnie's very public persona:

Because Winnie too waited. The only difference between us and her is that she waited in public while we waited in the privacy of our homes, suffering in the silence of our bedrooms.

(2003:39)

While other famous women like Albertina Sisulu, Urbania Mothopeng, Veronica Sobukwe or Ntsiki Biko waited in public, Ndebele writes that "there was a silent, almost private dimension to their waiting". Winnie is seen as the antithesis to the other women:

She could not escape the drama of public attention. She invited it. Her presence was active and pervasive. Her energy didn't seep through the walls; it broke through them; broke them down like a bulldozer. Only with Winnie was tomorrow unpredictable. The sun could rise sublime and go down in unspeakable horror.

(2003:40)

Winnie's marriage to Nelson Mandela catapulted her into the public arena, but she began to revel in the limelight and eventually believed that "she owned the struggle". When Winnie becomes part of the *ibandla*, she admits having reservations about revealing everything because of her public position. She explains:

Yet, I'm not confident that I can unburden myself as you have done. I'm all too conscious of being a public figure, and must confess to a hesitance I'm trying to overcome.

...While you can unburden yourself in public and remain anonymous, I can't. Self-exposure offers the real possibility of damnation at the stake of journalistic prurience...

(2003:91)

Winnie has realized the impact of being too much in the public eye. She courted the public and the journalistic fraternity, during the height of apartheid. When the public scrutiny of her actions began to expose her shady enterprises, the 'public' became the enemy. Ndebele intimates that when the private is made public, it invites pain; that when one courts the limelight, it could eventually blind one to the realities.

Any novel, covering the black African context must cover the African cosmology and cultural landscape. Ndebele invites the reader to share a black cultural experience when Mamello suffers multiple nervous breakdowns when her husband divorces her and marries a white comrade. She is encouraged to visit a *sangoma*, to try to get him back:

*There was I kneeling naked in the middle of a thatched hut choking with smoke, being smeared all over with the fresh warm blood of a goat. Was that really me? Little cuts were made into my body and ointments and the goat's **inyongo** rubbed into the cuts*

(2003:24)

Mamello's encounter with the *sangoma* is a truly African experience that reveals all the beliefs and traditions that govern the African landscape. These rituals are part of their natural ancestral history which is inscribed on the landscape and the identity of a black South African.

It is the belief of this writer that Ndebele's main focus of interest in *The Cry*, was the psychological landscape of the black South African woman. Of all the role-players in the post-colonial and apartheid context, it is this individual who has been at the receiving end of multiple forms of oppression. Ndebele has taken the reader on a historical journey through the physical, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural landscape of these marginalized women. It is a journey into the very heart of the "inner country" of these women.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

As long as the world endures, there will be seen reflected in the face of Woman the dreams of art and of science towards which each new century aspires. Since the beginning of all things, Woman has never ceased to take as her own the flower of all that was produced by the vitality of nature or the art of man.... By its very nature, the Feminine must continue to make itself progressively more felt in a Universe that has not reached the term of its evolution. Teilhard de Chardin (1968)

The vision that Teilhard de Chardin, the great mystic, theologian and scientist held for the Feminine in a truly evolving Universe can only be properly realized when human beings can transcend the binaries of sex, race, class, gender, religion and all other forms of discrimination. Ndebele has taken on the mantle of a visionary, in his profoundly discerning caricature of black women in South Africa in *The Cry*.

Ndebele has successfully used the postmodern condition to refashion and *re-present* black women in South Africa. He engages in a flexible and fluid representation of time, shifting from Penelope in Ancient

Ithaca to sixteenth century Europe, and then to the local context, showing a commonality in feminine predicament. Time and space lose permanence while the suppression of women is the only constant. Ndebele has subverted the Western, colonial, patriarchal systems of literature, logic and representation of the "other" and opened up a space for feminine voice and signification. However, the focusing on the "one" and the "other" becomes problematic as it still resorts to essentialism and positionality.

The post colonial investigation exposed the level of contamination of the psyche of the "other". Once contamination has occurred, there can be no return to a sense of 'purity' from external influences.

Edward Said has spoken of "cultural hybridity" and the South African post colonial world has to come to terms with the influence of imperial cultures and languages on the colonized persona, without a total rejection but an assimilation into their own culture, to form an originary hybrid creation, which Ndebele fabricates well in this text, with PM theory and language.

Feminism has played a major role in the liberation of women but in the African context, women need to engage in a multi-pronged approach to the feminist struggle, acknowledging the differences of the various groups but consolidating their own kind of feminism.

This writer firmly believes in the spirit of evolution which Teresa de Laurentis seems to envisage. De Laurentis (1987) called for a move toward seeing the subject as made up of multiple layers of identity, and that identity is not a monolithic entity, cast in stone, but being constantly reinvented. Ndebele, through *The Cry*, takes the reader through the pain of oppression, but it is an oppression that is not damning or eternal, but oppression that can be worked through, and overcome by confrontation with the painful encounters that have shaped an individual. In the conclusion of *The Cry*, the women have all exorcised the demons of oppression and pain, and by doing this, they have empowered themselves. They have taken back their power and Penelope who has hitched a ride with the five women who are undertaking a healing holiday to Durban explains:

For more than two thousand years I have been on a pilgrimage of reconciliation....I travel around the world to places where women have heard of me, attempting to free them from the burden of unconditional fidelity I placed on their shoulders... I've come to join you briefly on your holiday trip, you women of South Africa....who are finally at peace with themselves and the world.

(2003:120)

CHAPTER EIGHT

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