



APPROXIMATING AN IDEAL SOUTH AFRICAN WOMAN OF THE 21st CENTURY
THROUGH POSTCOLONIAL FICTION BY SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS

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Declaration

I, Nomasomi Grace Morule declare herewith that the dissertation titled: Approximating and Ideal South African woman of the 21st Century through Postcolonial Fiction by South African Women Writers, which I herewith submit to the North-West University is in compliance with the requirements set for the degree ***Doctor of Philosophy in English*** is my own work, and has not been submitted to any other university

Signed: Date:

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my late mother, Ruth Mmasello Mtshengu.

I still feel the warmth of her love.

Acknowledgements

The study owes its success to the guidance and unwavering support of Dr M.L. Hove in his capacity as a promoter. His scholarly attitude, evidenced by constructive evaluation of this piece of writing, encouraged me to persevere. He created a conducive atmosphere for me step up to the threshold of my own philosophies on issues that emerged from the study.

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Abstract

Approximating an Ideal South African Woman of the 21st Century through Postcolonial Fiction by South African Woman Writers

At the dawn of democracy in South Africa, the emancipation of women was unequivocally placed at the centre of the on-going debates, recognising that a non-sexist democracy was one of the goals of the struggle. However, inequities persist along the axes of gender, fueled by a long history of patriarchal and political injustices against women. Such inequities did not disappear despite constitutional guarantees. This study maintains that it takes women writers to break the silence on violent masculinities and raise questions central to women's participation in leveraging access and democratic participation as agents in South Africa. An important dimension privileged in this study is Ramphele's (2008) nuanced notion of active and responsible citizenship in a democratic South Africa. Social stability and democratic participation depend on direct empowerment of those previously marginalised. I argue that the creative impetus in fiction works by South African women writers of the postcolonial period articulates significant spaces for stylising women's roles in the new democracy. The study adopts an interpretive lens to develop this investigation that appropriates postcolonial theory and perspectives of postcolonial feminism in interrogating fiction as a social and creative platform that could transform unequal power relations by inscribing qualities women should nurture to fully participate in a country whose liberation they helped to bring about. The thesis analyses a selection of primary texts by female authors in postcolonial South Africa, specifically *The Lying Days* (Nadine Gordimer), *Daughters of the Twilight* (Farida Karodia), *Mother to Mother* (Sindiwe Magona), *David's Story* (Zoe Wicomb) and *Black Widow Society* (Angela Makhholwa). The thesis endorses these texts as validating the moral responsibility of female authors in using their creative energies towards development, empowerment and reconciliation.

Key words: postcolonialism, feminism, empowerment, fiction, citizenship, gender relations, female sexuality, collective identity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Contextualisation

This study is an interrogation of South African women writers' fiction as a potential instrument for the development and empowerment of the 21st century woman for active participation in a democratic South Africa. The texts interrogated are produced by South African women writers of the postcolonial period. These authors' works are studied as part of the literature produced within the defined space of coloniality, the bio-political and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna within the domestic borders of the imperial nation (Tack and Yung, 2012).

For the purpose of the study, the post-colonial space is calculated from the first South African government after the British left the colony up to the start of the 21st century. The texts examined are selected from South African literary female productions from 1948 through to 2000 (21st century).

The study questions whether or not fiction produced by women of the post-colonial period envisaged the dawn of democracy, and therefore articulated the roles women would play in that space, and whether or not such literature empowers women for active participation in a democratic environment. An important critical dimension that the study privileges is Mampela Ramphela's (2008) nuanced notion of active and responsible citizenship in a democratic South Africa.

In order to be representative of the women writers, the choice of authors recognises the literary contributions by women writers from different racial, social and political groupings. The study maintains that women's writings may project the qualities women should exhibit to fully participate in a democratic country. If acquired and nurtured, these qualities could develop and empower women, teach them important lessons and prepare them for responsible roles in the communities in which they are members.

The study contributes to resisting objectification, customary laws and patriarchal practices that undermine women's constitutional rights, and appropriates decision-making powers afforded them by the new democracy and promoting and defending their specific needs and interests as women. Women's political participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development. Women must learn to raise their voices against unequal pay and indecent work by insisting on far-reaching changes to employment terms and conditions in a postcolonial South Africa.

The big question is whether women's writings meet the criteria of an alternative space and the accoutrement of resources seminal to developing and empowering women for meaningful participation within the postcolonial South African space. The space of participation in a democratic South Africa is analysed within the context of postcoloniality. Postcolonialism is used both as a literary theory and as a historical marker.

1.2 Problem Statement

South African women writers of the post-colonial period might have envisaged a liberated and democratic South Africa. Their writings became a fundamental cultural and literary factor in the renewal of the society and in the re-configuration of the nation's literary contours. One of the crucial aspects they address is the redefinition of women's roles in a transforming society.

The discord between these redefined roles and the attitudes of self-doubt portrayed in the women's writings is at the core of the current research problem. A self-effacing picture of women emerges from the long-held beliefs about the subordinating role of women, which impinges on their confidence. Such literary artefacts misrepresent the women folk despite the space afforded for their active participation. The implicit and complicating factor is that South African women's literature does not seem to influence the quality of citizenship women attained at independence in spite of the virtues they modeled through women protagonists projected in the post-colonial women writers' fictional worlds.

The study maintains that this lack of emulation of the projected possibilities and qualities also means that the fiction produced by women writers is not recognised as a developmental frontier and therefore nullifies its potential to ‘... redeem the society through the release of their creative power’ (Thepa, 2005). The study is premised on the understanding that fiction produced by women writers is a genre that could epitomise, through a selection of themes and protagonists of their fiction world, the qualities that women should exhibit to fully participate in a democratic dispensation. This genre could develop and empower women, if it models the qualities women should develop in order to participate fully – socially, economically and politically – as citizens of a democratic South Africa.

To investigate the stated problem, I use an emerging qualitative approach which involves close attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situates the study within the political, social and cultural context of the researched. The study interrogates the fiction works produced by South African women writers of the post-colonial era. Themes, perspectives and issues generated from the artefacts are interpreted through my personal understanding and interrogation of the lives of women in South Africa. This stance is influenced by the assumption that the writer’s targeted meaning comes second to the readers’ perception. It is situated within the post-structuralists’ rejection of the notion that literary texts have a single purpose and meaning, contending instead, that the existence, meaning and purpose of a text are constructed by the reader (De Saussure, 2002). In the context of this study, I represent the reader.

I undertook this investigation because I am convinced that it has implications beyond coloniality and postcoloniality where the development of women is contingent on their participation as citizens of a democratic dispensation. My submission here is that the literature produced by female writers of the period has defines new roles and identities of the South African woman of the 21st century.

1.3 Research Questions

How does South African literature by women writers of the post-colonial period contribute in the approximation of an ideal 21st Century woman who is an active and responsible citizen of a democratic society?

To answer this question, the study draws from women writers of different racial groupings as identified in the current South African demographics.

Collectively, the texts seek to provide answers to the following sub-questions:

- How relevant is women's literature to the socio-political entanglement and situation in South Africa?
- What is the nature of the personal spaces the selected authors wrote from and what do women learn from such sites and experiences?
- What roles of agency do women writers assign to their female protagonists?
- To what extent do such roles highlight the agency of women and qualities women have to adopt to liberate themselves from both patriarchal and apartheid practices such that they fully participate in the shaping and enactment of democracy?
- Do the writings by South African women writers of the post-colonial period exhibit distinctive features of postcolonial theory?
 - Do they constitute writing back?
 - Do they have a liberatory and transformative intent?
 - Are they adequately representative of various aspects of women's lives: the social, political, academic and economic facets?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

Based on the background provided, the study interrogated South African women writings as sites of struggle for the 21st century woman seeking space to actively and meaningfully participate in democratising post-apartheid South Africa.

The stated aim was achieved through a number of objectives, set out to provide:

- an examination of major themes explored by such literature to assess their relevance to the socio-political situation in South Africa,

- an analysis of the personal lives of the writers (as inferred from interview transcripts) to determine the nature of the circumstances they wrote from and what women could learn from them;
- identification of the roles the writers assign to their female protagonists in relation to their male counterparts and an appraisal of the extent to which the assigned roles enlightened women on the calibre of citizenship required for full participation in a democratic South Africa.
- assessment of fiction by South African women-writers on the extent to which it adheres to distinctive features of postcolonial theory.

1.5 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

The work takes the route of a qualitative study, giving close attention to the interpretive nature of critical inquiry and situating the study within the political, social and cultural context of the subjects studied. This choice is influenced by the leverage it gives me as a researcher to examine and interpret literary and biographical documents through postcolonial theoretical lenses.

The qualitative approach is best suited for the study because it allowed me to collect data by examining a variety of documents ranging from interview transcripts, biographical works and commentaries on works produced by selected writers. The approach positions the researcher as a key instrument in the collection and analysis of data. The use of multiple sources is also an important feature of this qualitative enquiry. I reviewed the stated sources and organised data into categories and themes that emerge through the sources. This organisation of themes involved an inductive process of working back and forth between the themes and the documents analysed to establish a comprehensive perspective.

A qualitative study is also an emergent design: it allowed some flexibility in executing the plan so that where necessary, I could change the initial plan to accommodate emerging issues. A qualitative study is also a holistic account of the problem or issues at hand. I reported multiple perspectives, identifying numerous factors involved in the study to

sketch the larger picture that emerged. The idea was not to look for cause-and-effect relationships among factors, but to identify the complex interaction of factors in the study. This facility immanent in qualitative enquiry, highlights opportunities for what can only be strategic and contingent collaborations, and to indicate the reasons that lasting solidarities may be elusive, but desirable for women's full democratic participation.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is an appraisal of women's writings of the post-colonial era to assess its impact, or lack thereof, in the approximation of the 21st century South African woman. The significance of the study rests on its advocacy for literature produced by South African woman writers as a site of enunciation and a genre that could be beneficial to the identification and development of virtues required to enhance the quality of citizenship for South African women in general.

Although it draws from the literature of the post-colonial period, it has implications beyond that period, informing on future development of women to maximise their participation as citizens of a democratic dispensation. It also raises awareness on the progress made by women in the re-configuration of the country's literary contours.

Because it also draws from the feminist perspective, the study highlights progress in the agenda for feminist movements. Analysis of the role assigned to female protagonists shows whether or not in essence the literature has defined new roles and identities of (and for) the South African woman. The central argument is that the anti-colonial turn towards the transnational can sometimes involve ignoring the settler colonial context where one resides and how that inhabitation is implicated in settler colonialism, in order to establish "global" solidarities that presumably suffer fewer complicities and complications. This is an analytic position that represents female voices about fellow women woven into their stories as captured by women authors and their experiences of authorship.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

The study relies on secondary data as it is an interpretation of texts which does not involve participants whose consent should be sought, or whose anonymity and privacy should be respected to avoid possible harm on them.

1.8 Chapter Divisions

Chapter 1: General Introduction and Contextualisation of the study

This chapter outlines the problem statement, aims of the study, research questions and the research design.

The chapter provides the context of study on two levels: the current socio-political situation in South Africa, particularly progress in the struggle for equity and inclusion of women in socio-political matters of the country. The chapter also situates the research topic within a theoretical framework, outlining the theoretical context of the study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Writing as a social responsibility. This section of the literature review highlights the significance of literature in the development of a society. Although the study focuses on women writers specifically, this section starts from a more general sense and then narrows down to the women's writings.

Post-colonialism is discussed as a principal period and theory of the study. Although the study concurs with Homi Bhabha's notion of 'spectacular resistance'; Edward Said's 'orientalism'; and Gayatri Spivak's concept of the 'subaltern', other critics like Bill Ashcroft (1989, 2001); Robert Young (1995,2001); Slemon (1995) Padmini Mongia (1996); McClintock (1992) are critically engaged and appraised.

Feminism is a necessary concept for any study involving women irrespective of the geo-political location. The discussion commences from the International Feminist debates and narrows down to the African continent and contests the interlocking aspects of gender, citizenship and democracy in a South African context.

Women and Literary Production traces female authors and their contribution in South African literary studies. It highlights the treatment of women as protagonists in the hands of female authors (Wolf, 1981) of the post-colonial period.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the paradigms to which the study subscribes: Postcoloniality and Feminist Theory. I also explain the qualitative research design along with the selected approaches in line with the paradigms.

I examined themes of the selected texts, analysed personal lives of authors, identified roles of women protagonists, and offered a general assessment of fiction written by women and its relevance to postcolonialism.

Chapter 4 - 6: Analysis of Texts

These chapters are largely an interpretive exercise to address the basic tenets of this inquiry. In making this analysis, I limited the scope to what the study set out to achieve (as highlighted in the 'Research Questions'). The following constructs are addressed in each chapter:

- The relevance of women's literature to the socio-political situation in South Africa.
- Authors' writing spaces and developmental implications for active citizenship.
- Relevance of themes and implications for women empowerment and active citizenship.
- The roles assigned to female protagonists and the qualities they exhibit for active participation in a democracy.
- The writings by selected South African women writers of the post-colonial period and the extent to which they exhibit distinctive features of the postcolonial theory.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The conclusion summarises the main thesis of the study. I offer concluding statements on the impact of post-colonial women writers in the development of the twenty-first century woman. My interpretation of the themes from selected texts and the way women are represented in such texts offered a contribution to the framework for further research on women authorship and representation of women in fiction.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

The study is premised on postcolonialism as a principal theory. Within the theory, the study particularly draws from the following theoretical concepts: Orientalism (Edward Said, 1978, 2003); nationalism (Frantz Fanon, 1952, 1961); ambivalence and hybridity (Homi Bhabha, 1994) and subalternity (Gayatri Spivak, 1988). Decolonization is discussed as a way of situating the study problematically within the 'posts' between the period after the colonisers have left the colonies and the constellations of self-rule. It is meant to highlight fissures in the activities that were meant to root out colonial rule from previously colonized states.

The feminist theory is incorporated as a support theory since the subjects of study are females – both authors of the selected texts and their protagonists. Feminism and related theoretical concepts are employed only in as far as they complement the principal theory of postcolonialism. They are useful literary tools in interrogating the oppression of women and subsequent resistance/s (robust and subtle forms) with the liberatory and developmental intent. The relevance of a feminist perspective is summed up in Dube (2000: 20) who contends that 'women in colonised spaces not only suffer the yoke of colonial oppression but also endure the burden of patriarchal systems imposed on them.' The postcolonial and feminist theoretical concepts therefore, complement each other in this study to demonstrate how marginalized postcolonial societies transformed colonial domination. To that effect, the study examines the post-colonial and post-apartheid literature as a body of literary writings that respond to the intellectual discourse of European colonisation in South Africa particularly. It seeks to address problems and consequences of a political and cultural nature on the decolonisation of South Africa as a country and a nation of people formerly subjugated by colonial rule. The study examines post-colonial and post-apartheid writings by South African women and investigates how such literature shapes colonial discourse of the women folk by either modifying or subverting the colonial encounter in the liberated space.

The current study is literary, premised on the notion that literature mirrors the society and that in analyzing it, such an interrogation could provide solutions to real life problems. The texts analysed represent lived experiences as captured through fiction works by South African women writers. To justify the literary productions (fiction works in particular), as a reflection of lived experiences and as a useful tool in the struggle for liberation, I revert to earlier assertions from Chinua Achebe (in Morell, 1975), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983) and Nadine Gordimer (1994) on the subject of *writing as a social responsibility*.

Chinua Achebe, for instance, rejects art for art's sake, remarking in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* that 'Art for art's sake is just another form of deodorised dogshit' or the idea that 'the hallmark of a true artist is the ability to ignore society' (Morell: 1975:10) and opts, instead, for an art that "is, and was always, in the service of man." By conceiving of themselves as instruments of social struggle for equality and justice, the post-colonial women writers have aligned themselves with the projects of many post-colonial novelists.

In *Freedom of the Artist*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o also locates creative, artistic and intellectual endeavours within the matrix of social responsibility, speaking against power and advocating the rights of the oppressed:

Our pens should be used to increase the anxieties of all oppressive regimes. At the very least the pen should be used to 'murder their sleep' by constantly reminding those of their crimes against the people, and making them know that they are being seen. The pen may not always be mightier than the sword, but used in the service of truth it can be a mighty force (1983:208).

Like Achebe and Ngugi, Nadine Gordimer (1984:19) believes that the writer's role is to act as a spokesperson for the oppressed. She argues that art can be effectively marshalled in resisting the abuses of power. In the long struggle against apartheid, it has been recognised that an oppressed people need cultural backing. Literature such as fiction, plays and poetry became a 'weapon of struggle.' It is in support of the notions stated above, that this study asserts that women's writings are a potential weapon of struggle against gender inequities in South Africa.

Since the study is literary, based on the assumption that literature reflects social reality, the texts are analysed as representations of lived phenomena. It is for this reason that postcolonial and feminist theories are applied to analyse the representation of women, including the injustices meted out against them and how they negotiate and translate the rhizomatic mutations of colonial and patriarchal domination.

2.2 Origins of postcolonial theory

Postcolonialism draws upon key ideas and concepts from the anti-colonial struggles to inform its theoretical constructs. These struggles were staged by the natives in resistance to, amongst others, the historical and colonial dominance, economic exploitation, artificial borders drawn by the imperialist and massive production of literature by the European powers which featured natives as barbaric and uncivilized. Within a South African context, anti-colonial struggles involved numerous formations, including *Black Consciousness*. This study does not intend to analyse the ideology of *Black Consciousness*, nor trace its development, except to highlight that the formation of other organisations which pursued liberation from white domination were rooted in its ideology. Black consciousness is understood in Steve Biko's perspective as:

An attitude of mind and a way life... Its essence is the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude...The philosophy of Black Consciousness therefore expresses group pride and the determination of the black to rise and attain the envisaged self...

(Fatton, 1986)

From Biko's perspective, whilst *Black Consciousness* accepted the liberatory mandate, it epitomised the need for "mental renaissance of the black intellect" that should culminate in the overthrow of white supremacy.

The postcolonial theory is also epistemologically indebted to post-structuralism and postmodernism. White (1973) stresses the link between the wearing away of the Universalist claims of Western epistemology and ontology and the cumulative influence of other cultures on European thinking. This monocultural thinking is subverted by structuralist, poststructuralist and postmodern literary theories.

2.2.1 Post-structuralism

A radical departure from structuralism, particularly rejecting the assumption that human culture may be understood by means of a structure modelled on language (i.e., structural linguistics) that differs from concrete reality and from abstract ideas. Post-structuralists' criticism of structuralism is based on the rejection of the autonomy of the structures that structuralism insists on and robustly question the validity of the binary oppositions that makeup those 'paradigmatic and syntagmatic' structures. The movement is closely related to postmodernism (Rivkin & Ryan, 2013). Poststructuralism dominated the French intellectual life around the 1960s through the work of French philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Gilles Deleuze and many others of the time.

The French intellectuals reacted to the socio-linguistic work of structuralists who held that linguistic codes or grammars should be sought to understand social interactions and cultures, rather taking interest in how texts resisted 'order and systematisation' (Prasad 2005:238). Poststructuralists view speech and behaviour as products of texts (more than just written words) and they focus on deconstructing texts showing how they systematically include and exclude people and ideas. It is this deconstructive nature that links it to postcolonialism. Poststructuralists seek to decentre and destabilise ways of thinking that have been accepted as universal and true, thereby introducing ideas that were initially marginalised and not voiced within structuralist discourses. Such marginalised ideas empower and represent indigenous knowledge that is deliberately undermined and dominated by colonial knowledge. Since these central discourses are seen as deceptive, and held up as social thought, including those of researchers, poststructuralism refuses to place the blame elsewhere other than the writers' contribution in the quest for social justice. Schwandt (1997:122) describes poststructuralism as "a set

of cultural theories that react to structuralism and closure of any kind". According to French scholars Derrida and Foucault, poststructuralism asserts that meaning is unstable, never fixed and that everything is a text and all texts are interrelated and that deconstruction is a strategy for revealing ways in which texts support and maintain views that are often taken for granted and serve to validate dominant groups (Pierre, 2000). It is for this reason that poststructuralism takes on a deconstructive approach. In fact Flax (1990) indicates that the fundamental drives of numerous 'post' traditions are deconstructive. She further posits that even postmodern discourses are all deconstructive in that they seek to detach us from and make us cynical about the truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted. Flax (1990) alleges that such axiomatic truths serve as legitimation for domineering contemporary Western cultures. It is evident at this point that deconstruction is at the heart of the 'post' traditions, including postcolonial. Pierre (2000: 483) describes deconstruction as one of literary criticism strategies

... that foregrounds the idea that language does not simply point to pre-existing things and ideas, but rather helps to construct the experiential world and, by extension, the world as we know it. In other words, the word makes the world. The way it is, is not natural. We have constructed the world as it is through language and cultural practice, and we can also deconstruct and reconstruct it.

Poststructuralism is a reaction to the assertion that knowledge starts from the core, and only then can the margins be considered as exceptions to the norm. Whilst structuralists hold that the truth and the good are the normative standards, poststructuralists fold back that which is thought of as the margin (often called the limit) back on to the core of knowledge, thereby unsettling the understanding of the truth and the good (Williams 2005). In so doing, post-structuralists do not necessarily compare the limits to, or balance against the core, but rather submit that the limit is, subversively, the core. What this claim means is that any 'settled' or accepted form of knowledge or moral good is constituted by its limits and cannot be defined independently from them. Limits, therefore cannot be excluded from the definition of the core; in fact any truth that refutes the existence of the limits is illusory.

The question often posed to poststructuralism is whether the limit is not dependent on the core, and the response has always been that the autonomous definition of the limit is a very important thread running through poststructuralism. The limit is “not defined in opposition to the core; it is a positive thing in its own right” (Williams 2005: 75). The definition of the limit sounds quite radical in that it questions the role of traditional forms of knowledge in formulating definitions. Williams (2005: 75) illustrates the relationship between the core and limit:

(wake - walk - eat - sleep): a repeated pattern of life.

The relationship between the elements can be worked out (order and place)

(sleep - sleep - play - sleep): a deviation from the pattern (a limit)

It constitutes an exceptional move away from the normal pattern.

Poststructuralists acknowledge that the limit is an unknown factor, for if it were knowable, it would be another core. They then define the limit as ‘a version of pure difference’ in the sense of deconstructing an identity (Derrida 1989). Difference then, is an unconceivable entity that can only be approached through its disruptive impact on the core; it cannot be identified, but its effects are traceable.

Theorists of poststructuralism vary in their perspectives because they observe the effects of the limits from various places through various trajectories. Jacques Derrida (1973) in his text, *Of Grammatology*, traces the deconstructive role of the limit to the immediate and truthful core of the language. Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *Discours figure* (1971) follows the impact of the limit in language and sensations. Gilles Deleuze (1995) in *Difference and Repetition*, confirms the essence of the productive limit between actual identities and virtual pure difference, whilst Michael Foucault (1989) in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, traces the genealogy of the limit as the historical constitution of later tensions and problems. Julia Kristeva in *Revolution in Poetic Language* ((1984) follows the limit as an unconscious deconstruction and reconstruction of the linguistic structures and oppositions.

Unlike humanism as a philosophy, poststructuralism understands power, resistance, and freedom as constructs and projects that provide more room to manoeuvre and more possibilities for social justice. This tenet of post-structuralism forms the basis in the development of postcolonial theory.

2.2.2 Deconstruction

Instead of a theory, deconstruction is rather a series of analytic techniques attributed to Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004) deployed to read and interpret texts. Through familiarity within literary studies, the term has come to be used synonymously with the term ‘criticism’ as in illuminating the (in) coherence of a stance. Norris (1991) acknowledges the work of Roland Barthes, who later criticised himself for his overdependence on concepts of metalinguistic or scientific knowledge. His deconstruction intent of the structuralist approach was derailed by the kind of linguistic analogy that he deployed which turned out to represent the same ideals that he had meant to challenge.

Deconstruction as ‘criticism’ was borne through Derrida’s critique of Saussure, in his essay *‘Linguistics and Grammatology’* (Derrida 1977: 27-73). In this critique, Derrida cites instances from Saussure in which writing is treated as merely a derivative or secondary form of linguistic notation, always dependent on the primary reality of speech and the sense of the speaker’s presence behind their words.

Derrida saw a metaphysics at work behind the privilege afforded speech and set out to demonstrate that it is a misnomer to degrade writing; asserting that writing is in fact a precondition of language and must be conceived as prior to speech; that it is the endless displacement of meaning which both governs language and places it forever beyond the reach of a stable, self-authenticating knowledge. It is this deep-sitting of the repression of writing in Saussurian theory that Derrida is deconstructing.

Deconstruction should not be seen to mean dismantling or replacing dominant signifiers in a binary with the subordinated, rather it points towards the preservation of traditions through constant engagement with the tensions and omissions in languaging in such a way that it becomes clear how the orthodox which received dominant interpretation has been produced.

The earlier use of the term deconstruction was limited to opposing orientalism by unsettling the 'orthodoxies and truths' of texts produced by the Eurocentric philosophies and producing therefore a counter literature. It later focused on unsettling institutions that produced such texts. Derrida (1997) challenged what was generally taken as the truth and objectivity, for he is doubtful whether it is possible for people to be optimally objective even when they know the truth. Deconstruction should not be seen as a comprehensive theory, nor a systematic fabric of ideas, but rather as a strategy. As Pestel (1991) puts it; it is a way of reading a literary or philosophical text in order to get to the bottom and find answers to the following questions:

- What do authors do in order to assume indisputable truths and concepts in their works?
- How do they convince the readers of the founding principles upon which their theories are based?
- How far do they go to attain a philosophy that concurs with their view of reality?

To achieve its goal, the theory of deconstruction digs deep into texts to expose both the author's blind spots and the unconscious premises on which the text is based. Tensel (1991: 11) equates the operations of the theory to a 'virus that is fed into a system...not to destroy the programme, but to reveal the conceptual structure...find the blind spot which can only be seen from outside (sic)'

Jacques Derrida questions Western assumptions and dismantles the notion of structure. According to him, a deconstructive text should:

show how a discourse undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical opposition on which it relies, but identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of arguments, key concept or premise (Culler 1983:86).

In this current study, women's writings are perceived as the deconstructive intent of literature and this in fact qualifies the writings as deconstructionist postcolonial literature.

The main aim of Derrida's deconstruction is to disrupt the metaphysics of presence which is the core of Western philosophy. He asserts that countless oppositions such as meaning/form, speech/writing, soul/body, normal/pathological, conscious/unconscious, man/woman and many others, relied on a metaphysics of the presence. Such oppositions and binaries, he claims, accord an advantaged position to the presence inherent in the former term and signifying the latter as non-existent, invalid, or absent.

The deconstructionist looks for the ways in which one term in the opposition has been privileged over the other in a particular text, argument, historical tradition or social practice. One term may be privileged because it is considered normal, central case, whilst the other is considered special, exceptional, peripheral or derivative. Something may also be privileged because it is considered more true, more valuable, more important or more universal than its opposite.

However, Balkin (1996:2) posits that a privileged term can be deconstructed in numerous ways: that out of two terms of a binary, where the first is A and the second is B, the reasons for privileging A may also apply to B, or the reasons for B's subordinate status can also apply to A in many ways; how A depends on B is actually a special case of B. In this exercise the main aim is to achieve a new understanding of the relationship between A and B, which is always subject to further deconstruction.

Within the context of my study, deconstruction allows for an examination of the coloniser/colonised relationship that still manifests itself through privileging men over women. Through deconstruction, the subordination of women and the privileging of men can be reversed or reordered so that women can equally be privileged by virtue of their talents, virtues or creative abilities.

Ashcroft et al (1995) puts this process of deconstruction at the centre of poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism. It is this logocentric meta-narrative of the European culture which goes unchallenged and accepted as the universal truth that is a shared concern for other 'isms'. Acting on this concern, deconstruction then emphasises the fact that the 'presence' which is inherent in the first element of the binary, is by itself not a given, but a product of socialisation and epistemic selectivity, which in order to function, must possess the qualities which belong to its opposite.

Balkin (1987) maintains that the deconstructionist must look for exceptional or marginal counter principles that have an unacknowledged significance, and which, if taken seriously, would displace the dominant principle that has always been taken for granted and deployed without question. In his subsequent text, Balkin (1990b) states that the role of deconstructive analyses should be to closely study the figural and rhetorical features of texts to see how they interact or comment upon the argument made in the texts. The deconstructionist should look for loose threads that at first glance appear peripheral yet often turn out to undermine or confuse the argument. Multiple meanings within a text should be considered, along with an interrogation of the etymological relationships between words and even puns to show how the text speaks with different (and often conflicting) voices.

The significance of this concept in this study rests on its unifying effect on the conceptual framework that forms the basis of this investigation. In relation to the subtheme of feminism, deconstruction was also found to be useful as a method of ideological critique, directed at the patriarchal thought and institutions. Feminists could use deconstructive arguments to expose and critique the suppression and marginalisation of things associated with women and femininity.

At a time when it seemed that patriarchy was unconquerable or that its control of the social construction of knowledge had been so successful that women's desires and identities were nothing more than the products of male power and privilege, it is deconstructivism, through the privileging of iterability and instability of social meanings, that undermined the potentially pessimistic suggestions in radical feminism.

2.3 Postcolonialism as a Principal Theory

The fiction works by South African women writers are studied within the conceptual framework of postcoloniality, a highly controversial social-political movement and research approach which seeks to oppose the racist and oppressive features which self-perpetuate in societies that were formerly colonised by European empires (Somekh & Lewin, 2012).

The term 'postcolonial' has multiple implications beyond periodicity (historical marker) and lends itself more to a theoretical position. It focuses upon the myriad ways in which colonialism continues to manifest itself in the everyday lives of people and how it is resisted and challenged. Post-colonialism criticises how Eurocentric thinking dominates the lives of people throughout the world. It seeks to re-centre the voices of the marginalised and displace Western hegemony.

This is an ideology that emerged throughout the world from previously colonised states, ironically with a wave of intellectual support from Europe and the United States. It is concerned with the legacies of colonialism and how they work to 'subjugate entire populations on the basis of race and geography' (Prasad 2005: 212). The concept is defined differently by various authors.

James (2015:1) defines postcolonialism as:

A theoretical procedure used to interpret, read and critique the cultural practices of colonialism and shows how the optic of race enables the colonial powers to represent, reflect, refract and make visible native cultures in inferior ways. It begins with the assumptions that colonial writings, arts, legal systems, science and other socio-cultural practices are always racialised and unequal where the coloniser does the representation and the native is represented.

Ashcroft (2013:205) maintains that the term is used broadly to denote the political, linguistic and cultural experiences of societies that were colonised by European states.

This study therefore examines and provides an analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialism, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects...the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations and communities.

Chilisa (2012: 48-49) defines postcolonialism as:

...a theory that discusses the role of imperialism, colonialism, globalisation and their literature and language in the construction of knowledge and people's resistance to imposed frameworks of knowing.

Common with the previous definition is the idea that postcolonialism is a literary construct that re-presents and re-inscribes indigenous knowledge systems against the commonly-held knowledges of the West.

In relation to what the current study purports to do, these definitions advocate for the interrogation of the imperial/colonial or global knowledge with the intent of re-constructing a national identity. The implied imperial/colonial knowledge includes assumptions and opinions that men hold about women which they use to construct the female identity. Often the females do not participate in the constructions and projections about themselves, in which case, specific forms of identity are imposed on women. The definitions also encourage participation of the subject (in this case, women) in the construction of knowledge thereby resisting the Eurocentric notions (and sometimes male assumptions) of what it means to be a woman, a wife, mother or any such roles traditionally occupied by women in their respective societies.

Ashcroft (1997) is concerned about how Africans can break away from the tyranny of a discourse that constructs their representation. This concern comes from an observation that numerous projects which set out to dismantle colonial binaries (for example, black/white, coloniser/colonised, inferior/superior, self/other) ended up formulating new ones. In order to escape from this predicament, Ashcroft (1997) advocates the adoption of postcolonialism as an alternative theory of deconstructing European ideologies about the Orient, Africa in particular. Based on this background, and within an African context, he describes postcolonialism as:

a way in which the African subject re-imagines itself by confirming the very porous borders of Africa as a discourse of geography, history, culture, nation and identity. It looks beyond Africa to see that African cultures share something crucial with many other cultures around the world; they share a history of colonial contact, with its inevitable material effects, its conflicts, its complicities and opposition, its filiations and affiliations...(Ashcroft, 1997:23-24).

Although other postcolonial scholars are discussed, this study mainly focuses on the following theorists: Frantz Fanon (1952, 1961), Homi Bhabha (1994), Edward Said (1978), and Gayatri Spivak (1988).

The study aligns itself more with Ashcroft's (2013:205) definition in the examination of the selected texts. It charts an analysis of themes and the way they support or frustrate the colonial intent. The following aspects of Ashcroft's (2013) definition are fully addressed: the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse, resistance of the subjects, the differences in response to intrusions and their contemporary colonial legacies in pre- and post-independence nations and communities.

The subtleties of subject construction imply that the construction of the subject identity is not an active process by the subject-forming power; instead, the subjects are born into communities that already live by such 'constructed identities'. Women protagonists in the study find themselves in communities that subscribe to patriarchy as a way of life and therefore, through expectations from parents, education systems and other patriarchal institutions, find themselves endorsing such identities because to them it is the only way they can belong to, identify with and become constellations of the communities. It should be noted, however, that the authors have created opportunities for some of their protagonists to resist and in some cases even engage in rebellious and violent acts to oppose domination.

In the study, the female protagonists are placed in societies that already embrace particular views of the world with packaged senses of morality, political and social values. As observed from the selected texts, the older generation of women upholds these constructed identities and assumes the responsibility to inculcate them as they bring up girls and women as wives, mothers and subaltern others within their communities.

With regard to Ashcroft's notion of resistance, it is important to observe that African women in particular live within an overriding masculine culture that subjugates and undervalues them. The study interrogates these subjugating identities imposed upon women by dominant colonial cultures and by post-liberation male cultures.

To demonstrate how women resist these socially constructed identities, the study relies on South African women writers' depiction of how these identities are constructed and how women (portrayed as female protagonists) in the selected texts interrogate the perceived oppressive identities. In an attempt to engage these issues, the women protagonists are placed within a specific time framework from which to abstract and

analyse their roles, images, identities and statuses. To this end, the study identifies a time frame that is contemporaneous and located within the postcolonial context.

The significance of postcolonial context in this study resides in its resistance and deconstruction paradigms. Postcolonialism is associated with various forms of resistance: intellectual, political and cultural against colonial encroachment and duplicitous practices. In this study, postcolonialism locates gendered violence and oppression within resistance ideology. It provides a framework for highlighting various forms of resistance staged by women against colonialism and patriarchal mechanisms of gendered oppression.

Through postcolonial literature, theories emerged advocating for different forms of resistance: Fanon (1961) against colonialism and resulting bourgeoisie nationalists; Said (1978) against intellectual domination; Bhabha (1994) against the unquestioned hegemony of colonial power and Spivak (1988) against marginalisation (subalternity) and oppression of social groups outside of the hegemonic power structures. In the current study, the observation is that the relationship between coloniser and colonised is replicated in power relations between male (along with patriarchal institutions) and female protagonists. In this relationship, women are subordinated to their male counterparts through traditional practices – African as well as colonial. The study therefore interrogates these traditions and teases out how women negotiate their status through postcolonial and feminist theoretical moorings.

2.4 Frantz Fanon on Nationalism

Although Robert Young in his *Colonial Desire* (1995) calls Edward Said along with Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak the ‘Holy Trinity’ of postcolonialism, other sources recognise Frantz Fanon’s (1952) contributions as a springboard for the development of postcolonial theory.

Frantz Fanon’s (1952) work serves as a vital node of focus in the institutionalisation and consolidation of postcolonial studies from the 1980s through to the 1990s. His writings have been granted a formative, stabilising status in various readings published during those years, whose aim was to set a theoretical and substantive agenda for postcoloniality and to provide it with ‘an archive and a canon.’

Frantz Fanon's (1952) research agenda earned him a deserved pride of place in the subsequent works by Edward Said, Chakravorty Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha – the three scholars whose critical voices are presented as typically defining the field.

Frantz Fanon (1961) criticises colonialism for its destructive nature on the colonised communities. He particularly condemns the way it subjugated pre-colonial identities, asserting that such a practice is a serious desecration of humanity. For this reason Fanon (1961), in *The Wretched of the Earth*, supports violent resistance to colonial subjugation. To him vehement resistance to colonialism was a liberating endeavour, which would jettison colonial servility from the native soul, and restore self-respect to the subaltern.

In the current study, violent resistance results from failure by government institutions to address concerns of the black majority of the country. However, the study focuses on the violent measures staged by women against the South African government in particular and the associated regulations that relegated women's issues to the periphery. This 'peripherisation' of the plight of women forced South African women to resort to violent means to warrant attention by the powers that be. Failure by the justice system forced women to return violence by violence and kill their perpetrators (spouses that abused them physically and emotionally). The study also examines acts of violence (rape, torture and physical abuse) perpetuated against women which justify Fanon's notion of 'violence as a human fundamental' so that women begin to own their bodies and not surrender themselves as objects of pleasure to men without their express consent.

I start off by highlighting what the concept of nationalism means within the discourse of postcoloniality and then cite Fanon's reaction to nationalism as practised by independent African states.

Nationalism refers to the intense devotion to one's nation; while a nation is a group of people united by residence in a common land, a common heritage or culture, a common interest in living together for the present and in the future, and a common desire to have their own state (Sauers and Weber, 2010). As an ideology, nationalism places the nation at the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being.

The formation or growth of nations, sentiments or consciousness of belonging to a nation, a language and symbolism of a nation, a social and political movement on behalf of the nation and a doctrine or ideology of the nation all constitute nationalism (Smith, 2010). The need for nationalism arises when national identity is threatened or is perceived to be deficient. Nationalism seeks to preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity when that identity is threatened or the desire to transform or even create it when it is felt to be inadequate (Kecmanovic, 2013).

In his essay, *Pitfalls of Nationalism*, Fanon criticises the anti-colonial bourgeois nationalists. He argues that the attainment of nationhood from colonial rule only constitutes a transfer of "those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period" (152) into the native hands – the bourgeois nationalists. He alleges that these elites do not observe their mission to transform the nation for the nation's sake, instead, whatever transformations they put in place is for personal gain. "Sometimes, especially in the years following independence, the bourgeoisie does not hesitate to invest... [and] large sums are spent on display: cars, country houses..." (154)

It is implied here that, instead of working towards fulfilment of the people's hopes, national consciousness turned out to be an 'empty shell... a travesty of what it might have been' (148). Fanon is also concerned that the bourgeoisie does not only step into the former European settlers' shoes, but also continue their relationship with the Western bourgeoisie: "National bourgeoisie organises centres of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie" (152).

Used within the study, nationalism had promises for women as well by virtue of them being citizens of a democratic (post-liberation) South Africa who participated alongside their male counterparts in the military wing of the ANC (uMkhonto weSizwe). These women had legitimate expectations from the spoils of freedom which they helped to bring about. The women folk formed part of the masses who, after delivering the country to democracy, were then treated as second fiddle.

The nationalists' system of exploitation is true to women particularly. While the males were taken for training so that they would occupy positions of power at the dawn of democracy, women were relegated to domestic chores and earned the title 'citizens'. This domestication cut women out from active participation in the economy of the country whilst men assumed positions of power – as beneficiaries of the newly independent state. However, the postliberation literature allude to the fact that women who were given political positions of power were only figure heads afforded the position through male discretion and removed as it suited them.

Within the current study, the men represent what Fanon calls 'national bourgeoisie' and women the 'citizens' enticed with empty titles such as 'mothers of the nation.' The financial muscle that the men nurtured inflated the male ego, which in turn subjugated women in a dependent status.

It is worth noting here also that the women compromised on the feminist agenda in order to pursue and prioritise issues of nationhood. For purposes of acknowledging their contribution, the women's rights were given special consideration in the Constitution of the country. However, this state-of-the art Constitution could not deliver on its promises: these rights exist only in principle; in practice, the women are still victims to the same injustices they suffered before democracy.

Fanon is concerned that the nationalists are uninformed about and oftentimes disinterested in the economic programmes that should see the nation spur forward irrespective of their speeches bereft of meaning and lacking in humanist content. According to Fanon, the claims about African unity are far from attainment due to these conspicuous fissures and contradictions that need to be resolved before the continent can hope for such unity. He raises awareness on what he calls a "national system of exploitation" (Fanon, 1961) which only benefits the bourgeoisie who make fortunes out of emasculating the masses and thereby deferring their dream of a postcolonial 'Utopia.'

Fanon's (1961) response to the disappointment of nationhood – a nationhood that imposes itself by bullying people and intimidating them to compliance – is total rejection:

“This is why we must understand that African unity can only be achieved through the upward thrust of the people, and under the leadership of the people, that is to say, in defiance of the interest of the bourgeoisie” (1961:163)

From these post liberation incidents, it is clear that the colonial powers still have a hold on former colonies. This hold, Fanon maintains, is achieved through betrayal by native leaders: at first, the leaders appear to embody the people’s aspirations for independence, liberty (political, social and economic) and a dignified nation. However, after independence, they can no longer mask their intent to preside over companies of profiteers constituted by national bourgeoisie. Leaders then assume the responsibility to defend the interests of the national bourgeoisie and ex-colonial companies.

Fanon (1961) laments the fact that participants of the liberation struggle are left in the cold as the militants disappear into the crowds and take the empty title of citizen. Now that they have fulfilled their “historical mission ... they are invited to retire so that the bourgeoisie can carry out its mission in peace and quiet” (1961:170). It should be noted that the women formed part of these militants who are now relegated to domesticity as mothers, wives and ‘responsible citizens’ - where responsible means docility and compliance to domesticity.

Some theorists in postcolonial discourses have repudiated Fanon’s legacy, alleging that his approach follows the same trend by other European theorists who tend to impose the Eurocentric paradigms onto the African contexts. Miller (1990), in particular questions the application of Fanon’s notions to different geographical and cultural contexts within the continent: “Fanon winds up imposing his own ideas of nation in places where it may need reappraising” (Miller, 1990: 48).

Notwithstanding the criticism, Fanon explicitly addresses the specificity of precolonial and cultural reforms. The reality of Fanon’s criticism holds even today in the post-liberation states: the only way postcolonial states can overturn the colonial system is through appropriation of nation states as part of the anti-colonial struggle.

It is this resistance which brought about numerous activities in the form of anti-colonial struggles whose prerogative is infused into the agenda and intent of postcolonial theory.

Fanon's contribution is essential in the development of postcolonial theory, more specifically when he teases out the complexities of the 'self' and 'other' in *Black skin, White masks* (1967).

Congruent with Fanon on the post-liberation 'bourgeois nationalism' and resistance to colonial domination, liberation theorists like Amilcar Cabral, Che Guevara, Ngugi wa Thiong'o have adopted the same perspective of violent resistance to domination whether directly or indirectly through the native leaders who subscribe to the same domineering attitudes of the ex-colonialists.

The relevance of Fanon's principles in the study lies in their insistence on robust deconstructive imperatives. Fanon is relevant because both postcolonial and feminist theories are deconstructive in their approach, addressing inequalities in power relations that exist between postcolonial elites and the masses (including women as citizens) whose expectations are betrayed by postcolonial governments. In the case of women, this betrayal further translates into violence and domination even in their private spaces through patriarchal practices.

The implication for women is that they should confront their issues with the same attitude as radical feminism which advocates for radical re-ordering of society through elimination of male domination in all social manifestations. Fanon underscores radical feminism in the assertion that since communities are not attentive to women's plight, the women should employ more radical and violent approaches to warrant attention and secure justice.

In this study I juxtapose colonial dominance with patriarchal practises that oppress women because like colonialism, patriarchy is sustained through violence and suppression. Patriarchy is a perpetuation of male domination and repressive traditions maintained through violence. It should be remembered here that the South African Constitution classifies abuse as violence (including emotional abuse), therefore when men are abusive, they are violent, and they ought to taste the same violence in return. Fanon alleges that that colonial rule "is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native" (1963: 38).

The view that Fanon claims the coloniser has on the colonised can be said to be the same view that men have about women (of backwardness and absence of empathy and rationality) which dehumanises the colonial subject (in this case, woman) and “turns him into an animal” (Fanon, 1963: 42). It then becomes natural for the 21st Century woman to resort to deploying violence in the various contexts that oppress them.

2.5 Ambivalence and Hybridity: Homi Bhabha

The study also employs Homi Bhabha’s concepts: ambivalence and hybridity.

Ambivalence is a concept appropriated from psychoanalysis, which describes a recurrent wavering between one thing and its opposite at the same time. In ‘Signs Taken for Wonders,’ Bhabha (1994) maintains that ambivalence

...makes the boundaries of the colonial ‘positionality – the division of self/other – and the question of colonial power – the differentiation of colonizer/colonized – different from both the Hegelian master/slave dialectic or the phenomenal projection of Otherness’ (169)

Instead of assuming that some colonial subjects are ‘complicit’ and some ‘resistant’, ambivalence connotes that complicity and resistance exist in a messy and shifting relationship within the colonial subject: there are instances when the colonial subject would comply with the expectations of the coloniser and then at some point, resist such expectations.

The complexity of the relationship between colonial discourse and colonial subject is ambivalent, for it might exploit and nurture instantaneously. However, Bhabha’s theory evidently views ambivalence as some kind of disruptive factor on colonial domination because it interrupts the simple relationship between coloniser and colonised. In this sense, ambivalence is not a pleasant aspect for the coloniser.

Ambivalence challenges the objective of the colonial discourse: to produce acquiescent subjects who mimic its conventions, customs and morals. In essence, ambivalence is an enemy of mimicry. The result then is the production of ambivalent subjects whose mimicry approximates to and often becomes mockery.

As applied in the study, ambivalence represents salient resistance by women protagonists which seems to suggest compliance, but which constitutes a mockery and denigration of male power. Incidents in the selected texts are mostly of women agreeing, in principle, to avail their services and then betraying the agreement in the actual execution of the assignment. Such a conduct constitutes a mockery in that the woman does not have to raise her voice in disagreement, in which case the man prides himself on his ability to command respect, when in essence, silence is both subversion and an outright refusal to comply.

In the current study, ambivalence describes this fluid relationship between mimicry and mockery, which is profoundly disquieting and unsettling to male dominance. In this respect, ambivalence does not predictably disempower the female subject; it is seen to be ambivalent or 'two-powered' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2008). This ambivalence (the simultaneous attraction and repulsion) is a fundamental destabilisation of the authority of the male protagonist. Bhabha's theory, therefore, is a controversial proposition in that because the colonial relationship is always ambivalent, it produces the seeds for its own destruction. The controversy implies that the colonial relationship is going to be disrupted, notwithstanding whether or not the colonised stage any form of resistance. Bhabha argues that it is imperative for colonial discourses to be ambivalent because it would not appreciate similarities between itself and its subjects; it would be a threat if the colonial subjects could be exact replicas of the colonisers.

He cites the example of Charles Grant, who, in 1792, wanted to instill the Christian religion into Indians, but anxious that this would render them 'turbulent for liberty' (Bhabha 1994: 87). To curb the unpleasant possibility of such turbulence, Grant adjusted the Christian principles with the discordant caste (hereditary classes in Hinduism) practices to produce a 'partial reform' that would produce a void imitation of English mannerisms. According to Bhabha, this incident is a demonstration of the existing conflicts and contradictions within imperialism certain to cause its demise. It is bound to produce an ambivalent condition that disturbs its notion of 'monolithic power.'

Robert Young posits that Bhabha's theory of ambivalence is an inversion of the imperial discourse:

The periphery, which is regarded as 'the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful' by the centre, responds by constituting the centre as an 'equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence' (1995: 161).

Young's (1995) analytic observation here is in line with the deconstruction paradigm that recognises the margins as part of the core without which the core does not exist. Worth noting though, is that this is not a simple reversal of a binary, for Bhabha demonstrates the participation of both the coloniser and colonised in the ambivalence of colonial discourses.

Within the context of the study, ambivalence is characteristic of the patriarchal system that both recognises the value of women as 'custodians of tradition', affords them accolades like 'mothers of the nation', and uses the term *mother* as an Deleuzian assemblage of everything valuable: *motherland*, *mother tongue* and then turning the table by relegating them to domesticity because they are weak (need protection), irrational (use the heart and not the head) and therefore cannot make any meaningful contribution in matters of public interest. The study traces this ambivalent relationship and how women navigate their way to insert themselves as agents in the interstitial narrative of nationalism, despite the obstacles patriarchy throws in their pathways.

There is a close association between ambivalence and hybridity: when ambivalence 'decentres' authority from its position of power, rendering it susceptible to inflections by other cultures, it is hybridising such authority. The hybridity of Charles Grant's suggestion cited earlier, is a hybridising act that can also be seen as a feature of its ambivalence. In sum, engaging with indigenous cultures of the colonised, over which the coloniser has dominance, inevitably leads to an ambivalence that disables its monolithic dominance. Homi Bhabha (1994) in 'Signs Taken for Words,' coins the term 'hybridity' to characterise this ambivalence; that in the very practice of domination, the language of the master becomes hybrid, enmeshed and 'contaminated' by the colonised's linguistic repertoire.

He asserts that hybridity results from various forms of colonisation which lead to cultural interchanges and that in an effort to exert power over the colonised, “the trace of what is dissolved is not repressed, but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid” (1994:111). This hybrid trace contradicts the colonial power’s attempts to fix and control indigenous world views, experiences and cultures.

Although hybridity has taken a central position within postcolonial studies, it is not a new concept to the humanities. It owes its origins to the biological studies of cross-fertilisation (Acheraiou, 2011). Within postcolonial studies, hybridity threatens racial/cultural purity and singularity. The cultural concerns in the humanities necessitated the incorporation of this concept into postcolonial studies by non-European intellectuals. In this study, I adopt the concept of hybridity from Bhabha (1994) and engage with his delineation in detail.

Homi Bhabha adapted the concept into colonial discourse theory as a description of a complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between the coloniser and colonised. The relationship is ambivalent in that the colonised is not entirely opposing the coloniser (Bhabha 1994).

Hybridity for Bhabha, is located at the limits of authoritative discourses, such as the period of colonisation in Africa, during which hegemonic predatory nations dissected the African continent, expropriated the land, pillaged resources and forced the natives to work as slaves in their ancestral lands, all the while establishing colonial schools and colleges fashioned closely after British models that disregarded autochthonous teaching and learning systems in Africa, thus ‘normalising’ imperial dominant hegemonic value systems and silencing the natives or ‘subaltern’, disabling them from speaking of their experiences and negotiating their own identities (Sivasaipoorani & Phil 2017:419).

Bhabha’s cultural hybridity is often criticised for the implied assumption that as at the point of contact (third space) and/or interaction, the culture maintained absolute purism (uninflected by other cultures). The critics attack this ‘purity’ asserting that cultures are constantly interacting and inflecting one another and therefore the implied purity is an invalid assertion. Jonathan Friedman (2016) in particular, in his essay:

The Hybridisation of Roots and the Abhorrence of the Bush, depoliticises Bhabha by nullifying hybridity. However, on the contrary, Bhabha's hybridity does not suggest purity, but constant interactions resulting in further inflections without suggesting that the interacting cultures were initially pure at that point. Implied in Bhabha's concept of hybridity is that a culture deriving from fusion with others is still subject to further inflections culminating in dislocations and displacement which constitute fundamental tenets of postcolonial experiences.

Hybridity is relevant in any study that examines lived phenomena through the lens of postcolonial theory. It helps the postcolonial critic to upset the discourse of imperialism that would otherwise remain 'unmixed' and uninfluenced by anything other than itself. According to Bhabha, hybridity allows the colonised individual or 'subaltern' to negotiate and articulate their own identity by creating a new point of view or perspective from the clashing and or blending of two or more worlds.

Molefe Asante (1987) for example, coined the term Afrocentricism as a method deriving from an Afrocentric paradigm, which deals with the question of African identity from the perspective of African people as centred, located, orientated, and grounded and this proposition was created in order to convey the important need for African people to be relocated historically, economically, socially, politically, and philosophically (Mkabela, 2005:179).

Bhabha challenges the assumption that an individual's identity is simply the result of fixed factors such as education, gender or race and argues that a mixture of cultural influences shape the individual and affects their identity. An example of the influence of a mixture of cultures on one's identity is cultural appropriation, which is a diverse phenomenon and when viewed from the arts can be thought to include occurrences such as the representation of cultural practices or experiences by cultural 'outsiders, the use of artistic styles distinctive of cultural groups by non-members and the procurement or continued possession of cultural objects by non-members or culturally distant institutions (Matthes, 2016:343).

However, Matthes (2016) contends that cultural appropriation is often viewed as morally problematic when compared to actual events as there could be noticeable misrepresentation, misuse, and theft of the stories, styles, and material heritage of people who have been historically dominated and remain politically and socially marginalised. Thus, although hybridity advocates for a cross-fertilisation between two separate races or cultures, it is necessary to consider all elements of the cultures involved from the perspective of the cultural group, in order to avoid misrepresentation of the heritage of the people, as suggested by the Afrocentric method, which suggests cultural and social immersion as the best way to approach and understand African phenomena (Mkabela, 2005:179).

Bhabha maintains that people can only be described through cultural hybridity. This concept implies a mixture of cultural influences that shape a human being and affects their identity. To see an individual's real self, one must look past logical contradictions and accept the inner conflicts inherent in humanity. Postcolonial cultures are extremely complex – they often reflect mixed cultures and linguistic imitations of the colonial power with pre-existing traditional customs. This mixing results in the creation of transcultural forms within the colonially-produced zone. Homi Bhabha (1994) calls this new form 'a third space of enunciation.'

In this study, hybridity represents a postcolonising tool that rejects purity of cultures. Like mimicry, hybridity can run in reverse: it can describe how Western cultures can be inflected by African elements – chutneyfied (Singh, 2009). Similarly, within this third space of enunciation, women may acquire and practise qualities that can be seen to be 'unlady-like' because they are normally associated with masculinity. The reverse is also possible. Since the study traces the emergence of the 21st Century woman from oppressive colonial and patriarchal practices, Bhabha's cultural hybridity is a significant concept: it creates the third space for cultural interchange and allows for the emergence of alternative cultures – what Bhabha calls 'mutation' – by transgressing problems of suppression and exclusion involved in notions of hegemony or purity (of races, cultures, traditions) which are upheld by resisting nationalist efforts to maintain the status quo of dominance and manipulation.

For the study, hybridity allows an opportunity for women to actualise themselves through acquisition of empowering attributes for active and meaningful participation in the post-liberation democratic South Africa. It allows the subaltern woman to negotiate and articulate their own identity by creating a new perspective from the clashing and or blending of two or more worlds.

The implied significance of hybridity in this context lies in its deconstructive impact on the assumption that gender exists in the extremes of male and female with each gender representing a hegemonic group that bears no commonalities (of physical structure, mentality and behaviour) with the other. This deconstructive imperative of

Hybridity also calls for a revision of the age-old binaries of sun/moon, rational/irrational, strong/weak as referents to maleness and femaleness respectively.

I am not as ambitious as to claim that the study reverses these power-based binaries, but to demonstrate that male and female genders exist in constant reconnoitering of the continuum between genders and therefore it is a misnomer to assume purism in gender relations. On the contrary, women have shown appropriate conduct and displayed qualities that were initially associated with maleness: rationality, militancy, strength (willpower) and aggression. It only takes affordance of opportunities or as according to Bhabha (1994), the 'space of enunciation' for these attributes to become manifest and for women to actualise themselves.

2.6 Orientalism: Edward Said

Orientalism is an integral concept in postcolonial studies that shows a different mechanism through which the ex-colonialist sustains control over postcolonial communities. In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) links culture to imperialism. He argues that through the support of administrative and academic institutions, the Western powers partitioned and dominated oriental countries. His notion of 'orientalism' represents a 'systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the Orient...' (Edward Said, 1978:3).

Edward Said (1978:3). unmasks and exposes Eurocentric universalism which takes for granted both the superiority of what is Western and the inferiority of what is not. The Orient is viewed as the 'other' and inferior to the West.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993) sees 'orientalism' as a Western system of dominance, restructuring and governance over the orient. Kapoor (2013) maintains that this position, though highly influential, depicts a monolithic conception of Western cultural imperialism. Based on this analogy, Said contends that postcolonialism as a theory should involve not only the retrieval of geographical terrain but also recovery of the indigenous cultures, identity and being, more specifically the sense of agency resident in the dispossessed. This contribution has become critically important in the formulation of associated tenets of postcolonial theory.

The thesis of orientalism reasons that much of the study of civilisation of Islam, in essence, is a practice in political intellectuals, some kind of a "self-affirmation of European identity" (Said 1978: 11) and not necessarily an intellectual inquiry on Eastern cultures. Said (1978) argues that this practice then reduces orientalism to a discriminatory practice by European societies to establish and maintain European domination. This domination is justified by acclaimed 'essential and definitive knowledges about the orient which the Orientals themselves do not have' (Said, 1978:11).

Said (1978:12) maintains that the physical and political conquest of the East by the West was followed by an intellectual conquest of the people where Western scholars appropriated the interpretation and translation of Oriental languages and the critical study of these cultures and histories of the orient. In this way, orientalism became an intellectual norm for cultural judgment, used to "invent" the "exotic east" and the "inscrutable Orient" which are cultural representations of peoples and things of the West (Said, 1978:12).

As applied in the study, the proposition of orientalism represents male knowledge about the female. This is how it came about that the woman was depicted as weak, irrational and earned the referent 'feminine other.' These referents are in contrast to the strong masculine man: firm, phallic and rational.

The binary relationship of strong male and weak female enforced cultural stereotyping through literary, cultural and historical texts that give a myopic and misconstrued understanding of the capacity of women, both as individuals and as a collective. Applied in this study, it means that through orientalism, different societies of women folk are conflated into a homogeneous world of womanism.

The study demystifies this assumption that women are a homogenous group of individuals. It highlights differentiated talents, potential, and mental capacities and contributing to the development of other women (and men) through their creative powers of writing. The study is based on the premise that women-produced fiction works constitute a genre that empowers women for meaningful participation in the 21st Century. According to Said, the greatest influence of orientalism on postcoloniality is experienced and observable in cultural studies and literary theory, both of which contributed to the field of postcolonial studies. His method of analysis follows the prescripts of post-structuralism and deconstruction which are pillars upon which postcoloniality rests.

Orientalism is adapted and interrogated for its fundamental documentation of the extent of postcolonial studies and its contribution towards analysing multiple settler moves towards innocence in order to forward “an ethic of incommensurability” that recognizes what is distinct and what is sovereign for project(s) of decolonization in relation to human and civil rights-based social justice projects. It turns out that the proposition of orientalism is precise and represents truthful history for the postcolonial period in the way the Western world represented and reconstructed the Eastern world (Eagleton, 2006). Postcolonial theory therefore examines the power that the West exerts on the east, even after they have left the colonies to self-rule.

Edward Said’s model of colonial discourse was not without criticism: Spivak (1988) particularly, is concerned that whilst Orientalism theorises how the West dominates the non-West, it was silent on the anti-colonial resistance that was masked by the dominant system of Eurocentric representation (Morton 2009). Bhabha also reiterates the limitations in Said’s orientalism: claiming that the West can never completely dominate the orient.

Said maintains that the orient might simply mimic the Western ways but not lose their indigenous cultures; that there will always be a trace of what the West is trying to destroy, simply awaiting an opportune moment to erupt and recuperate. This analogy is consistent with his assumption that power is not monolithic; rather it creates a web of underground connections that emerge at different points with varying intensity, a phenomenon that Deleuze and Guattari (1986) perceive as the rhizomatic.

The relevance of orientalism in this study is its role in highlighting the ways in which the West continued to dominate the East through intellectual inquiry and knowledge production in the academic, cultural and intellectual sectors of the decolonised countries. As applied in the study, orientalism carries a cautionary note: that even if the material resources could be appropriated to the indigenous communities, they would still be subordinated intellectually.

This status quo raises awareness on the need for a different and alternative form of resistance: literary resistance characterised by productions that portray a truer version of the 'third world' communities. Spivak (1988) adds that even as the orient writes back to the canon, they should not expect to completely undo the damage done to the cultural heritage of the indigene. This argument is also consistent with what Bhabha asserts: that through interaction, there develops interculturality within the 'third space' that neither resembles the dominant culture nor the subordinating culture inflecting it; something he calls a 'mutation.'

Over the decades, through Eurocentric literature dominating the writing space, the orient was depicted as weak, *womanly*, and irrational. These referents are in contrast to the strong masculine West: firm, phallic, male, and rational.

Within the context of this study, the concept speaks to female authors, as 'non-European Other' (and in this case also, as non-male): that unless the women contribute to literary productions, and report on issues of concern for women, including their contribution in the liberation struggles and subsequent involvement in the creation of a post-liberation (and post-apartheid) societies, the male authors are likely to continue to produce literature that portrays women as weak, irrational and requiring guidance, protection and rescue from male counterparts.

The male ego is thus furtively nurtured through works of art that depict them as equivalents of the strong masculine West: firm, phallic and rational.

Therefore, writing (including fiction works), is another form of resistance that Bhabha would classify as a 'spectacular form of resistance'.

2.7 The Subaltern: Gayatri Spivak

Like Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak (1988) has been consistently concerned with the production and reception of 19th century Western and European literature which she claims is inextricably bound up with the history of imperialism. She then challenges, through engagement with literary texts from the European tradition, the authority of the colonial grand narratives.

Morton (2009) observes that through engagement with postcolonial texts, Spivak challenges the totalising gaze of colonial discourse by concentrating on occurrences of subaltern agency and resistance.

This study adopts Spivak's vocabulary (deconstruction, subaltern, resistance, re-articulation) which does not only add substance to the literary framework, but also streamlines analysis later on in the study. In an interview with de Kock, Spivak posits that: "Subaltern...has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis" (1992:46).

Spivak highlights that 'subaltern' is not an alternative for the oppressed, but a mechanism of the discrimination that sets a person aside as another.

Spivak recuperated the term from Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) who used it in his political theory developed in *Prison Notes* (1935). Gramsci used this terminology as he only had the workers and peasants who were oppressed in mind.

Spivak explains:

It means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act. That's what it meant, and anguish marked the spot (1988: 292)

Although the concept is used in different contexts by theorists, it still carries the basic connotations of being marginalised, not consulted and therefore voiceless.

In both critical theory and postcolonialism, subaltern refers to social groups that are outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and are assumed not to have any culture of their own. 'Outside' here means not participating in any geographic, social or political activities. This exclusion from participation has a silencing effect – it denies them the means by which other people voice their presence in their societies. *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (2008) further adds to Gayatri's subaltern concerns when it posits that 'otherness' is a form of relegation of non-Western forms of knowing or of acquiring knowledge to the margins of intellectual discourse.

Sharp (2008) supports Spivak and laments the fact that for the subaltern to be heard and known, they have to adopt Western ways of knowing, reasoning, thought, language and, most importantly, they must also construct expressions of their non-Western knowledge of colonial life in contrast to Western ways of knowing the world. This conformity and re-construction, in essence, constitutes mimicry – an abandonment of customary ways of thinking and an adoption of Western ways, implying that the subaltern must speak to the oppressor in the language of the oppressor in which case their true voice is muddled by the cultural and intellectual filters of conformity.

In her essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak (1988) is concerned about the processes employed in postcolonial studies, which in her opinion ironically re-inscribe and adopt neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation and cultural erasure. She questions whether the postcolonial critic is unknowingly perpetuating the same task of imperialism, furthering on the same institutionalised discourse that catalogues and appraises the East in the same models of colonial imperialism they purport to dismantle. On the contrary, she encourages the 'postcolonial intellectuals to learn that their privilege is their loss' (Ashcroft 1998:28).

From inception, the concept of the subaltern has always been and still continues to be one of the most complex and challenging to grasp. The subaltern as fundamentally expressed in the words of Gramsci refers to any individual or a group of individuals of low rank, who form part of a specific society suffering from domination by a hegemonic elite

class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation (Louai, 2012).

Louai's (2012). definition highlights the fact that there are two classes here i.e. the ruling class and those that are ruled over which we can refer to as subalterns.

It is such divisions that necessitated the binarism in which the underlying logic is that 'signs have meaning not by simple reference to real objects, but by their opposition to other signs' (Ashcroft, 2013). A binary in this context refers to a combination of two things which oppose each other and by so doing suppresses anything that comes in-between the two proposed categories. The concept of the subaltern moved to a more complex theoretical debate with the intervention of the Indian-American post-colonial feminist critic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who was criticised in her ground-breaking essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). When Gramsci used this terminology, he only had the workers and peasants who were oppressed in mind. However, this word has now become 'totally situational' according to Spivak (Morton, 2003).

The following concepts can be related to that of the subaltern, namely, hegemony and binarism. Hegemony fundamentally refers to the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that are less powerful that the interests of the ruling class are the interests of all (Ashcroft et al., 2013). In a society where hegemony exists, it is important to realise that this domination over the other classes is usually by consent.

The method used by the ruling class to achieve large-scale domination is through a subtle and inclusive surveillance and regulation of the state apparatuses such as education and the media (Ashcroft et al., 2013). However, the true power of hegemony lies in the binarism in which the coloniser creates the idea of superior/inferior, good/bad, black/white polarity. An example of this can be illustrated in Chinua Achebe's novel *Arrow of God* which describes how the white man uses more than just physical weapons to dominate the Ibo people of Nigeria (Rosen, 2010). This example displays how people do not control ideas but how ideas control people.

Subaltern is often associated with 'otherness' and 'alterity'. Alterity is defined as "the state of being other or different; diverse, otherness" and is derived from the Latin word *alteritas* (Ashcroft et al., 2013).

Alternate, alternative, alteration and alter ego are English derivatives of alterity, while *alterité* is more common in French, and has the antonym *identité* (Johnson and Smith 1990: xviii). The term alterity was adopted by philosophers as an alternative to 'otherness', with the intention to reflect a change in Western perceptions of the relationship between consciousness and the world. Before Rene Descartes, individual consciousness had been taken as the privileged starting point for consciousness, where the 'other' appeared in post-enlightenment philosophies as a reduction, an aberration and an epistemological question.

In postcolonial theory, alterity has often been used interchangeably with 'otherness' and 'difference', however, with an initial distinction between otherness and alterity, where 'otherness' as a philosophical problem and otherness as a feature of a material and discursive location is peculiarly applicable to post-colonial discourse. It is impossible to separate the identity of the imperial culture from the alterity of colonised others, who, according to Spivak, are an alterity determined by a process of othering.

In the current study, the subaltern represents power relations between women (black, coloured) as citizens and the South African apartheid regime; women and men within patriarchal institutions - of marriage, religion, justice education and others that subject women to traditional practices that sets them apart as subalterns.

Since Spivak is a postcolonial theorist and feminist activist, her use of the concept subaltern deviates slightly from what Gramsci intended when he first coined the word, finding cleavage in a more complex theoretical debate where it serves both postcolonial and feminist agenda. As a feminist critic as well, she asks: *Can the subaltern speak?* She is actually making a statement: that the world is not paying attention to women's plight – both in public and private spaces. This analogy is useful in understanding the silences that characterise women's communication and participation in democratic enactments.

The study employs the concept as explained by Spivak (1988) in her controversial essay: *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She explains that the question is rhetorical in that it is making a statement of fact – that the subaltern cannot speak. She further explains that the question implies that there is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak (Spivak 1988: 307).

The study interrogates the speaking spaces to deconstruct factors that silence women. As Spivak advises, it is not that women cannot articulate, but that even when they speak, they are understood through pre-conceived notions of women being irrational, thinking with their hearts, or just being petty. It is these male attitudes that the study intends to expose as constituting a breakdown in communication between men and women.

From the texts analysed, women opt for silences even where speaking could have served them best. This results from disinterest on the part of listeners along with lack of empathy to women's plight that renders the receiver deaf during the communication process.

2.8 Feminism

Because the study examines women's literature, it incorporates tenets of feminism to supplement the main theory of postcolonialism in approximating the ideal South African woman of the 21st Century. There are many types of feminism in circulation, and researchers and authors may conceive of the concept in differing ways depending on their political perspectives. Mills and Mullaney (2011) define the concept feminism as:

a political movement that focusses on investigating gender, that is, the way that men and women come to construct themselves, their identities and their views of others as more or less feminine or masculine, straight or gay.

Christie (2000: v) defines feminism as 'a movement which has the emancipatory aim of redressing gender inequalities.' This means that feminism is a philosophy that promotes equal status for women in social, economic and political spheres. Feminists are proponents of this philosophy. The history of this social movement is divided into three time periods or waves of feminism. The first wave was an earnest quest by women of the 19th and 20th century, centred on one basic right: the right to vote and Mary Wollstonecraft is pedalled as the progenitor of this wave with her seminal publication, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The second wave challenged the legal and social inequalities. Though it lasted nearly 20 years, this second-wave of feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities.

This study adopts a definition within the African context by Ahikire (2007) who views feminism as multifocal theoretical perspectives from complex and specific material conditions and identities on the female population informed by diverse ways that women contest power, both in public and private spaces: “An ideological force that poses fundamental challenges to patriarchal orthodoxies of all kinds” (Ahikire 2007:3).

What Ahikire (2007) means here is that the feminist agenda in Africa constitutes a precarious position against patriarchy. As used in this study, the concept is particularly significant in affording gravitas to the questions of development and empowerment. At this point I have to indicate that feminism is not necessarily completely embraced within the continent: with some women alleging that it contravenes the culture and/or traditions of their indigenous societies.

A negative reaction to feminism then often comes from the very women whose situations the feminist agenda seeks to address. Compounding the problem is that even educated women in Africa, who embrace feminism, have different expectations. As Tegomoh (2002:3) puts it: What is considered feminine and appropriate in one place, is considered wayward, indecent and rebellious in another. Feminism faces challenges from numerous standpoints across the continent because of cultural and sometimes religious diversity. Whilst other feminists and activists subscribe to the early feminist theories aligned to Western notions, others uphold African feminism. Flora Nwapa finds the ‘African’ in African feminism problematic since it is predicated on how one defines ‘African’.

I do not intend to differentiate between the varied strands of feminism, but use it in its general form: as emerging from women’s experiences under different circumstances informed by social and moral philosophies of the time. Since the study involves experiences of women within the African context and within the post-colonial era, I focus mainly on African feminism along with postcolonial feminism. I apply postcolonial feminism within the ambit of African feminism considering that the majority of African countries were colonised by European powers.

The commonality between African feminism and postcolonial feminism rests on their objection to the assumed commonality and universality of women's lives. They both acknowledge the social, cultural and racial differences that divide women from men. Implied here is that women's oppression is a universal concern, but that it varies in terms of geographical, historical and cultural factors.

There is no single definition for African feminism. It has always been a contestation of a multiplicity of discourses and courses of action in the form of women-driven movements across the continent. In the current study I deviate from the essentialist definition of African feminism that suggests that African feminism is indebted to Western feminism. I argue instead that African feminism owes its origin to dynamics different from those that informed Western feminism. Although Mikel (1997) maintains that African feminism is designed through resistance to Western hegemony, its legacy within African cultures has largely influenced its view point.

The study centres feminism between the extremes of the Western and African notions as delineated by Adichie (2014) and Iboudu (2007) in their definition of feminism as a "doctrine which advocates the expansion of rights of the women in society" (Iboudu, 2007:163 translated). The term *feminist* in this study refers to "a man or woman who says, 'yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it'" (Adichie, 2014: 48). Perceived in this sense, African feminism is neither a duplication of the Western feminism nor anti-Western. Adichie (2014) maintains that women have, in the past, fought with patriarchy in pursuit of social justice for women without necessarily assuming the 'feminist' title.

Adichie's (2014) notion of feminism is more appropriate for this study, particularly because of its move away from the traditional assumption that physical strength is a determining factor for leadership and moving, instead, towards intelligence, advanced knowledge and creativity as determining factors for leadership, irrespective of gender (Adichie 2014). The 21st Century woman is one who develops herself towards leadership roles and does not necessarily inherit them on the basis of gender.

Feminist movements have always been clouded with negative connotations emanating from the Western notions of feminism which tended to give wrong impression about feminists: “you hate men, hate bras, hate African culture, you think woman should always be in charge, you don’t wear make-up, you don’t shave, always angry... (Adichie, 2014:11).

This study delineates African feminism from its Western counterpart which has generated a lot of negativity within the African continent. The 21st Century woman recognises that feminism is a common fight by men and women against gender inequalities and foreign exploitation. The texts studied, particularly *Mother to Mother*, have demonstrated that feminism is not necessarily an opposition to the West; oftentimes it might relate to or be independent of it. The emerging feminists of the 21st Century view feminism as a social, economic, political and moral issue, which by seeking to enhance the dignity of individuals, transcends cultural and racial differences.

Postcolonial feminism draws parallels between colonialism and the subjugation of women. The Western feminists’ narrow focus that (a) all women should be equal to men and (b) all women are the same irrespective of their manifold cultural, social, and economic differences, necessitated postcolonial feminism. The nuances and ambiguities of African cultures were completely ignored. This notion is in line with the colonial notion that Westerners were superior and the colonized were inferior races and, therefore, they (Westerners) had to improve things for them. It is this idea of the commonality and the implied universality of women’s lives that Postcolonial feminists object to (Shenmugasundaram, 2017).

Postcolonial feminism is also referred to as third world feminism. Rather than treating gender in a simplistic sense postcolonial feminism explores issues of subordination, such as migration, slavery, representation, suppression and resistance.

The agenda of postcolonial feminism is based on the assumptions that gender cannot be disengaged from other aspects of their identities and that differences between Western and post-colonial countries should be taken into cognisance. In this study, postcolonial feminism provides the analytic tools to interrogate issues of structural inequities emanating from colonial rule which in the current study present as patriarchal practices that perpetuate subordination of women.

The study interrogates progress made in South Africa, particularly in the empowerment and development of postcolonial and post-apartheid women. It also negotiates spaces of participation and involvement of women in the economic, social and political activities as citizens of the post-liberation South Africa. Whilst remarkable strides have been made with policies governing participation in broader communities, the study highlights traditional practices (typical of colonial control) in the private and public lives of women that overrule and delay progress in the feminist agenda.

African Feminism along with postcolonial Feminism face challenges of demystifying the preconceived ideas about: women's writings, motherhood, sisterhood widowhood and women's sexuality.

2.8.1 Women's Writings

On the question of women representation in authorship, under-representation of women as writers is often associated with planned conspiracy by top male publishers to keep women out of print. Olsen (1978) and Rich (1995), cite a complex combination of material and ideological factors that inhibit potential women writers. They catalogue problems ranging from inequalities in the education system, burdens of child bearing and rearing, and domestic obligations through to restrictions of family and social expectations. Ideologically also, women writers find themselves at a point of tension when their writings challenge both the conventional view of what is appropriate for women and also encroaches on a 'male preserve,' that is authorship. In fact the very act of writing, Rich (1995) argues, constitutes a conflict between 'traditional female functions' and the 'subversive functions of the imagination'.

Gilbert and Gubar (1979) in what became the most memorable opening sentence in literary criticism, ask: 'Is a pen a metaphorical penis? Implying here that writing is essentially male, a kind of extension of the generative act that confers on the male writer authority, the right to create, control and possess. Gilbert and Gubar (1979) believe that women writers find themselves in a continuous balancing act between conformity to certain patriarchal literary norms and a trenchant critique of those same standards. Many critics however, find this view uneasily situated between a view of the literary establishment as comprehensively antagonistic to women writers and the historical evidence that many women did actually write.

There is consensus among critics that the problem with women writers lies not only with production of writing, but also its reception (anxiety of authorship). This state of affairs is maintained, partly through the practice of reviewing and literary criticism. In Eagleton (1993), Rich vehemently objects to what she calls 'false and polarised definitions which link women with selfless altruism and men with a driving egotism that produces art.' According to this analogy art is male and men are creators of art, and therefore, if a woman attempts to write, she merely brings to the body of established male texts the 'feminine' qualities they represent.

The same sentiment presented above is shared by Showalter who is disheartened by the assumption that women writing:

lacks originality, intellectual training, abstract intelligence, humour, self-control, and knowledge of male character. Male writers had most of the desirable qualities; power, breadth, distinctness, clarity, learning, abstract intelligence, shrewdness, experience, humour, knowledge of everyone's character and open-mindedness (in Eagleton M, 1993: 41).

Margaret Atwood (2004) adds that this practice of ascribing rigidly structured concepts of male and female to styles of writing, what she terms the 'Quiller-Couch Syndrome' is still alive and used in twentieth century reviewing.

Female authorship in this study is relevant because the selected texts are written by women, in which case it becomes imperative to examine the postcolonial spaces from which the texts are produced. Authors in South Africa, male or female, writing within the postcolonial period could not evade the responsibility to be 'more than just writers' (Gordimer 1984). Authorship also constitutes a form of resistance: As Said (1978) avers: political independence is nothing if the continent is still dominated intellectually through massive literary productions of the West.

2.10 Motherhood

Feminists distinguish between motherhood as an experience and as an institution. It is commonly held within feminist studies that motherhood is constructed through a patriarchal system and women simply experience it as constructed. Implied here is that women do not define motherhood. The earlier (1970s and 1980s) feminists see motherhood as enslaving because it is narrowly defined – in a way that limits women and their potential to be something else other than mothers. Nnaemeka, Taylor and Francis (1997:139) allege that:

Motherhood is dangerous to women because it continues the structure within which females must be women and mothers and, conversely, because it denies to females the creation of a subjectivity and world that is open and free.

The active rejection of motherhood by feminists involves the advancement of the evacuation ideology which proposes a collective process by which women liberate themselves from all forms of 'oppressive' mothering. Identification and analysis of the multiple aspects of motherhood not only show what is wrong with motherhood, but also the way out.

Feminists feel that it is simply not enough to subject motherhood to some form of analysis that tries to identify aspects of motherhood that makes it unpleasant and enslaving, but to render it null and void by vacating it. This is a radical way to highlight the necessity for women to participate in the redefinition of motherhood instead of trying to view it in a different light. As Allen (1996:28) asserts:

Freedom is achieved when an oppressive construct, motherhood, is vacated by its members and thereby rendered null and void.

Although the institution of motherhood has shifted over the past decade with regard to articulating the fulfilling aspects of motherhood, the earlier associations have not subsided. Women still experience unappreciated and unfulfilling motherhood in the hands of both the children they mother and their spouses.

Consequently, motherhood is discussed in relative terms that reflect different personal histories. Through African authors (Magona and Karodia), the study gives human faces to motherhood – of women who despite the pains, still hold on because they cannot define motherhood without pain but reap the rewards irrespective.

The study also examines the ‘othering’ effect of motherhood as observed from postcolonial societies which value motherhood and wifehood over womanhood: how childlessness ostracises a woman - ‘othering’ her, thereby rendering her less of a woman.

The concept of motherhood is a necessary one judging by the way nationalist societies use it to domesticate women; enslaving them with the responsibility through abandonment by father figures. The study comes from the premise that domesticity (and mothering) relegate women to the periphery and dismember them at a time when they have to benefit from their participation in the liberation struggles. It does not advocate against motherhood, but encourages women to participate fully in the decision-making processes about mothering: the choice to have children, how many and when.

The study examines the way motherhood is romanticised through appealing expressions like, *mothers of the nation*, *custodians of traditions*, *mother tongue* (along with many such cosmetic appendages) to deprive women of spaces and opportunities for meaningful participation in the socio-economic and political activities as citizens of a democratic country.

2.8.2 Sisterhood

Whilst the Weber dictionary defines sisterhood as 'solidarity' of women, liberationists emphasise 'support'. bell hooks (1984) maintains that for women to experience essential value of sisterhood, they must stand in solidarity against racism, class and sexism. She dismisses the notion of common oppression as a unifying factor because it pushes women into victimhood.

bell hooks (1984) argues that women's oppression mystifies the true value of sisterhood: one that recognizes women's diverse and complex social realities. She maintains that the reason women across the globe reject feminist agenda is because the white liberationists submit common oppression as a reason for women coming together. This wrongful association between feminism and victimhood endorses the impression that in order to exist as sisters – looking out for one another – women must share a common oppression and this assumption propagates notions of victimhood.

Whilst African women thrive on support, hooks (1984) advocates for a more involved and complex sisterhood. Lorde (2015) features sisterhood as a performance that inculcates solidarity in women. She maintains that sisterhood should encourage a communal commitment among women and women activists. Implied here is that sisterhood should move from just naming a relationship to a performed way of life. This analogy affirms hooks' (1984) accession that if sisterhood is based only on 'support', then it becomes occasional, but based on 'solidarity', it becomes a sustained and on-going commitment. Although postcolonial women writers advocate for global sisterhood, this global move is problematic because it ignores racial and cultural differences. Mwangi (2009) observes that global sisterhood adopts patterns similar to sexual hierarchical practices. African women, particularly, are not happy when white/Western women express a desire to join their movements. African feminism posits that although women are oppressed they are oppressed differently, depending on the sites of oppression and the mutating modus operandi. These varying degrees of oppression call for varied forms of sisterhood. Mwangi (2009:109) maintains that:

Real sisterhood should mean a willingness, a political and personal will – collectively and individually – to assume responsibility for the elimination of racism. Mwangi (2009) holds that sisterhood should spring from common experiences of racism as an obstacle that separates women, for which women should take accountability. Implications for sisterhood involve seeking revelation, acknowledging membership, and a robust confrontation of stereotypes, myths and misconstrued assumptions which blemish the reputation and existence of black sisterhood. The study views ‘sisterhood’, in all forms, as a necessary support towards a platform that will speak with unified voices to raise issues of concern surrounding the subaltern woman. Implied here is that as individuals, women are voiceless but as a collective their word carries more weight and warrants an audience. In this way sisterhood contributes to building a new world order and establishing an African and global community of women in a class of their own.

2.8.3 Widowhood

Bennett & Pereira (2013) maintain that a woman’s life is controlled, in its entirety, by cultural traditions - from when she is still a child through to wifehood/widowhood.

Because of the breadwinner/dependent ideology, which governs most of the African families, a woman is rendered economically vulnerable when the man dies. African widowhood therefore tends to denote ‘helplessness’ and ‘neediness’. It is this helplessness that perpetuates woman subordination.

African widowhood, in particular, is also characterised by social expectations of ‘restraint and restriction’ (Klaits 2005 in Bennett & Pereira 2013). An African widow has a stipulated period of mourning commencing at the announcement of death until the widow is ‘ritually freed’ by her in-laws to carry on with usual routine. Rituals vary culturally.

In some cases the widow’s mourning customs are shaped by discursive traditional practices, as well as socio-political developments in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa (Kotze, Els, Rajuili-Masilo, 2012). For instance, in most South African cultures,

when death is announced the family is immediately regarded as 'polluted' (*isinyama* in Zulu or *sefifi* in Setswana), which portends that a negative and dark shadow has been cast over the family and as a result the family is in a state of disequilibrium (Cebekhulu, 2016).

Within the Zulu ethnic group, and other African ethnic groups in South Africa, the widow is the main focus of rituals of mourning (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). Ngubane (2004) posits that the central role of a married woman whose husband has died is designated as the chief mourner. There are several implicit and explicit practices that the widow must adhere to, for instance occupying a sacred mourning physical space where candles are lit (Hutchings, 2007). This space is usually the widow's bedroom and she has to sit on a mattress surrounded by other close women all wearing special mourning garments called *inzila* in Zulu, which are commonly black (Mbizana, 2007). She has to shave her head (*ukuphuca*) and stay at home for the duration of the mourning period which is usually one year.

The widow is not allowed any social or sexual contact. When using public transport such as a taxi or bus, she has to sit at the back so as not to expose other travellers to her back and the possibility of a "bad omen or bad luck" (Rosenblatt and Nkosi, 2007:78). Conversely, when children lose a parent or a husband his wife, they are said to observe *ukuzila*, but the observances of children require rather minor changes from ordinary patterns and routines whilst widowers (husbands) are largely exempt from the more debilitating bereavement rites (Carton, 2003).

Within the context of this study, widowhood, either by choice or accident, has an impact on how a woman is viewed and treated by fellow members of the society. The cultural rituals often imposed on widows under the guise of culture further compound the impoverished condition resulting from the death of a spouse.

2.9 Conclusion

The effects of colonisation still exist even after the colonialist powers have been deterritorialised and many colonies have obtained their political independence. Raising the consciousness of those that were previously oppressed is a fundamental step towards decolonisation. In most cases the independence is only political and not economic since most colonies rely on the Western economies. This is due to the fact that globalisation is now taking over as the new way of participating in economic, social and political domains. However, it does more harm than good for those who have previously been oppressed. This raises the concern of whether or not colonialism has really been eradicated or there is a different kind of colonialism that is being experienced. These two processes are closely linked and can be viewed as benevolent or malignant depending on one's point of view.

Postcolonial writers emerge from various historical, geographical, religious, social and economic backgrounds and such origins often dictate on a wide variety of subjects in postcolonial writing. Wiskers (2006) maintains that it is a misnomer to hypothesise that every postcolonial text is resistance writing. This assumption explains the multiplicity of themes that postcolonial writers exploit in their literary productions. This is not surprising, considering the fact that postcolonialism is by itself, a subjective concept that allows for compounding together of a very dissimilar array of problems, cultures and experiences. Bahri (2007: 481) associates the diversity of definitions to the fact that postcolonialism is used in literary studies as both in a literal sense of 'former colonial societies and as a description of global conditions after a period of colonialism.' She asserts that as a literary genre and an academic construct, postcolonialism may have implications totally different and separate from historical time period.

Despite the fact that some authors associate novel writing creativity with femininity, they do not necessarily consider it fit work for women. According to John Fowles (in Eagleton 1993: 43), for example, there are 'Adam women', who have challenged the stable of literary production, thereby making it more gender ambivalent against the notion that

women leave behind only letters, diaries or journals as an indication of their creativity. Adrienne Rich (1997) however, laments that the woman writer is made to bathe in the refracted glory of the male writer; she is a special woman chosen to join a selected group of male writers. She warns that a woman writer is in danger of being incorporated, as a token, removed from her sisters in less prestigious forms of labour. Virginia Wolf (1981), diagnosing what she thinks is a common experience with women writers, contends that they '... are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex.'

The study rests on postcoloniality as a principal theory. To avoid some of the shortfalls of this theory, it was essential to complement it with a partner theory – feminism – in order to fully address the objectives of the study. Postcolonial theory owes its origins to the process of colonialism which locked indigenous societies and the colonisers in a complex and traumatic relationship of power and dominance. The social and economic imbalances in the colonised/coloniser binary were necessary for the propagation and maintenance of European capitalism.

Postcoloniality as a theory is formulated from key ideas of the anti-colonial struggles that were staged by natives resisting colonial dominance in the form of land redistribution, economic exploitation, and massive literary productions which featured natives as barbaric and uncivilised. Although the theory purports to resist colonial dominance, some authors (White, 1973) argue that its intentions are thwarted by the fact that the theory is epistemologically indebted to Western thinking associated with structuralist, poststructuralist and postmodern theories.

Post-structural feminists have adopted the same theories of resistance, power, and freedom as useful tools in their work for social justice. Because women are complex in terms of philosophy and origin, there could be no grand dream of liberation for all of them. Although different women organisations fight for certain issues, they encounter a lot of resistance from women who feel that such issues are not aligned with their brand of liberation. In particular, women in Africa have become gradually wary of some feminists' claim and desire to empower and liberate them and see this desire as an imposition and arrogance.

Post-structural feminists believe the struggles of women are local and specific and it is the local women who can better represent issues of their liberation. This highlights the significance of poststructuralism in that what is taken as the core (in this case general problems of women) could actually be a total misrepresentation of the actual plight depending on their contexts. A feminist agenda should consider the margins (limits) that exist in the periphery of the core agenda which then unsettles the core. Because of the complex nature of women's lives, relations of power are equally complex and constantly shifting. Women in an African context, for example, experience patriarchal practices that regulate their freedom and against which they have to respond with resistance – of subtle and sometimes radical nature.

For post-modernism theorists, the conflation between postcolonialism and post modernism arises because of their shared concerns such as the 'decentring of discourse,' focusing on the significance of the language and writing in the construction of experience and using subversive strategies of mimicry, parody and irony' (Ashcroft, 1997:117). Deconstruction then, is a key aspect of concern that post-structuralism and post-modernism share with postcolonialism. Through the process of deconstruction, postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism all contest almost every facet of Western philosophy and science.

Poststructuralism, like postmodernism, subverts assumptions about morality, about essence and values, and about truth. This philosophical movement sees disruption in a positive sense – not only that the core is unsettled, but rather that it is an assertion of the power of the limit as a source of the continuous process of merging and transformations and differences. This analogy implies that poststructuralism is not fettered by absolutes and must seek to disrupt them as they surface, even if initiated by politics appealing to poststructuralists. They do not respect dependence on certainty and unchangeable convictions.

Throughout the theoretical framework, Derrida's (1997) deconstruction comes very close to fulfilling the postcolonial intent. The proximities lie in its affirmation of orientalism which

involve troubling not only the texts, but also unsettling the very institutions that produce them. Ashcroft (1995) asserts that deconstruction is the central point of theories that challenge structuralism and gives birth to poststructuralism and postcolonialism. It also challenges the meta-narratives of the European culture which is generally accepted as the universal truth.

Deconstruction as a literary strategy has a unifying effect on the conceptual framework that serves as a springboard for the current study. The strategy also connects the theory of postcolonialism to the partner theme of feminism: feminists use deconstructive arguments to appraise the suppression and marginalisation of issues associated with women and femininity.

The significance of the given literary framework rests on the guidelines it affords the study by highlighting postcolonial feminism-related concepts in the study. The texts analysed focus on such concepts to assess the extent to which postcolonial women writings are postcolonial and feminist. The framework also inaugurates the delineation of the theories – postcolonial and feminism – for purposes of thorough analysis of the selected texts for the study.

Theorists that contribute to postcolonial theory seem to also subscribe to the deconstruction strategy for purposes of decolonisation. Frantz Fanon's (1952) contributions has more to do with consolidation of postcolonial studies which in turn construct the postcolonial canon and its fundamental theoretical agenda and framework. Major concerns on his part include ways in which colonised communities were deprived of an identity. He was unapologetic in the support for violent *resistance* which informed postcolonial African agendas.

Edward Said (1978) emphasised the retrieval of indigenous land and culture – important tenets of the postcolonial agenda. And Spivak Gayatri (1988), other than questioning the 'post' in the postcolonial, challenged the authority of the colonial master-narratives. Her contribution and focus in the postcolonial agenda, is the subaltern agency (translating into otherness).

Spivak's relevance to this study rests on her insistence on the articulation of the unwritten histories of tribal, subaltern women and the suggestion that postcolonial discourse ought to begin to provide space for subaltern groups to re-articulate the suppressed histories of popular struggles. This stance supports Macleod and Bhatia's (2008) concept of re-searching back which involves a re-examination of history to deconstruct the production of the post-colonial subject and re-construction of the future – an essential feature of postcolonial writing.

Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994:21) closely examines the interaction between the coloniser and the colonised and observes that despite assumptions of total submission, the indigenous cultural groups staged 'some spectacular resistance' to colonial authority. He demonstrates this hybridity and the power it has through a number of examples in the same text. Worth noting about Bhabha's assertion is that in the discursive realm, the oppressed can act subversively in spite of the master dominance. Owing to the contributions of postcolonial theorists, postcolonial literature exemplifies a multiplicity of themes on the relations between indigenous and colonial societies. The postcolonial literature depends on the union of previously colonised nations or groups to build identities uncontaminated by universalised Eurocentric concepts and images. The study is based on the premise that the fiction world is one of the institutions burdened with the postcolonial agenda – to write back to the canon. In this study the fiction world is exclusively represented by South African women writers of the postcolonial period.

Because the selected writers are women, the study portrays issues of a feminist nature including sexuality, family (motherhood, sisterhood), reproductive rights and the de facto inequalities. From the literary framework used for analysis, many impediments were identified in their coalition against female authorship, broadly classified into two major categories: production and reception. The study also appraises the authors' journeys and how they, irrespective of such impediments, forged their way through to represent the

female voices in a way that develops and empowers women for full participation as citizens of a democratic post-apartheid and postcolonial South Africa.

When postcoloniality meets up with feminism in a study, a double-edged sword emerges where women suffer not only the yoke of oppression, but also the burden of a patriarchal system. Gayatri Spivak's notion of the subaltern unifies the two canons: feminism and postcoloniality by criticising the European powers who silenced and refused to recognise and insert into history the liberation struggles by women movements. The writing by women is an opportunity to represent themselves and document such representation so that their contribution becomes a part of the tapestry and archive that they participated in creating.

By writing, both postcolonial and feminist writers repudiate the monolithic conception of Western cultural imperialism by performing a 'necessary gesture' of retrieving and recuperating the gender and geographical terrains and recovering indigenous cultures. It is precisely this contribution that the study seeks to assess. The framework identified a range of concepts determining postcoloniality (or lack thereof) in the fiction work produced by South African women writers of the time. The concepts outlined from the framework, which must be traced in the selected works include: orientalism, nationalism, decolonisation, subaltern/othering, alterity, hybridity, ambivalence, resistance and appropriation, feminism (and related concepts: motherhood, patriarchy, womanism and sexuality). The list so far is simply illustrative, not necessarily exhaustive.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

With the research goal of interpreting the social world from the perceptions of those acting in it, I thoroughly engaged the selected texts produced by South African women writers of the post-colonial era. I adopted an exploratory open mind-set to the variety of perspectives and issues in order to make an interpretation of what I understand about the lives and the emancipatory agenda of women in South Africa.

In line with the objectives of the study, I made detailed analyses of the texts under investigation. For this study the period commenced from the first time South Africa was allowed to self-rule up to the start of the 21st century. The texts selected for the study are from 1948 through to the 21st Century. Within this period, the following texts were selected:

- *The Lying Days*: Nadine Gordimer (1953)
- *Daughters of the Twilight*: Karodia Farida (1986)
- *Mother-to-Mother*: Sindiwe Magona (1998)
- *David's Story*: Zoe Wicomb (2000)
- *Black Widow Society*: Angela Makholwa (2015)

The analyses in this qualitative inquiry were based on data from the identified women authors of the period, their biographical work and secondary texts in the form of research articles and criticism of their work, and transcripts of interviews. The authors are selected from the following ethnic groups: Black, white, coloured, Indian a classificatory paradigm that is a relic of apartheid legislation where chromatic difference defined one's being and identity matrix.

3.2 Postcolonial Theory as a Principal Research Paradigm

3.2.1 Relevance of Postcolonial Theory to Study

The postcolonial theory engages with issues of power. In the context of my thesis, the theory enables the interrogation of power relations between male and female authorship, between male and female protagonists and amongst females themselves as portrayed in the selected texts written by South African writers of the post-colonial period.

3.2.2 Strengths

The postcolonial paradigm, informed by postcolonial theory, is suitable for the study particularly because of its distinctive features as outlined by Chilisa (2012):

- it is a 'research back' (Macleod and Bhatia, 2008) approach which involves examination of history to deconstructing the production of the post-colonial subject and reconstructing the present and future – a feature which carries hope for the oppressed. In the Spivakian sense, the literature has the potential to *unmute* the subaltern woman.

The selected authors are themselves South African and have lived experiences of what they are writing about. The study premise is that the writers engage in 'writing back' in order to raise the marginalised voices and deconstruct the South African identity that has been constructed by Eurocentric literary productions. The rewritings are an intervention endeavour in the feminist/colonized discourse as resistive literature against oppressive masculinist/colonial master narratives (Zubair, 2015)

- Liberatory and transformative intent: Postcolonial theory also produces knowledge that is liberatory and transformative. The study submits that women-produced fiction has the potential to transform women from their previous mentalities of inadequacy and self-doubt into active participants and responsible citizens of a democratic South Africa. The selected texts are analysed in terms of this intent.

As women, and a marginalised sector in South Africa, their writings anchor hope for the liberation and transformation of women under a tripartite oppressive framework whose constituents are colonialism, patriarchy and apartheid. The study examines how the women writers usher the women population into a contested democratic setting.

- It is also a theory-driven research that borrows from other theories across cultures and academic disciplines. This means that such a postcolonial research paradigm is a mixed method approach. This latter feature addresses the concern often raised by critics: that the theory is inadequate to address all forms of social, political, academic and economic nature.

It is for this reason that I intend to draw from tenets of feminist theory and research perspectives to complement the postcolonial paradigm.

3.2.3 Weaknesses

The term postcolonialism, is not only inadequate in defining contemporary realities in the once colonized countries, but also vague in terms of indicating a specific period of history such that it clouds the internal social and racial differences of many societies.

The term therefore cannot be applied indiscriminately to examine the complexities of being and becoming in postcolonial South Africa. As Loomba (1998) proclaims, there is nothing post about the colonisation of people at the bottom of the hierarchy. She further asserts that the elite creoles cannot be aligned with other colonized people, no matter how they differed with the European colonisers, culturally and economically. Unlike other indigenous people, they were not subjected to economic exploitation or political exclusions. Implied here is that members of the same community were not affected in equal measure by colonialism, and therefore would not define the period in the same terms.

To deal with this problem, the study focuses on a South African context exclusively and draws from different ethnic groups of South African women; particularly from the historical fact that race used remains a marker of distinction in the way women responded to their experiences in the word and the world.

Post colonialism is further complicated by the fact that anti-colonial movements rarely represented the interests of all the people of the colonized country. Loomba (1998) adds that the newly independent nation-states make available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly. She posits that the dismantling of colonial rule did not

automatically bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class or the peasantry in the most pre-colonised countries.

The study then assesses the contribution of South African women writers in the extent to which they could muster solidarities that bring about change in the status of women, even if it is a change in mentality.

3.3 Postcolonial Feminism as a Support Paradigm

Feminists working in Postcolonial theory are often criticised for focusing on the status of *woman* without a thorough analysis of how the woman factor connects with the existing forms of marginalization like nationality, class, race and competencies. The concepts of woman, when used in relation to postcolonial contexts, the 'third world' is portrayed as a victims as opposed to liberated (white) Western woman. Mohanty (1998) condemns the research nurtured by the Western feminist for this dichotomy that (re)produces and represents diverse lives of postcolonial women from their perspective.

The separation is borne from practices that depict women's oppression as a world-wide phenomenon in total exclusion of the influence of colonialism, imperialism and racism. The postcolonial women are portrayed as subjects of domination by legal, economic, religious, and familial structures without individual agency (Mohanty, 1988). He advises feminists who write about women as postcolonial other to be cautious in their choices of data collecting devices, lest they fall prey to the sort that promotes the very colonial attitudes they set to eradicate.

This study supports reframing of the 'speaking for' approaches in the less privileged social locations by engaging authors within the postcolonial setup in South Africa to speak for themselves through their narratives and thereby deconstruct the social location from which 'the truth and content' are often constructed in literary studies.

The study takes accountability and responsibility for approximating the identity of a South African woman by examining dialogues (from interview transcripts), conversations (from protagonist roles given to women in fiction), and critique from commentaries of authors' literary works.

Postcolonial theory, like Postcolonial feminism, is sensitive to the methods through which power and language affect the nature of cultural identity, gender, race, social class, ethnicity, and nationality in postcolonial contexts (Burney, 2012). They complement each other to advocate for postcolonial knowledges, both in the research communities under study and academically. The reason the theories were integrated in this study was precisely because they could give the study effective critique that disputes conventional research paradigms in European and North American universities characterized by a set of values, attitudes, conceptualizations of time, space, subjectivity, knowledge, theory, language, and structures of power that frame them as superior approaches (Smith, 2012). This qualitative research design is adequately flexible to adjust and adhere to local forms of knowledges that develop from the research process. Postcolonial theory, along with Postcolonial feminist paradigm, were useful not only for data analysis, but also for the recursive and constant critique of the research methodology and techniques I chose to use in this study.

Throughout this study, emphasis was on knowledge and its indigenous situatedness; social constructionism and on production of knowledge for women as opposed to politically and institutionally dominating knowledges of the West (Harding, 2012). In accommodating the postcolonial, I had to deconstruct the power rooted in traditional approaches; acknowledge the validity of non-Western forms of knowledge; and follow the route of intercultural collaboration that foregrounds postcolonial standpoints and epistemologies (Jankie, 2004; Swadener & Mutua, 2008).

3.4 Researcher Positionality

I subscribe to the notion that there is no neutral position in research, as according to Halse & Honey, (2005); Lather, (1991); Mohanty, (1988) any analytical decision I make through this research process is influenced by my values, beliefs systems, and social background. Conscious that my personal locus could be of harm to this study, I employ my researcher position to put weight behind less powerful voices to bring to light their perceptions of what development means and should be in the postcolonial state and space.

The study is a response to Said's (1985) call for a greater cross disciplinary action branded by responsiveness to the political, social, methodological and historical situation that form the context within which literary work is produced. It is not as ambitious a piece of writing claiming to dismantle systems of domination but just to illuminate and raise issues of concern as deduced from the selected postcolonial women writers in their endeavour to both define and change a given context so that they attain equity and justice characterised by development and empowerment of the marginalised, garnering in the process enhanced participation and responsible citizenship.

I am convinced that I can give the study a more objective approach if I am aware of the influence of my positionality so that I continuously reflect upon its impact and conscientiously seek to represent the women writers' views through their protagonists in a way that aligns their identities with their emancipatory intentions. The position I adopted then gave the study a more interpretive inquiry status.

3.5 Research Design

3.5.1 Qualitative Inquiry

It is evident according to the cited research questions that the study investigates human elements in which case a qualitative approach was preferred over quantitative. Although the human element can be analysed through the use of both qualitative and quantitative studies, this element is more visible, thoroughly interrogated and therefore better understood using a qualitative approach. As Short (1995) argues, quantitative data analysis offers reduced acumen for readers than their qualitative counterparts owing to the absence of and at times limited critical analysis.

The qualitative approach is best suited for the study because it allowed me to collect data myself by examining a variety of documents ranging from interview transcripts, biographical works and research articles on work produced by the four selected writers. The approach then put me in the position of a key instrument in the collection and analysis of data. The use of multiple sources is also an important feature of a qualitative study (Creswell 2007).

I reviewed the stated sources and organised data into categories and themes that cut across the sources. This organisation of themes involved an inductive process of working back and forth between the themes and the literary artefacts to establish a comprehensive set of themes.

A qualitative research is also an emergent design (Creswell 2007): it allowed me some flexibility in executing the plan so that where necessary, I could change the initial plan to accommodate emerging issues. Because the qualitative approach is also a holistic account of the problem at hand, I report on multiple perspectives, identifying numerous factors involved in the study to sketch the larger picture that emerged. The idea was not to look for cause-and-effect relationship among factors, but to identify the complex interaction and endless flux of factors in the study.

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and employs a theoretical lens to question the meanings individuals ascribe to a social problem (Creswell 2007). Prominence is placed on the process of research as flowing from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a theoretical lens and on to the procedures involved in studying a social problem. The theoretical lens I choose to use for my study is that of postcoloniality: a theory that engages issues of power, interrogating relations through representation and resistance (Chilisa, 2012).

Since the study investigates women authors and their women protagonists, it also involves examination of female representation in fiction work. This examination calls upon me to also assume an interpretive role. Interpretivism is a form of social inquiry founded by idealist philosophers who believed that the world cannot exist independently of the mind (Glesne 2012). Central to the interpretivist tradition is the assumption that reality is socially constructed, complex, fluid, messy and ever-changing.

Within postcoloniality and qualitative framework, the study adopts an interpretivist approach: it seeks to uncover meanings and understand deeper the implications revealed in data about society and the habitus (Somekh & Lewin 2011). Because it goes beyond understanding, I use a theoretical lens to interpret data and in this case the theory is drawn from postcoloniality as a principal framework of the study.

Interpretivism is particularly relevant to my study in that by its design, it features common characteristics of qualitative research – it emphasises the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents the information – a privilege I uphold throughout the study. Creswell (2007:39) clearly explains this role and suggests that ‘it is what the researcher sees, hears and understands ... it cannot be separated from researcher’s background, history, context and prior understanding’

An interpretive approach is where a qualitative research is located philosophically. This approach emanates from the assumption that observable reality does not exist, but is constructed within a social setting (Creswell 2007). Implied here is that there could be multiple realities or numerous interpretations of a single event. The qualitative orientation that I adopted for this study is interpretive - sometimes also called constructivist (Sharan 2009). This qualitative study therefore, followed the route of social constructivism which informs the discursive interpretation of the selected texts.

Following this understanding, I obtained the perspectives of the selected women authors of the colonial period on the South African woman. Apart from how they portray their women protagonists in the selected texts, their perspectives about women were also sourced from interviews and articles that are in the public domain. Along with these, I accessed commentaries and critics of their work and made my subjective interpretation about cultural patterns of thought and action in relation to the phenomenon of postcoloniality and how the writers approximate the 21st century South African woman.

Although *qualitative* is difficult to explain or define because of its fluidity, it is broad enough to cover a variety of research practices that scholars develop because there are different orientations and facets to it. I chose to deliberately disassociate my approach from definitions that place the researcher and the researched within the same world literally.

I examined the authors' worlds through the works they produced and interpret them using postcolonial and feminist theories as research frameworks. To this effect, I subscribe more to the older definition by Maanen (1979) that qualitative research is:

an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with meaning and not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomenon in the social world (Maanen 1979: 529).

A key concern of a qualitative study is understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspective: in this case the authors' views on the identity of a South African woman and how it was developed over time towards meaningful participation as citizens of a democratic South Africa. This approximation is arrived at and understood through the portrayal of female protagonists in the fiction works of such authors along with the themes they highlight in their works.

3.5.2 Thematic Content Analysis

The methodology involves a qualitative content analysis and close reading of books representing South African women writers based on a postcolonial theory. I adopted Short's (1995) definition of Thematic Content Analysis within the postcolonial theory to scaffold and guide the study:

Thematic Content Analysis is the use of theory or theme to analyse text or a series of texts. The theory or theme is used as an analytic device. The main focus is analysis of the text rather than the development of theory. (21)

In line with the cited aim of the study, I deliberately steered away from the use of quantitative data collection and analysis with a view that approach would constitute the very concern that postcolonial feminist literature raises – the subjugation of the female voices because of limited insight resulting from lack of consultation, wrong methods of data collection and inadequate representation in literary studies.

The postcolonial theory-based content analysis sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

- (a) how relevant is women's literature to the socio-political situation in South Africa?
- (b) what is the nature of the personal spaces that the selected authors wrote from and what can women learn from such experiences?
- (c) what roles do women writers assign to their female protagonists?
- (d) to what extent do such roles highlight the qualities women have to adopt to liberate themselves from both patriarchal and apartheid practices and participates fully in a democracy? and
- (e) do the writings by South African women writers of the post-colonial period exhibit distinctive features of the postcolonial theory? (Do they constitute a practice and process of 'writing back? Do they have a liberatory and transformative agenda? Are they adequately representative of various aspects of women's lives: the social, political, academic and economic spheres?)

The selected texts are analysed following the format set out in the question statements. Each text is dealt with in a sub-section (4.1 – 4.5) in the chapter. Within the chapter, the following format is maintained for every text:

- Author's background
- An abridged context within which the text is produced; geographically, politically and historically
- Discussion of the dominant themes.
- The theory of the study, postcolonialism, along with its supporting theory, feminism, is subsumed in the discussion as a common thread that runs through the selected texts.
- A summative conclusion in response to the research question/s.

As the definition of *Thematic Content Analysis* implies, I did not seek to develop the theory; postcolonial theory is fully developed, and here it merely serves as a topological vantage point through which the texts are analysed. The content analysis was done on selected texts written by South African postcolonial women with the intention to critically interrogate their potential as developmental instruments in the approximation of a 21st century woman of the post-apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

INVITATION OF THE EXOTIC

Yet now as I stood in this unfamiliar part of my own world knowing and flatly accepting it as the real world because it was ugly and did not exist in books...the shudder of revulsion at finding my finger going out wanting to touch it! (Gordimer 1953:21)

The epithet is a depiction of Nadine Gordimer still in her nascence as a fiction writer. It also depicts how an author forgoes privileges afforded by her own world and ventures into the world of her protagonists, accepting it as part of her own. The *Lying Days* is based essentially on Nadine Gordimer's personal life through a character, Helen Shaw, a youth who frees herself from her home town prejudices. Represented by Helen Shaw, Gordimer is standing at the periphery of a Eurocentric culture absorbed in the newness of the 'other' world – the black world that she is unable to integrate into her work. Kossew (2003) maintains that the apartheid system and its practices and discourses blocked white writers' access to 'blackness' (represented by the metaphorical glass, which prevents access, but allows views of an unfamiliar world). Equally, through the policy of segregation, black writers in that era could not experience 'whiteness' in their writing.

In *The Lying Days*, Gordimer (1988a) acknowledges her constructed blindness to black people, which presents with cultural limitations and with a "distorted version of her own whiteness". In one of her titles, *A World of Strangers* (2002), she draws attention to the primal apartness and separation as representational practice that constructs a world of strangers. Her interest in the 'exotic' world puts her in a dilemma because of a lack of belonging:

The whites were not my people because everything they lived by...was the stuff of my refusal. But at the same time, the black were not my people because throughout my childhood and adolescence they had secretly entered my consciousness. I had been absent from them (Gordimer, 1988a: 266).

Titlestad (2016) observes that the struggle between Afrikaner and African nationalism put white writers in a dilemma, where they remain unaffiliated to the struggle. This experience renders white writing transitional and perpetually incomplete. Bethlehem (2017:708) maintains that it is because such literature is generated by people “no longer European but not yet African”.

The text *The Lying Days* is selected particularly because the study is about women’s writings. The study does not approximate black woman’s identity, but a South African woman, irrespective of cultural or racial affiliations. Most importantly, *The Lying Days* is selected because although she is white, Nadine Gordimer could relate to both black and white communities and her writing experience informs the journey of writing, including what it costs to write in a politically and culturally diverse setting – a third space – when you could not align to any. Other than just writing fiction, she has also documented her journey to becoming a prominent writer, outlining developmental steps for objective writing, including the paradox of her white privilege. This text then, sets the tone for analysis of women’s writing.

4.1. *The Lying Days*: Nadine Gordimer

The story in this novel is a journey in the acquisition of race consciousness by a daughter (Helen Shaw) of white middle-class parents in a small gold-mining town. Gordimer’s title, *The Lying Days*, is drawn from “The Coming of Wisdom with Time” by W.B. Yeats: (*Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*: 76)

Though leaves are many, the root is one;
Through all the lying days of my youth
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun;
Now I may wither into the truth.

Gordimer’s story is mainly concerned with the injustices of apartheid on the lives of ordinary South Africans. Through Helen Shaw, Gordimer narrates the life of a privileged

young woman attempting to carve her own path and establish an identity in the midst of political conflict where one race is deemed to be superior to its nemesis. As she develops into an adult, she becomes conscious of the African life around her and the disparities between whites and blacks. The text is a trajectory of Helen's experiences, starting from the confined space of her home and its mining compound, to a burgeoning adult life characterised by romance, politics and the buzz of city life. The enormous weight of the struggle (political and personal) compels Helen to desire to leave South Africa but she later decides to stay and identifies herself as a South African when she states, "I'm not running away from now because I know I'm coming back here" (*The Lying Days*, 256).

As a white writer, Gordimer's endeavour in the fiction includes a refusal to employ white proxy in the arts but rather, to search for storylines which join European and indigenous societies and are mindful of the mainstream voice in South Africa. Thus, her work is both politically probing and stylistically innovative, dealing with topics of intense contemporary interest. Gordimer's thematic concerns deal with issues of racism, the crisis of liberal values, the nature of the historical consciousness and sexual politics (Newman, 2014). Her work further proposes two ways in which white females could be accepted among black South Africans: radical political action and sexual liaisons with black activists. Political action could dispel the myth of superiority and benefit the cause of liberation poetics and politics (Bazin, 2000).

The political landscape of South Africa as depicted in *The Lying Days*, awakened Gordimer's consciousness to the disparities, insecurities and inequities etched in race. In the study, this realisation represents a personal development of historical consciousness. As a white young woman, Gordimer struggles with her identity. She cannot fully relate to whites who were the instigators of this racial segregation and she is unable to relate to blacks, who were in a titanic battle to free themselves.

Gordimer turned into a political activist and used her writing skills. She wrote fiction as an outlet of her frustration and anger with the apartheid government. As a woman she related to the black liberation struggle with other women who were continually battling for a place in a racialised and sexist world. She demonstrates through her artistic oeuvre that in the world of writing, there are contestations.

Although Gordimer does not necessarily pursue a feminist agenda, she embodied the persevering calibre of the woman a democratic country should develop. What women should learn here is that rights are not served on a silver platter; sometimes women must pursue their needs through unconventional and sometimes violent ways to attain them. It is through such performances that Gordimer earned her way into the black community of South Africa. This was not easy for, like their enemies, she was white, lived in the same neighbourhood and enjoyed all the privileges that only white citizens were afforded.

Women should also learn to accept consequences of the decisions they make; that in pursuit of their rights, they may have to pay a price: forgo certain privileges and entitlements, be ostracised by the very people they are trying to help, and sometimes suffer irreversible penalties (divorce, death). The 'struggle' within a South African context requires relentless spiritedness and fortitude, and it should not mean abdication of femaleness, but an application of natural talents, skills and resources relevantly in pursuit of the liberation agenda. It does not mean that if they are not physically strong, they cannot participate, but should find space where their talents benefit the struggle.

4.2 Gordimer and the Paradoxes of Privilege

Born from Jewish immigrant parents, Nadine Gordimer was bound to struggle before discovering her identity in South Africa. She was born in Springs, a town outside Johannesburg, during the apartheid legislation era (Kossew, 2004). The apartheid era was a time for white supremacy where blacks were segregated and ill-treated. The divide between these two races was apparent in most spheres of society at the time. Whites were the privileged race while the blacks were labourers, maids, mine workers and contract workers (Kossew, 2004). As a young white woman, Gordimer struggled with her identity: she could not fully identify with whites who were the instigators of apartheid; neither could she identify with blacks, who were struggling to liberate themselves and therefore perceived her as an oppressor (Anderson, 1990)

As a white writer, Gordimer shares the same sentiments with J. M. Coetzee, who expresses the inadequacy of the coloniser's language in response to the revolutionary language of the black people. She describes the colonial language as 'dead leaves...the words of a woman, therefore negligible...but above all of [the words of] a white' Coetzee (1990b: 72).

Gordimer laments the uncomfortable space she is writing from: while she has the means and education to participate in the art of writing, she is limited by the 'white settler woman' displacement which constitute traversing marginality that destabilises her speaking position. Her voice is muffled by intersecting factors including gender, age, and whiteness. Coetzee and Gordimer acknowledge this paradox of their position as white 'liberals' within the body politics of apartheid (Hewson, 1988). *The Lying Days* is Gordimer's way to finding herself and her place in a South African society that according to her, 'made itself comfortable with injustice' (Gordimer 1995:115). She admits:

Only through the writer's exploration could I have discovered the human dynamism of the place I was born to and the time in which it was to be enacted...I had to be part of the transformation of my place in order for it to know me. (Gordimer, 1995:115).

The notion of place emphasised here implies that Gordimer realises that she has to participate in transforming not only her physical space, but her role in it as well. The settler woman's discomfort with displacement is privileged here, necessitating the longing for belonging. However, she realises that she cannot identify herself without acknowledging the 'other' world. As deconstructionists assert, the dyads of binaries cannot exist without their counterparts. In seeking to indigenise herself, she has to acknowledge 'black' experiences:

In mixing more and more with blacks, sharing with them as aspirant writers, painters and actors the sense of learning how to think outside the way our society was ordered, I was going through a personal revolution that had no other issue but to lead me into theirs, to find myself there (Gordimer 1995:13)

Gordimer admits that finding herself in 'blackness' was both a paradoxical and problematic endeavour for a privileged white, particularly within a South Africa riddled with apartheid policies of segregation and white supremacy ideologies. In her subsequent writings, Gordimer agonises about this problem of representation white representation of blackness.

Lockert (1996) criticises Gordimer for recognising 'otherness' in black society and her willingness to participate in the eradication thereof, but failing to recognise herself as 'other' in terms of gender politics. This criticism is a response to Gordimer's refusal to be classified as a feminist writer although her writings are about empowerment of women through the eradication of systemic oppressive patriarchal practices.

Gordimer and other white writers lament the dilemma of literature in South Africa: that a writer wishing to write in South Africa is subverted before she puts her pen down. Whilst a white writer is limited by enforced privileges, a black writer also has limited representation of white characters because of an enforced chromatic segregation from the areas of white experience: "As a white man, the one thing he cannot experience is blackness ...As a black man, the one thing he cannot experience is whiteness" (Gordimer 1976:119).

Kossew (2003) posits that the problem is often compounded by white writers who try to assume a mediatory role, setting them for further ambiguities and contradictions. Driver (1988:13) shares the same view: that sympathy for the oppressed and concurrent entrapment within the privileged group, hugely compromises the narrative stance. As indicated earlier, Gordimer's linguistic confinement in the patriarchal and imperialist language widens the very gap she wishes to bridge. Gordimer's work, particularly her representation of blackness, is said to reflect her white ambivalent role as a 'liberal' woman writer trapped in whiteness and trying to find her place in Africa (Driver, 1988).

4.3 On Sculpting the Postcolonial Writer

Nkululeko (1987) uses the expression 'Euro-settler' to refer to white women writing about women in Africa. She outlines crucial developmental steps any white writer should undergo before they can pen down the experiences of a black woman under colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. These include foregoing interests and status, disassociating themselves from the colonist-settler nation and like socialist feminists, create conditions for the destruction of oppression among their own people (Nkululeko 1987:107).

Throughout her writing, Gordimer concerns herself with the *heart of darkness* paradigm – of the privileged white woman who ventures into blackness seeking to find herself through political action and personal relationships with the colonised majority. She empowers her main protagonist, Helen, with renewed understanding of indigenous cultural knowledge, through which she breaks away from the colonial pathology and chooses to live in a culturally diverse setting. When she gets an opportunity to lodge with the Marcuses, she welcomes the prospects to entice real friends, real supporters who will offer an alternative company – of people living under a new cultural engagement with people from cultures other than her own. In essence, Helen enacts and opts for what Bhabha (1994) calls a 'third space.'

Helen is hopeful that diverse knowledges would grant her a way out of the stratification and poverty, both economic and psychological, that the youth of her time is facing. The breakaway could be a starting point towards destroying the constructions of colonial ideologies, thereby sculpting a postcolonial writer grounded in the principles of liberty, equality and reciprocal concern.

This theme represents a sudden turn away of a young girl from her family and the cultural practices which she has grown to despise, judging by the way they esteem one race (their own) at the expense of the 'other,' Although she is a member of the white community, she does not see anything about her people that makes them stand out supreme.

The theme of dislocation entails elements of estrangement borne from the emergence of this young girl's emotional and political self into a complex citizen whose horizons are broadened by engagements within and outside the safety of the Mining compound – where she lived with her family.

Agilias (2016) outlines forms of estrangement as physical, emotional, family and cyclical estrangement. Gordimer's protagonist, Helen Shaw, seems to align more to the cyclical estrangement which involves alterations between all other forms and often punctuated with periods of reconciliation across various cycles. These alterations are typical of the ambivalent nature of postcolonial discourse characterised by concurrent desirability towards and simultaneous dislike of one person's action (in this case, the white community).

The mine compound represents a safe haven for white folks in Atherton, but outside of it, there exists another *rough, dirty* and *low-class* world from which the white folks must constantly protect their children. Fredericks (2008) classifies Helen's racial consciousness as 'unachieved', implying that she lacks commitment to and denies racial issues that other co-members uphold – purity and supremacy of the white culture.

Through the processes that shape the writer in her, Helen develops historical consciousness. She unequivocally acknowledges racial differences and is fully aware of her being white and clearly understands the implications for those who do not share the white group membership. Over time, she becomes conscious of the social boundaries that exist between her world, as a member of the white culture and the African world surrounding it.

4.4 Emerging Identity: From Being to Becoming

Edmiston (2010) contends that identities are shaped in two complementary and intersecting ways: from a cultural outlook, identities are dictated by the narratives and practices that particular groups share and identify with when they think of themselves as group members. Then, from a social constructivist perspective, identities are shaped as people position themselves in view of what others with more or less power, authority, and status think of them.

According to Kuscer and Prosen (2005), the emergence of identity is a social process. As interactions with other people occur, beliefs about selves are created. From the onset, Helen is a child, but a social being still, capable of interactions with others. This interaction results in the internalisation of skills and cultures other than her own leading to the child becoming increasingly hybridized in a way that renders her self-sufficient and independent. Hybridity entails an embodiment of distinct cultural and sociological traits in one body.

Helen struggles to find her identity as a woman and a citizen of a country. She wants the kind of identity that would make her a member of the nation and not necessarily confine her to the Afrikaanerdome and its limiting ideologies. This search for identity is driven by consciousness of her status – white and middle class as different from black citizens of the same country.

The story starts with an act of adolescent truculence: a rebellious but normal developmental stage of a young woman's growth away from her immediate family and in this case even from her community and associated rituals. Within postcolonial discourse, such rebelliousness constitutes what Bhabha (1994) calls 'spectacular resistance.' It is spectacular in that Helen does implicitly challenge the apartheid regime and its policies and strategies. This refusal marks the beginning of a series of rebellious acts that finally insert a wedge between Helen and her family, Helen and the Mine compound. Even at this age, the girl is determined to take risks of walking away from the safety of the compound and wander off into the native township.

The tendency to venture into the unknown without any guidance is often seen as a projection of adolescent discontent, sometimes also called adolescent defiance: a common attitude of the emerging identity. In her township venture, Helen comes to observe that, in fact, the world is populated by more than one specimen: white, coloured and black. The life that she sees in the township is totally different from her own life in the mine compound, but she flatly accepts it as the real world.

Helen absorbs such a difference as she peers through the dirty windows of the black stores. (*The Lying Days* 21)

The child that she is, even after refusing to accompany her parents to the Tennis Club in Atherton, Helen returns to join them. (*The Lying Days* 17) Gordimer brings this behaviour as if it is the nature of children to be inconsistent in their needs and wants, but in essence this is a compulsive indecisiveness typical of Helen throughout the text; even in her adult life, Helen is torn between two worlds. Although she has ambitions to progress and part ways with the life in Atherton, to disassociate herself from what that life represents, she continues to return to this 'deoxygenated, dreary environment just because it is so predictable to her and she is there accepted' (Green, 1988).

She still remembers, without regret, that she was one of them, and an accepted member of the Tennis set. Atherton remains to Helen a predictable world where she does not have to negotiate her membership. Worth noting though is that whilst residents there see her presence as absolute, to Helen it is simply transitional. Again, this is a cyclic estrangement that Agilius (2016) alludes to – where one experiences periods of reconciliation with issues that pose a challenge to current feelings and beliefs.

Helen's awareness of the historical injustices meted on blacks irks her to the point where she wants to rewrite this unpleasant history and change the situations for black people. Once she has decided that she cannot identify herself away from this 'other' world, she takes matters into her own hands and makes a ridiculous demand (at least that's what her mother thinks) to embrace this other world:

... there's a native girl in my group; she's really a bright girl and it's so important for her to pass. She was telling me she doesn't get a chance to work at all. And so I thought... couldn't she come home here for a while. Just for, say ten days until we start writing.

A native girl?

Yes, an educated native girl, of course.

But where would she sleep?

In the cooler, I'll fix it for her. She's as clean as a white person.

Where will she wash?
And where's she going to have her meals? I don't fancy her using my bath.
She'll wash outside. She'll eat in her room or she and I'll eat together.
You'll eat...?
(I made a gesture of quick dismissal) She won't care where she eats.
Well, I don't know, I'll speak to your father. (*The Lying Days* 188 -189)

The way Helen navigates through her negotiation for the black friend shows that she questions historical categorisations of illiterate “an educated native girl”, and dirty “she's as clean as a white person”. She is also engaging in what Derrida (1983) calls deconstruction – questioning the privilege of that one term of the binary. In this way Helen challenges the metanarrative of the European culture which has been accepted as the universal truth. The mother's response to the proposition is the final nail in their relationship. It becomes an emotional cut-off type of estrangement that culminates in a physical estrangement as well, a phenomenon that Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1997) call ‘deterritorialisation.’

(Continues...)

I don't want to see you. I don't want you in this house again!
You understand that? (*The Lying Days* 274)

The “*I don't want to see you*” is an instruction for her to remove her presence from their home. This is a huge price to pay for challenging the norm, for embracing the other races. Again, she cannot shake it off completely; it is part of her, maybe the one thing about her that she cannot deny. This is why Nkululeko (1987) advises that white authors (Euro-settlers) should mobilise within their immediate communities and deconstruct oppressive structures before they can be trusted to represent the black community. Bethlem (2017) maintains that the white South African writers of European culture are saddled with the responsibility of discovering a home in Africa for a consciousness formed and by a language whose history lies in another continent.

Helen's whiteness is the very thing that inhibits committing to any world other than her own no matter how supportive she is of that world. Gordimer allows Helen to mourn this estrangement since there is no hope for reconciliation, unless Helen totally conforms to the pre-conceived location of blacks 'outside.'

Helen also gets to meet other people in Johannesburg who contribute to shaping her emerging view of the world; her identity. These people are a circle of friends in the form of artists and intellectuals in Hillbrow. It turns out that their presence in her life does not add as much value as she had anticipated. This lack of gratification constitutes an anti-climax. It also serves to emphasise the central paradox of the novel as observed from the title, *The Lying Days*. Recurring in the novel, the title implies that whereas Helen rejects the world of the mine, the external determinism of South Africa prevents her from discovering personal modes of experience. Beyond the novel, this lack of gratification also speaks to the disappointment with post-colonialism.

It is seminal to note that the estrangement that Helen demonstrates from her family does not necessarily push her to socially commit to the issues she now observes in this 'other' world – the black world. Although she alienates herself from the white community, she does not participate in the struggle to liberate the black community. Even on witnessing the horror of a black protestor dying at the hands of the police, she remains undecided and does not take action.

The black world alluded to continues to haunt her even in her private space. It finally occurs to Helen that her private life with Paul cannot survive the external turmoil that is intensified by the Nationalist's triumph. She perceives her life with Paul (something she holds private and worth holding onto) is in 'a state of suspension' (*The Lying Days* 291) between an intolerable present and unimaginable future. She cannot hold to that either: nothing seems tangible. It is, as the title suggests, all a lie.

The novel shatters the expectations of the reader when Helen, having estranged herself from the injustices of the apartheid structures, still does not participate actively in dismantling the regime that perpetuates it.

It might be necessary here to revisit what Joel (the Jewish friend) said to Helen at the time she wanted to sound more converted from racial prejudice than her mother. He was talking in relation to Mrs Shaw's successful friendships with Paul, the native gardener and Annah, the native domestic, both of which made Helen uncomfortable:

Your mother succeeds in the personal relationship; she fails in words, in theory.
Your theory's sound alright, but you betray it in the heat of personal involvement.
Your blood lets you down... (*The Lying Days* 124).

Gordimer's heroine could not participate in the public life and interest despite witnessing police brutality that took the lives of more than 18 protestors; one of whom was a friend of Paul's. The text ends with the main protagonist lamenting her situation which seems overly impossible and without any way forward: "Even in the mist of brutal reality, I was not moved; I remained lost" (*The Lying Days* 328).

Helen's tolerance of differences and ambiguity makes her to see magic in the physically distant black landscapes. It is this ability that often comes with youthfulness that enables her to view her own world afresh and be open-minded towards cultures different from hers. But the point is: what is the use of open-mindedness, the fresh set of eyes that look at issues through a transcultural lens, if the new vision is not acted upon?

Again she is simply watching through "the fly-blown window that separates her from the lions' tails, shrunken seeds and desiccated roots inside the shop" (Shaikh, 2014); like the spectator that she is; unable to penetrate the black world and forever wondering what is happening on the other side. The themes explored in *The Lying Days* are a true reflection of a South African context during the apartheid period. Nadine Gordimer captured the South Africa of her time; the plot is relatable for anyone who lived in the country then.

Black people could not hide their discontent with the Malan and Smuts regime anymore. Helen forms part of a small minority of whites that are disheartened by the white government.

Whilst the older of black and white generations tended to keep to diametric opposites, the younger generations gravitate towards each other because of the restricted spaces and opportunities for interaction (for example in institutions of higher learning). And when two cultures interact, there develops a new culture that does not necessarily fit into either of the originals – a hybrid culture; a mutation. Mrs Shaw does not understand how her daughter (Helen) should have anything to do with Joel (the Jewish boy) and Mary (the black girl). Anna, an elderly black domestic, cannot understand it either. But these are people who belong to different cultural communities of a much earlier period – where white is white and black, black, without any inflections in between. Anna has ‘accepted’ white supremacy as a way of life and does not understand why black youth should seek to eradicate it. However, this acceptance is served with reservations because Anna adopted some kind of spectacular resistance by speaking the master’s language and practices whilst still preserving her cultural practices and displaying them at every opportunity she got.

Although the younger generation of white folk benefit from the apartheid system, they do not necessarily support it; particularly that their black friends and neighbours suffer excruciating brutality right in front of them. They feel that the injustices are undeserved, but they do not act against such manifestations even if they speak against it. This portrayal of the injustices of the past is an accurate delineation of the incidents and sentiments of the South African youth – involving racial consciousness and complex processes of identity construction. The commonplace consequence is estrangement – leading to dislocation in South Africa.

4.5 Politicised Feminism Adapted to the Realities of South Africa

While Gordimer concerns herself with issues relating to women and women writers in South Africa, she rejects any affiliations to feminist movements. This rejection complicates reading of her work by feminists. Driver (1988) observes inherent problems in Gordimer's positioning with regards gender and race issues through an interrogation of power structures. Lockett (1996) sums up these problems as a white feminist in South Africa:

This makes our position (i.e. white feminists in South Africa) especially difficult, since we may identify with black women but they are more likely to view us as agents of their oppression. It also poses the vexed question of whether we, as white people, have the right to speak for or about black women when we, in turn, reject the discourses that oppressors (i.e. male patriarchs) have made about us (Lockett 1996:17).

When Gordimer allows her female protagonists to triumph against patriarchy, it is in pursuit of a feminist agenda. Gordimer allows Mrs Shaw to emerge victorious every time there is a conflict between her and Mr Shaw. Her victory is a reversal of traditional power relations where the woman is always submissive to the 'head' of the family. Mr Shaw is given a more reserved role in the novel. He is a head of the family but plays a very low profile in the house. In most cases he only steps in to extinguish the flames that flare up between his wife and daughter without voicing his opinion on the debate, or if he does, it is always with a subdued voice that readily conveys all the accoutrements of defeat. (*The Lying Days* 14)

His passive existence then leaves the wife, Mrs Shaw, in charge – not only of the household maintenance, but also of important decisions pertinent to the family. When Helen chooses not to go to the Tennis Club with them, it is his wife who raises her eye brows about it. The father, though equally concerned about his daughter's safety, relegates himself to a position of marginality and 'not [getting] involved'.

The following exchange demonstrates this stance clearly:

Mrs Shaw : Helen
Helen : Not going anywhere
(Mr Shaw came through, looked on, and asked)
Mr Shaw : What's the trouble?
Mrs Shaw : No, we're just going to leave her here, that's all.
... If something happens to her, it's her own fault.
Mr Shaw : Will you be alright Nell? You'll play quietly in the garden hey?
(*The Lying Days* 14 -15)

The status that Gordimer assigns to Mrs Shaw should awaken women to the potential they have to make the men in their lives listen to them instead of playing being submissive all the time. The text *The Lying Days* epitomises assertiveness as an important quality and trait if women want to participate fully in democratising their spaces. They should accept their full citizenship in their own right and not wait to have such rights distributed to them by their male partners.

4.5.1 The disempowerment of women in romantic relationships

Although Helen is a strong character in the novel, she readily gives in to Paul because he was a balanced person: he was active both in his private space and in the public arena. Through this text, Gordimer suggests that often women in relationships (marriage) tend to have eyes only for their partners and do not take concerted effort to form or nurture other relationships - of friendship, family or sisterhood - outside of marriage.

The problem with Helen's one-sided life is that when it crumbles, she does not have any other platform to keep her intact: she crumbles along with it. Worth noting is that there is no controlling external factors, which can poach into a relationship and start destroying it. Helen realises this eventually: "something she holds private and worth holding onto is in 'a state of suspension'" (*The Lying Days* 291). The relationship with Paul turned Helen into a sycophant, mimicking what she thinks Paul wants to hear.

It is not implied here that women should mess up their intimate relationships because they have others that they can fall back on, but that they develop mechanisms of resisting victimhood that often comes with disappointment in romantic relationships. In spite of her strength and mental stamina, Helen's life falls apart once external factors seem to distract Paul from their relationship: she becomes timid and suspicious to every woman within Paul's circles.

The lesson Gordimer teaches women is that they should not depend exclusively on their partners for joy, but must find useful things to do to help humanity. She demonstrates that there is greater joy in extending a helping hand to the needy and knowing that one has made a difference. Most importantly, Gordimer insists that women should nurture other relationships outside of marriage so that marriage does not become a life, but a constituent of it.

All other platforms that Helen could hold onto, she discarded: her home, her studies, Atherton and its mining compound. She also gives up on her best friend, Joel, because she has eyes only for Paul. She finally comes to realise how much of a loss Joel is:

When I left you, I got into a sort of panic. I can't explain it. I saw how I had wanted to go to your graduation, I really wanted to, very badly, and yet I didn't. There was nothing to stop me. But I didn't go, I forgot. It seemed that some other person had forgotten. Myself ... (*The Lying Days* 348).

Gordimer gives her main protagonist all the qualities of a literary hero: that despite her level-headedness, there is this one weakness about her - her inability to step into the public life even as she identifies a definite role she could play in the lives of the downtrodden, the marginalised and oppressed.

4.5.2 Self-actualisation: In Pursuit of Gender Equity

Whilst Helen feels threatened by Isa as a potential interest for Paul, Isa herself has already ruled out Paul as a partner. Helen picks quarrels unnecessarily and Paul has to call her to order:

I cannot understand why you do this. Yes, of course I like Isa!
All her inadequacies she had as a lover are her virtues as a friend.
Christ, she's a grown up woman. I can talk to her.

Yes, I can talk to her and she doesn't always expect me to be consistent,
every word out of my mouth to fit into some idea she's got about me.
Every time I say something I have to watch your face measuring it up.
(*The Lying Days*, 301)

One might think the exchange is about Isa, but in essence, it is about Helen. Every accolade that Paul utters about Isa has its implied negative about Helen: it says Helen has to grow up, that Paul cannot even engage her in a civilised conversation because she is narrow-minded. As if to say: get a life, make friends, loosen up and do not make me a centre of your life (*The Lying Days* 301).

Gordimer had to bring another character to arouse her main protagonist from sleep. Gordimer places Helen in situations that should have a developmental effect on her, but most of the time she misses them. Isa, particularly, is used by Gordimer to model the kind of woman a democratic country requires. This exchange sums up such qualities:

Isa : (smiling out of her own fascination)

You don't have to worry about him and me... He'd never really want me because I'm too clever for him. I'm too clever for him, and so I go for debunking... Isn't clever enough, if I could find a man who has the brains and the guts to debunk me...

Because of this he couldn't really love me. I mean it never could have been anything but an affair, even before the advent of you. You're too clever for him too, not with your head, (she added, as if she knew I couldn't compare with her) but in. Your emotions... It's too weighty for him... You frighten him, I frighten him. Different ways, but all the same... And I couldn't want him, not permanently. You need never have worried about that (*The Lying Days* 334).

The quote sounds like it is purely on male/female relationships, but in essence, it is a demonstration of the strength in women. Most importantly it inscribes how differentiated the strengths are, which denotes interdependence for growth and collaborative, rather than competitive imperatives towards advancement of women's interests in the socio-political agenda of a democratic South Africa.

It turns out that Isa is too strong for Paul and because she knows it, she is quite comfortable when he does not give her any attention: if she gets it, she would not have asked for it. She clearly understands her impact on men like Paul, men who thrive on domination and are threatened by strength in a woman. Isa is clever enough to know what inferiority complex does to a relationship and this is why she selects and decides on when she is available to be with men, because she *can't find her match*.

One very important thing that Isa does here, other than praising herself, is acknowledging the strength in another woman – it may not be the same strength, but it is strength all the same and she wants Helen to acknowledge it and start investing in it appropriately – where its recipient will be whole enough to sustain it and appreciate it as a tribute and not a threat.

In essence, the strength of these women here is a demonstration to Helen that she has surrendered to Paul mocking her for nothing. And Gordimer sends a message to women that sometimes they are disrespected because they pose a threat and abusing them is just a way of suppressing their strength. They must appreciate their strengths and not condemn one another for attention by male counterparts.

Gordimer's political beliefs and treatment of female characters in her works implies a keen understanding and heightened awareness of the special circumstances of women's lives.

In addition, she expresses her disapproval of the appraising, judgmental and emotion-laden manner in which men address and think about women, in particular and in general (Ettin, 1993).

The women in *The Lying Days* have shown a more subtle form of resistance that is equally effective. 'Subtle' should not be taken to mean weak, but rather, more calculated engagement with the issues, where intelligence and assertiveness take precedence over emotion-laden reactions which may not yield intended results. The women may not be in the forefront of demonstrations, but they choose their battles – for example Helen chooses to write and raise women's plight at the right platforms; Mary Seswayo, a friend of hers, pursues education which sharpens her mind to effectively and strategically deal with issues relating to racism.

At household levels the home-saty women secure the children to safety during political uprisings and police raids. Such roles should not be ranked against violent engagement with the law (as in throwing stones or burning police cars during demonstrations) but ought to be recognised as valuable a contribution to the struggle. In preserving the lives of children, they also preserve the next generation of freedom fighters who should receive and run with the baton after the current bearers.

When Sipho dies in a demonstration, it is a terrible loss, but such is the nature of struggle. It is at this point that we begin to appreciate Mary's way of staging resistance: refusing to be separated from her people's suffering and standing firm on her decision. She does not carry posters, but she convinces an outspoken white girl and trusts her to preach that message to her white folk. She also chooses to empower herself through education. Sharp (2008) acknowledges this attitude as necessary: for the subaltern to be heard and known, they ironically have to adapt to the Western ways of knowing and reasoning. Mary does not seek conformity; neither does she abandon her customary ways, but acquires the language of the oppressor to defeat him in Calibansque ways.

In spite of the fact that women in Gordimer's subsequent books introduce themselves as capable political activists keeping apace with men; she consistently denied that she was an activist advancing the cause of the women. In her own words, Gordimer retorts that she is an author who coincidentally is female (Ghorpade, 2004). She asserts that she is not a woman author; a woman being somebody who is set out to make a point about being a woman. However, to her, what makes an author is the capacity to discern other individuals' perspectives (Gordimer, 1990). She easily accepted the titles of white African and African writer as compared to woman author, but continued to give voice to her women.

4.6 Postcoloniality and Feminism: Double-edged Sword against Colonialism

Postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminism advocate for critical knowledges and both are sensitive to the methods through which power and language affect the configurations of cultural identity, gender, race, social class, ethnicity, and nationality in postcolonial contexts (Burney, 2012). Feminist theory expresses a concern with the neglect of women and the inevitable male bias in the theoretical frameworks that inform research practice. Postcolonial and feminist theories complement each other in what Chilisa (2012:26) calls 'postcolonial indigenous feminist research methodologies.'

4.6.1 Ambivalent role of a domestic

The Shaws family is a small component within a colonial community and Anna, the domestic worker, represents the colonised. As Bhabha (1994) claims, in the very practice of domination, the language of the master becomes hybrid. In this coloniser-colonised relationship, where it is assumed that Anna completely submits in her subordinate role, she is elevated (unawares) to a position even higher than Helen's (the Shaw's daughter) because she becomes a family member whose ideas Mrs. Shaw values. She also becomes Mrs. Shaw's confidante and trustee; a relationship Mrs Shaw and Helen could not achieve.

The Shaws live with Anna who occupies the outer room in their household. The arrangement is typical master-servant hierarchy of the colonial era in a neo-colonial period. In this relationship, Anna becomes as indispensable to the Shaws as they are to her. Anna presents herself as a good domestic and very respectful. Everybody in the house affirms her accolades and sees her for an ignorant person in whose presence they can say just about anything: “Anna walked in with the sweet, and her detached and servile presence, a kind of innocence of ignorance...” (*The Lying Days*, 306).

Anna stays a long time with the Shaws whilst they ostracise, neglect and spurn her culture. She, on the contrary, learns the ‘white ways’ as Helen observes: “she has been absorbing my mother’s homespun philosophy for fifteen years’ (*The Lying Days*, 123

It is evident later on that Anna is allowed privileges that Helen could not enjoy. She could invite friends and relatives over to the Shaws. This ambivalence is one of the distinguishing features of postcoloniality. The ambivalence in the role assigned to Anna as a domestic worker represents a significant feature of post colonialism where the oppressed act subversively in spite of the dominance of the master.

Although the domestic worker does not regularly practise her cultural rituals because she is housed within the master’s property, she does not relinquish them; instead she adapts to the dominant culture so that she can continue to work and earn money. In the meantime the master is deceived into thinking that the domestic worker has converted from her ‘barbaric’ and ‘uncivilised’ ways. Given an opportunity, she invites her friends over and during those times it turns out that her horizons are simply expanded without any loss of her cultural self.

4.6.2 Hybridity: Creating Conditions for the Deconstruction of Oppression

Hybridity is a postcolonial analytic tool that rejects the purity of cultures. It is frequently used in colonial discourse to mean cross-cultural exchanges which lead to linguistic and cultural transformation. This cultural flux influences the way cultures and races view and

relate to one another. In navigating the differences, people's thoughts and viewpoints are deconstructed and reconstructed – subtly or radically – leading to the Deleuzian 'thousand plateaus' that signal uncertainties (Ashcroft 1998). Like mimicry, hybridity could transform into mockery of the chutneyfied messiness of modernity.

Throughout the text, Helen is faced up with a series of choices – always between her white world with its assumed purity and supremacy, and the black world that comes alive right before her eyes and represents a contested reality that is not recorded in history books. When Helen is confronted by these two worlds, she finds herself agreeing that the one world is easy; she can relate to it because she grew up knowing only this world and is readily accepted as a member. However, when she ventures out of the security and confines of the mining compound, Helen is confronted by this other world that she did not know existed.

The 'other' world is powerful because it is vast: it represents everything outside of her home: The university, city life in Johannesburg and place of work. She is made to believe that her life in Atherton is fake. Ludi is 'honest' to her about what he thinks of Atherton:

A life in the mine is the narrowest, most mechanical and unrewarding existence you could think of in any nightmare (*The Lying Days* 56).

In the text, hybridity is illustrated by Helen's acquisition of some of the practices and conduct that belong to cultures other than her own. The 'deviant' behaviour is usually acquired through cultural interchange and it lends her in disrepute with both her family and community members in Atherton. In the process, Helen does not totally submit to the cultures she interacts with. Instead, there emerges, some resistance; what Bhabha (1994) calls 'spectacular resistance' (Location of culture: 21). The resistance here, is that of the colonial culture resisting inflections from the indigenous culture.

The plot shows a gradual positive change in the caliber of women, particularly the young generation of women, who, at the advent of democracy would have made remarkable strides in their development and the development of others if they were allowed sufficient

space for participation. What seems to constrain participation in this instance is the differences in racial affiliations. As a white person, Helen is not readily accepted by the black community despite her decent intentions. In this case, the hybrid trace resists the indigenous power's attempt to inflect and control the colonial power.

The hybridity is also demonstrated through Mary Seswayo. She has qualities assumed to be typical white: 'educated' and 'clean' but she retained her Africanness. She stages spectacular resistance through her rebellious attitude towards the luxuries afforded in a colonial family. She befriends Helen, is one of a few blacks in a white-dominated institution but her blackness is treated repeatedly as something different that cannot be suppressed by the ambitions of a luxurious life. She emerges as a mutation.

It is evident here that the divide between the coloniser and colonised becomes fainter where the postcolonial generation of women straddle the lines, acquire one another's cultures through interaction and this improves the quality of the South African women who should participate actively and meaningfully in a democratic country. There are no intentions for total acculturation from either side, however. It is up to the 21st Century woman to build bridges that will unify women irrespective of political, cultural or racial affiliations.

4.6.3 Silenced by Marginality

Gordimer brings the issue of marginality through Mary Seswayo. Mary is an educated black girl. She gets her education at a time when it was not common to have black students at institutions of higher learning, particularly an institution like Witwatersrand University. She is very conspicuous amongst her mates because of her difference, both in race and cultural orientations. This status quo then sets her apart as a member of the 'marginalised.'

By virtue of her academic accolades, she is in the same class with Helen but racially and economically she does not belong to the same class with them.

As a post-colonial writer, Gordimer questions the supremacy of Western cultures: if Mary is equally educated as Helen and other friends, then what makes her inferior? Through Mary, Gordimer transcends the colonising boundaries of modernising discourse in recognition of differences and multiplicity of axes and identities that shape women's lives.

As a marginalized person, Mary resists the representation of the elites: she refuses to allow Helen to force the Shaws to make an exception and allow Mary to stay with them. She maintains "the fact that I'm good enough does not mean she's got to want me. If I'm good enough, I'm good enough not to go where I'm not wanted..." (*The Lying Days* 203).

This scene emphasises Spivak's assertion that representation should recognise the importance of engaging with the 'other' in order to confirm assumptions about them. Applied in this situation, Helen should have consulted Mary about the sort of 'help' that she wants to extend to her and not assume that she knows what Mary needs.

Mary refuses to abdicate her blackness in order to be acknowledged as worthy of recognition as a human being. She resists the luxury of a comfortable home if it comes at the cost of her identity. She accepts her status of a minority: ...there are so few of me. We're still exceptions and not a class (*The Lying Days* 203). She acknowledges that she is an educated 'native girl...as clean as any white person' (*The Lying Days*, 188-189).

'Few' signifies not only the minority, but also the marginalized and therefore voiceless. Through Helen and Mary's relationship - a failed relationship, the author demonstrates that the efforts to unite women of different locations and origins are often nullified by racial prejudice or national liberation which has the potential to breed confrontations amongst women.

Gordimer seems to be handing the baton over to the 21st Century woman to combat racism and economic exploitation of fellow women: a feminist imperative. She demonstrates that opposing oppression in its diverse forms may be instrumental to, or crucial to feminism, but not inherent in it.

As bell hooks observes:

Feminism, as a liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as a part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all its forms. We must understand that patriarchal domination shares an ideological foundation with racism and other forms of group oppression, and that there is no hope that it can be eradicated while these systems remain intact. This knowledge should consistently inform the direction of feminist theory and practice (hooks 1989, 22).

Helen's failure to build 'bridge identities' across differences is a result of her inability to acknowledge flaws in her social identity, or failure to act out this acknowledgement and instead remaining glued to the moral supremacy of the white community. As Marchand and Parpart (1995) posit, it takes participation - something beyond observation and sympathy - to demolish hierarchies of knowledge and power that privilege one culture over the 'other.'

Gordimer introduces Mary Seswayo as educated but still representing the less privileged signifier in the colonizer/colonized binary. [25] However, Bulking (1996) asserts that binaries can be deconstructed so that the dominant term can emerge truer, more valuable or more significant than its opposite. Mary, like Bhabha (1994) maintains, is the remnant of what colonisation and bourgeoisie nationalism is trying to destroy. The Shaws reject Mary on the basis of her skin colour and fail to recognize that she could be as clean and educated as their white daughter, Helen. It is evident that Mary represents a stubborn gene that refuses to die, even if she has to struggle through Chaucer (a difficult poetry text). Apartheid was designed to ensure that blacks remain poor and illiterate, but Mary is an exception.

Whilst Helen drops out of the university, Mary and others continue forming a web of interconnected power operating from under the surface, awaiting an opportune moment to erupt. This is a deconstruction of the assumed monolithic nature of dominant powers. Implied here is that the silenced and marginalised communities are, in precarious ways, no longer whispering but speaking to power.

4.6.4 How Transformative is Freedom?

Through Helen's life, Gordimer's novel fulfills the liberatory and transformative intent of postcolonial literature. Throughout the text, Helen takes decisions that go against the prescripts of white culture. It makes her feel liberated and mature: she defies the moral code of the white culture by establishing relationship across the races and class: "I'll be friendly with whom I choose and I'm not interested in their standards or who they think would be suitable for me" (*The Lying Days* 192).

Helen does not care to negotiate her exit from white culture. She grabs the first opportunity that presents itself to remove herself from a fairly privileged and sheltered white world that is her home. At the mention of the Marcuses, something lifted in her, the sweet smell of freedom. She is unable to contain the possibility that she could come out free at last; "free of the staleness and hypocrisy of the narrow stiflingly conventional life" (*The Lying Days* 196).

This is what Helen thinks about her home and its inherent prejudices: *narrow, stifling and conventional*. However, she does acknowledge the protection that her home provides her. The literary device that Gordimer uses is indicative of this awareness: "I would get out of it as palpably as that overelaborate dress that had pampered me too long" (*The Lying Days* 197). 'Overelaborate' and 'pampered' both show class and status: that the home offered her luxuries and comfort that 'other' children could only dream of.

It is liberating for Helen to make friends freely without any racial boundaries to observe. She befriends Mary Seswayo and Joel Aaron, who are black and Jewish respectively. As she newly defines herself, Helen rejects the assumption that an individual's identity is shaped simply by fixed factors such as education, a new job, a new town, a divorce.

She insists here that change is brought about by a “long and slow mutation of emotions, hidden, all-penetrative; something by which they may be so taken-up that the practical changes of their lives... pass almost unnoticed by themselves” (*The Lying Days* 244).

Her passionate relationships that ran across the races also become a part of the arsenal for a liberatory enactment. They constitute a violation of her conservative upbringing: a direct defilement of, not only a ‘moral principle’, but also a violation of the Statutes and Laws pronounced by the Nationalist government which banned mixed marriages and interracial cohabitation. These deliberate protestations to the communal code of ethics give Helen the pleasure of truancy and freedom that is often the object of a young mind.

However, the liberation is more in principle than practical: she is still drawn to her old life and often feels ashamed and disgusted with herself for being less of an adult woman answerable to her own integrity. These relationships - friends and lovers - created a medium of transformation and a platform to exercise her newly found freedom in a slim way.

Gordimer uses Helen’s newly found freedom to show that the postcolonial promise has not necessarily yielded intended results. Mere separation of the coloniser/ colonized binary does not translate to total liberation and transformation. This failure to use freedom from oppression to effect genuine liberation and transformation is lamented greatly by previously colonized communities who had pinned their hopes on the decolonizing process of nationalism. The protagonist Gordimer uses does not achieve much with the freedom she desperately fought for. The author seems to caution the 21st Century woman to invest her freedom wisely; that as she engages in deconstruction processes and actions, she should keep their eyes on the prize – liberation from all forms of oppression, transformation of the self (from victimhood to independence and self-actualisation).

4.7 From Subtle to Radical Resistance

Resistance to colonialism is a liberating exercise, which would eradicate colonial servility from the native soul, and restore self-respect to the dominated. Fanon (1961) contends that resistance necessitated various undertakings in the form of anti-colonial struggles whose agenda is subsumed into the agenda and intent of postcolonial theory.

Mary Seswayo confides to Helen about her living conditions, not complaining though; merely indicating that she makes reasonable progress working at the library than at home. It occurs to Helen that a comfortable and spacious home is a luxury only a white person could afford. Although Mary resisted apartheid and its policies of segregation, she engages in it in a spectacular way - empowering herself through education. She is equally affected by the apartheid regime but decides on a subtle form of resistance. She makes it known that she knows that she is good enough not to force herself where she is not wanted. She does not use huge platforms to let the white folks know she is resisting but lets one, very outspoken friend know:

You want to give a nice plump person to practising cannibals and tell them they mustn't eat them because they will be eating themselves, but they're used to eating people. They haven't had their diet changed yet, like you have (*The Lying Days*, 203).

The metaphor used here is loaded with criticism against the white community, but presented in a subdued tone that does not provoke any feelings of animosity, but of understanding; a gospel that the recipient should hear. It is more like a baton passed on to a fresh pair of legs. Mary insinuates that whites are cannibals (implying uncivilized) who still live in a primitive world. Contrary to the 'cannibals', she calls herself 'plump' to mean she is enticing to them but does not want to fall victim to their cannibalistic appetites.

Gordimer contrasts Mary's resistance to that of Sipho: unlike Mary, the latter does not adopt a passive form of resistance. Sipho leads the demonstrations, organizing meetings and formulating discussion groups. Although he goes about it in a more civilized manner, involving Native Representatives (Paul Clarke for example), still it does not save him from police brutality and he dies during one of the organised police raids in the township. Resistance, whether subtle or vigorous, is always met up with some consequence.

It was necessary that a protestor dies in the novel to give a true picture of the real situation that prevailed in South Africa during the apartheid era where lives were sacrificed in pursuit of a democratic country. The death also demonstrates the cruelty of the apartheid system; as the African people felt: 'the velvet glove is off the iron hand' (*The Lying Days* 257), implying that the natives stood to suffer the wrath of the Malan government led by the Nationalists.

To demonstrate resistance to patriarchy, Gordimer uses Helen and Paul's relationship to show how women are caught up by the inescapable, the ceremonial engagement and marriage; 'nice little homes'. Helen has contravened limiting precepts of other institutions including her home, university, work, friends and many others but her love for Paul seemed to soften her up in the wrong, wrong places. She does things she promised herself never to do, like consulting her husband on everything as if he were some reference material. Not long into the relationship and Paul is already dictating to her, even to her conscience:

You know what you remind me of? A little girl that's been told God is watching her all the time. And if she does something God thinks is naughty...he will know... Look at you (*The Lying Days* 253).

This came up because Helen is hesitant to tell her parents about her cohabitation with Paul. In her response, she is careful not to offend him: "It seems so mean, I said, not

wanting to offend him" (*The Lying Days* 253). That becomes a pattern of her life - mimicking what Paul says, tip-toeing around him, lest he is offended. This subordinating role is disappointing, judging by the strength she has to resist this humiliation. In the presence of Paul, her integrity collapses, along with her sense of morality.

Gordimer then introduces another woman protagonist – Isa Welsh, through whom she demonstrates that women are equally strong and gifted as their male counterparts; that women should not constantly seek confirmation - of values and morals from men. She demonstrates that women sometimes submit to being judged, ridiculed and humiliated by their male spouses just because they are not aware of the power they have in their own right.

Isa's happiness does not depend on the man in her life, unlike Helen who feels ashamed that she does not measure up to Paul's expectations and is constantly worried by the attention that Paul receives from any woman, even close acquaintances like Jenny and Isa. Until Isa sat her down and addressed her: "You don't have to worry about him and me. He'd never really want me because I'm clever than him" (*The Lying Days* 334).

Isa indicates to Helen that often times men are threatened by women who demonstrate mental strength that they do not possess themselves and then get out of their way to make such women feel inadequate, less than what they really are in order to subordinate them.

The way resistance is portrayed in *The Lying Days*, it is clear that it is not something that emerges once off. It is a build-up from a long series of injustices whose perpetrators are not exposed and punished. At the point of the build-up, the perpetrators might try to intercept it with resources at their disposal. However, extinguishing the flame does not mean killing the fire: circumstances will continue to fan the smoky remains until the flames flare up again.

The hunger strike in the Atherton mine was hushed down by authorities and the strikers bowed down, as if calling it off. Not long after that demonstrations started in most of

greater Johannesburg townships. It is evident that the resistance had been brewing from under the surface and only burst when the momentum was fully gained. The resistance took different forms: subtle, spectacular and radical. So far, Gordimer's women are involved at a subtle or spectacular level.

4.8 Sisterhood: Transcending Status and Racial Boundaries

Redstockings was one of the influential, but short-lived radical feminist group of the 1960s to 1970s in the US. It fronted with numerous ideologies that became household words and 'sisterhood' was one of them. It is evident that this concept was upheld much earlier in Africa although it might have been influenced by a different set of factors ranging from patriarchy, polygamy through to racial/tribal prejudice.

Gordimer uses the relationships between Mary and Helen, Helen and Isa and Mrs. Shaw and Anna to portray sisterhood that does not bow down to racial pressures. The way sisterhood is represented in the text, it varies in the degrees of attainment. With Helen and Mary, there is an attempt to extend a sisterly hand across the racial divide. However, both Helen and Mary remain grounded in their respective cultures and could not forge a midway platform to interact in spite of their differences. Helen tries but wanted Mary to move towards her world without making any move to meet her halfway. Mary; on the other hand, does not see any possibilities of a union between her and Helen judging by the existing social and political environment. To her, it is enough that they are on good terms, she has no expectations beyond that. This sisterhood cannot be nullified on the basis of its shortcomings. It must be credited for opening channels of communication even if such channels were not fully exploited.

Helen and Isa do not start on the right footing: Helen comes to know Isa as someone she is contending with for Paul's attention. Even when Helen is with Paul, she still doubts Isa's intentions and because of these constant suspicions, she has reservations about allowing Isa into her personal space. While Isa could argue about everything with everybody, Helen holds that her arguments are on the basis of her interest in Paul. The situation is

aggravated by Paul's comment about the argument Helen and Isa had. He steps in, but more towards separating them than defending Helen: "... of course Isa can't stand intelligence in other women, she has the greatest respect for the views of an intelligent man, but she can't listen to another woman talking sense." (*The Lying Days* 217)

Although the comment was intended to breed animosity between the ladies, it also illumines common and valuable quality between them – that they are cognitively gifted. It is only after Isa arranges a meeting between them that they equally become more aware of each other's virtues without any feelings of intimidation. Isa acknowledges that they are both too clever for Paul:

I'm too clever for him....You are too clever for him too, not in your head, but with your emotions. (*The Lying Days* 334). Helen, for the first time warmed up to Isa. But today, I warmed up to her in another way.....I came to understand something about her (*The Lying Days* 335).

Helen begins to understand that it is a sense of authority in a woman that hardens others towards her. It occurs to her that Isa is too clever to be dominated by what she calls 'household gods.' Helen immediately forgets her hostility and sense of distaste that made her close away from Isa.

Gordimer seems to suggest that other than race, politics and status, women are often isolated from each other because of men: either, already in their lives, or contested for. But she demonstrates that true sisterhood can transcend such contending factors. However, sisterhood does not just happen: it is nurtured and sometimes involves compromises of social, political or economic status. Helen had to leave Paul to be able to extend a sisterly hand to a woman.

4.9 Write-back to the canon

Helen's life has always been a series of contradictions: she observes that her world is nowhere near what is described in the texts she read as a child; of

Princesses who changed into frogs or houses that could be eaten like ginger bread. Nannies in uniforms, governesses and ponies, nurseries and playrooms and snow fights... (*The Lying Days* 20)

Helen is concerned that she has never read a book where she, herself was recognisable, where there was a girl like Anna who cooked, cleaned and called Mr and Mrs Shaw Missus and Baas. What Helen is saying is that she sees an unfamiliar world, one that was never written about, probably because it is dirty and ugly, but real.

As Gordimer writes about Helen and the literature available to her, she is accepting the blame for the world not written about and commits to the responsibility to write about this unfamiliar world. Helen reads a lot of texts ranging from poetry through to prominent fiction writers of the time. However, she is concerned that nothing she reads approximates to her life; personally or the life in Atherton.

At some point Helen's mother brings her books which she loans with her adult ticket. These are 'gentle novels of English family life' (*The Lying Days* 40). She is not the only one who read such literature; Mary walks around with *A Key to Chaucer* (*The Lying Days* 130), a very complicated text even for the English-speaking.

Gordimer finally accepts the writing role in the struggle for freedom in South Africa. When she leaves for Europe at the end of the text, she promises to come back with the determination that she will not play spectator anymore; she would take advantage of her non-aligned status to report on the two worlds objectively from this vantage point. She merely exercises her writer function on these worlds without committing to either.

This responsibility is meant to write back to the colonial writings by Eurocentric literary productions to improve and correct the myths written by writers outside of the context they are writing about. Along with the acknowledged responsibility to write, Gordimer also becomes politically active in her subsequent writings although most of them were banned by the Apartheid regime.

To the 21st Century woman writer, writing within South Africa, Gordimer advises thus: as articulated by Robert Green (1988):

To write serious fiction, Gordimer is hinting, involves the questioning and abandonment of stock conventional responses: a readiness to take the risk of isolation and loneliness. Helen's walking away from the safe white compound and her turning off the tarmac road down the dusty path that leads to the black stores are at the same time projections of adolescent discontent and sentences from an artistic manifesto. (543).

The implication in this quote for a 21st Century woman who chooses to write, is awareness of the isolating effect of writing. This is because the deconstruction strategy dictates the dismantling of preconceived ideas and advocates for negotiated authorial practice.

4.10 Conclusion

The author uses writing as a deconstructive tool to oppose the injustices of an apartheid regime in South Africa that is characterised by racism, patriarchy and marginalisation. The text is her biographical debut novel after looking at the lives of the people facing these injustices, from a privileged point as a white woman of British descent during apartheid. From looking through the glass, the author becomes racially conscious and resolves to participate in the struggle for liberation of the marginalised.

Gordimer employs the voice of a teenage woman protagonist to represent issues of concern for black women in the post-colonial apartheid South Africa.

Throughout the novel, Gordimer models the calibre envisaged for meaningful participation of women in a democratic country, although she does not identify as a feminist author but instead, an African author.

Writing as a white woman, alienates Gordimer from fellow white South Africans, but at the same time, does not earn her membership with Black South Africans. The 21st century woman writer should be willing to forego privileges and or comforts if they wish to observe social responsibility through literary work that should possess willpower and fortitude, and be resolute in her own existence, not allowing herself to be compromised due to fear of alienation by her own or another race. This is why Wolfe (1929:4) asserts that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'. This is so that when alienated by cultural communities that the woman author wishes to liberate herself from, she can still self-sustain.

On exploiting the theme of emerging identity (from being to emerging), Gordimer subjects Helen, her female protagonist, to multi-cultural settings that then allow for intercultural relations, which in turn shape her belief systems from a simple and naïve Afrikaner, to a more self-actualised and socially conscious woman of the 21st century. The emerging identity does not resemble the culture from which she is exiting, nor does it resemble the culture she aspires for, instead, it is a new hybrid identity that characterises a stoic woman, who is better equipped to have a meaningful and active participation as a citizen of a democratic South Africa.

As Bhabha (1994) asserts, the presence of multiple cultures creates cultural differences, which allows for discursive construction of identity, rather than inherited or predetermined. This multi-cultural setting is referred to by Bhabha (1994) as a third space - a space of enunciation. Embracing a different culture is not characterised by the abandonment of one's own, instead, it is the acknowledgement without prejudice of the existence of cultures that coexist within an interactive space.

Gordimer, through her character, Mary Seswayo, seems to suggest that while the 21st century woman embraces difference and is aware of racial differences, can be resolute in her own race and culture and not allow herself to be compromised due to fear of alienation by another race. This is seen with Mary, who despite being rejected by Helen's family and race as a whole, remains unwavering in her Africanness.

CHAPTER 5

RECLAIMING CONTROLS OF THE FEMALE SPACES FROM PATRIARCHY

Resistance and social change arise only from an entanglement with regimes of dominant knowledge/power, not outside them (De & Sarkar, 2002).

The developments in literary theory advocate for a transformation in postcolonial societies. Women producers of the fiction genre can no longer write and claim to be feminine unless they accept the responsibility of transgressing the norms set up by patriarchal authority. Literature by women writers of the postmodern, postcolonial times, supported by feminist criticism has necessitated 'a new discipline ...that has as the object of its study, women's writing.' Tharu and Lalitha (1993), in their preface to the first volume of the much celebrated work - *Women Writing in India* - submit that patriarchy has proven to be a violent social structure of control and domination that defines the roles, behaviour and human interactions to the disadvantage and subordination of women. Through this system, society treats women as relatively powerless, invisible and unimportant. Subconsciously, a patriarchal system teaches its architects and proponents (both men and women), particularly the older generation of women who have internalised patriarchal practices as a norm, to think that women's bodies, appearances, opinions and time are subject to entitlement by men.

Postcolonial feminists continue to analyse perpetuation of gender bias and 'double colonisation' (Dube 2000) even in post-independence states where women suffer domination in national patriarchies. Dube (2000:20) sums up a feminist perspective:

Women in colonised spaces not only suffer the yoke of colonial oppression, but also endure the burden of a patriarchal system imposed on them.

Patriarchy has naturalised divisive and gender based social spaces. Such spaces exist in ordinary places where there is human interaction. Spaces formed for men, by men are automatically exclusive for women, not explicitly, but through unwritten laws that make women feel unwelcome.

A patriarchal system has apparatuses in place that sustain such thinking and related actions. Wrestling controls of the female spaces from patriarchy implies creation of a counter-hegemonic system that resists perpetuation of women subordination.

Living in a patriarchal society has varying meanings for different women across the globe. Because patriarchy manifests itself in different patterns in societies, it has varying definitions from different authors. Lerner (1986:217) maintains that patriarchy is “the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligation and reciprocal rights.” A patriarchal system therefore is promoted through the consent and cooperation of women. When women consent to gender socialisation, or comply with long-standing definitions of their roles, they cooperate with a patriarchal system (Lerner, 1986). Researchers (Lerner, 1986 and Figes, 1970) trace patriarchy from the emergence of Christianity and capitalism.

Ernst (2015) views patriarchy as an institution which endorses authority to one partner (traditionally male) on the basis of their ability to accrue resources for livelihood and then utilise the power concomitant to such resources to dominate and maintain power over the other (woman). The resulting concern is that women are automatically subordinated as “a commodity and thus objects of accumulation for their labour and sexual reproduction” (Ernst 2015:59). Implied here is that until women can attain economic power, equality between men and women remains a dream and patriarchy will persist. The challenge of patriarchy cannot be ignored if the 21st Century woman wants to enjoy their rights as citizens of a democratic country. It should be resisted.

It is a concern within feminist structures that such a practice survives political changes and societal advancements through democracy. Gender research identifies dimensions of patriarchy to include employment, the state, violence, household, sexual and culture (Majstorovic and Lassen, 2011).

Within the context of this study, patriarchy is said to collude with, and reinforced by colonisation in aggravating the plight for women, particularly by disempowering them politically. The study focuses on cultural and literal productions that influence decolonisation from not only colonial and indigenous patriarchy but also from other forms of domination.

De and Sarkar (2002) resolve that resistance and social change can only be achieved through direct confrontation with regimes and institutions of dominant knowledge and power, not outside them. This resolve is a call for women writers of the postcolonial period to dismantle, through their literary works, this dominant system by portraying women protagonists who occupy spaces where patriarchy thrives and reverse the dominant/subordinate binaries of power. Patriarchy as an institution applies not only within family environment, but through other institutions that tend to oppress women by relegating women issues to the periphery.

5.1 South Africa in Transition: An Inviting Space for Postcolonial Writers

Like many South African writers of their time, Farida Karodia and Sindiwe Magona found their motivation from politics, mainly in opposition to the apartheid regime. They particularly explored themes relating to race and identity. Prominent themes in South African texts (at that time) were race and identity, thus a majority of South African writers privileged politics and opposition to apartheid (Ray, 2003).

Both authors began writing during the apartheid era in response to the shortage of black women writers in South Africa. The fact that South African stories during this period of unrest were told by males and outsiders stirred feelings of social responsibility and encouraged non-white women to tell their stories (Magona, 2009). The authors define South African stories in ways that acknowledge the complexities involved, culturally and otherwise. Like the postcolonial writers they are, Karodia and Magona have had to peel off multi-layered traditions which became more important than women entrenched in both colonial and indigenous customs that continue to oppress women.

As postcolonial writers, Sindiwe Magona and Farida Karodia present texts that demystify traditional female roles: wifehood, not in its traditional fulfilment and nurturing posturing, but as enslaving, ungratifying motherhood and othering of women who dare to break the tradition. The texts are but one form of many other literary productions that seek to present female resistance to these preconceived patriarchal practices that continue to marginalize women. As Katrak (200) maintains: "Tradition is gendered so that the same elements of tradition, such as religious beliefs, education, dress codes, and freedom of movement are enforced very differently on male versus females" Katrak (2006:159)

Definite political and historical frameworks instigate and foster these cultural traditions. The postcolonial women writers have a responsibility to challenge postcolonial tendencies that perpetuate and intensify ossified traditions. Karodia's and Magona's protagonists have to navigate through a network of overbearing power relations that were taken for granted as a way of life.

Although there was an imbalance of power between males and females in precolonial times, colonialism significantly interrupted indigenous cultures and further complicated this imbalance. This makes 'tradition' a highly contested concept in postcolonial studies, and therefore compelling postcolonial writers to historicise and deconstruct these varying configurations of tradition.

Karodia and Magona assume different foci in deconstructing the race-determined traditions in an effort to reconstruct indigenous norms and values through their creative art. The difference in focus and stances is embedded in the authors' backgrounds, political awareness, level of education and the degree of willpower and robustness in assuming the social responsibility to write.

These authors' works set out to characterise the nature of the modern black and coloured female voices through unique selection of characters. They use their creative skills to depict women's situations in a way that allows the protagonists to rise above such situations.

The texts: *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother-to-Mother* are developmental in that they portray changing realities (Mutahi, 2011). Although Karodia's approach is feminist, she refutes the stance (Ray, 2003), while Magona openly acknowledges the influence of black consciousness and feminism in her writing.

Through their narratives, Karodia and Magona reveal the truth experienced by people suffering the injustices of apartheid, crafting literary bridges of reconciliation and thereby crossing racial, economic, linguistic, and spatial divides. They are driven by a sense of duty to their people – Indian and Xhosa respectively – the South African nation and the global community to take up the responsibility to write.

The novels are representations of numerous social and psychological effects and economic inequalities of racial segregation on the Indian ethnic minority and black majority. These effects include relocation, reclassification and the varying degrees of exclusion, belonging and cross-racial alliances predicated on the difference between rural and urban resistance (Pirbhai, 2009).

Although Karodia and Magona write from the context of an apartheid South Africa, their writings are based on two different racial groups that form part of the marginalized. Abridged descriptions of the authors' backgrounds along with their writing spaces and style, as distinct from each other are given here.

5.1.1 Re-Inventing Women in *Daughters of the Twilight* – Farida Karodia

In her debut novel, *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia embraces a recursive innocent-eyeball narrative style that documents how the white government forcefully removed people from their homes and locations, and racially reclassified them through an arbitrary system of racial classification (Gikandi, 2003). The novel is set in South Africa during the apartheid era and it centres on the life of a Muslim family as they navigate through a racially discriminatory government system. The main characters in the novel are members of one family: the parents, Abdul and his wife Delia, the two daughters - Yasmin and Meena (the narrator) and the maternal grandmother, Nana.

Karodia's story focuses on the children of a Muslim father and a Coloured mother, an example of a family uniting the different ethnic and racial groups of South Africa. By giving voice to a group that was side-lined through politically-sanctioned racial segregation, Karodia offers a window into the complex South African culturality (Sugars, 2004).

From the time they settled in South Africa, South African Indians, a diasporic people, had to navigate cultural and political obstacles in order to shape their collective and individual identities. For instance, during and after apartheid, the racially configured South African society sought for Indian labour. However, the competition they presented in the economic environment was resented by white farmers, businessmen and black African labour alike. In the 19th century, Indian people could own properties in special streets, wards or locations which allowed them to trade and own businesses. But the passing of the anti-Indian legislation in the 20th century stripped Indians of these privileges and they began contracting their labour. The Indian people were subjected to the same discriminatory laws as non-whites (blacks and coloureds).

Indian women were not exempt from these discriminatory laws even though they were in a better position economically and politically than black women. South African historiography is replete with evidence of how black women bore the brunt of this harsh system (Farmer, 2013).

Karodia's voice, as an author, is echoed from exile in Canada – away from the squalor that anchored racism. Similarly, Magona wrote from America. Chetty (2002) asserts that it was time and space that lent Karodia the voice to speak back to her country of origin. Chetty (2002) suggests that in the midst of degradation, one's mind is preoccupied with daily survival and there is no stopping and taking note of what is happening; and this is why most authors develop an imaginative patina which keeps the native experiences alive, even in their absence.

Karodia uses fourteen year old Meena to relate the incidents that took place under apartheid (Killam and Kerfoot, 2008). Meena is the youngest female protagonist in the novel. This is her way of looking at the context of her writing with an innocent and fresh pair of eyes that are not contaminated by ossified attitudes and pre-conceived ideas. This young girl mainly captures incidents involving her older sister, Yasmin, and how they affect the family. This choice of narrator also magnifies the complex nature of racism – young children are not spared; they grow up to realise that there is no escaping the fierce invasive tentacles of racism. The protagonist asserts:

I tried to force myself out of this miserable environment, into the tranquil world of my childhood, but it seemed impossible to make the transition. The little space in which I had taken refuge as a child no longer existed (*Daughters of the Twilight* 147).

The text, *Daughters of the Twilight*, is a female-voiced construction of enlightenment about women's potential, irrespective of their status (down-trodden, mother, wife, sister or girl) to rise above their situations. Farida Karodia does not only capture the situations as they present themselves, but brings a beacon of hope by changing realities that her protagonists face in the text. She presents the changes as a development of a conscious decision made by women. For example, Delia, Nana, Yasmin, Meena are presented in the text as taking responsibility to liberate themselves from the restraints of the apartheid regime. Even in a small unit as a family, unity and sisterhood amongst women thrown together by their unfortunate situation becomes a forte.

5.1.2 Challenging the Discourse of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in *Mother to Mother* by Sindiwe Magona

In *Mother-to-Mother* Sindiwe Magona explores the lives of the deprived and degraded black community during the years of apartheid to the transitional era from the apartheid government and into the democratic South Africa, led by the African National Congress (ANC). The novel conveys the injustices of apartheid through the lens of a woman who is a victim of apartheid herself. This period saw a culture of resistance against white people.

It was a time when black youths joined strikes, absconded from school and engaged in revolutionary activities to express their discontent with the government. This story explicitly tells of the history of people who bore the brunt of a racist and patriarchal system created by white rule.

Magona's narrative explores the identity of the black nation (in particular black women) and identifies the constructs of resistance. In the liminal spaces, ethnic and cultural bonds among the blacks are cemented as they united against a common enemy. In this forged unity among different ethnic groups, the voice of the black woman was drowned. The men were at the forefront of the war.

Sindiwe Magona's *Mother-to-Mother* is not only about the plight of black people during apartheid but also about the role of the woman in the entire debacle. By writing the novel as an epistle from the mother of the murderer, Mandisa, reaching out to the mother of the victim, *Mother-to-Mother* gives voice to the woman and reshapes her identity. In spite of the measures instituted by the apartheid government to make it difficult for women in particular to carve their identities, *Mother-to-Mother* grants women the leverage to cultivate their sense of worth.

Although in real life there were four killers in the death of Biehl, the text fictionalizes only one, Mongezi Mqina, whom Magona renames 'Mxolisi' which literally means the one who appeases. The name is consistent with the tradition of *Mater Dolorosa*: his conception is exceptional in that it is a virgin birth - Mandisa was 'jumped into' while practising non-penetrative sexual play (*Mother to Mother* 113). Magona's focus on Mandisa as a virgin mother speaks to the central criticism against the TRC that it (a) only projected women as secondary victims and therefore, (b) presented a diminished truth established through 'narrow lenses' that did not expose the total violent mechanisms of apartheid which hit at the 'entire communities' (Mamdani 1996: 58 – 59).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was an assembled body with a court-like structure officially established as a constituent of the transition process to democracy in South Africa. It marked the end of apartheid and its main purpose was to afford the nation an opportunity to heal from the injustices of the apartheid regime.

The healing was assumed to occur through the affordances of space for victims and perpetrators of apartheid to testify. The victims gave testimonies of how their human rights were violated and the perpetrators, through full disclosure, requested amnesty for such violations (Hayner, 2002).

As a liturgy of the everyday life, Magona's narrative accumulates the horrors that confirm Goldblatt & Meintjies' (1996:3) assertion:

The history of apartheid, just as it can be told by a man tortured in detention, could be told by almost any black woman in describing her life. It would be a tale of families torn apart, land taken away, schooling denied, movement and speech curtailed, of fear, harassment and poverty.

But now, people look at me as if I'm the one who woke up one hot [shushu] day and said, Boyboy, run out and see whether, somewhere out there, you can find a white girl with nothing better to do than run around Gugulethu... (*Mother to Mother* 1)

The first line of Magona's lament is the oblique set of accusations confronting her in the community: 'People look at me as though I did it. The generous ones, as though I made him do it...' (*Mother to Mother* 1).

Magona writes this novel in empathy of Amy's mother by adopting a non-judgmental position and allowing Mandisa (Mxolisi's mother) to narrate her story. Magona takes up a courageous stance by putting on two sets of shoes at the same time: on the one hand she feels for Amy Biehl's mother, Linda, because like the mother she is, she can relate to the pain of losing a child (she has lost a son to the liberation struggle). On the other hand, as an author, she also feels for Evelyn Manqina, fictionalised as Mandisa in the narrative. Magona and Manqina were home girls and shared the same experiences of growing up in impoverished conditions as poor South African women under apartheid. She acknowledges this similarity of experiences in an interview where she confesses: "I know what kind of life she must have had as a poor African woman. Because that's a situation I've been in... And I imagined the rest of her life. The horror, the poverty..." (Samuelson, 2000: 284-285).

Magona's critical sense of the intense fugitive brush with this fate – 'it could easily have happened to me' (287) – enhances a compassionate element of the re-enactment of her home girl's storyline. Here Magona uses her voice to represent the collective – a communal, African sisterhood borne under a common plight of apartheid.

The South Africa that the author lived in, and writes from, is a colonial space: it suffered colonially-inspired violence against women that disadvantaged black South Africans. It is this background that charges Mandisa's narrative with emotion and remorse. In the beginning, the novel is about Amy Biehl and Mxolisi but later turns its focus to Mandisa, the mother of Mxolisi. By assigning the whole novel to Mandisa's narrative, Magona unmutes the long-silenced black women of South Africa.

In *Mother to Mother*, the most important voice is that of a black woman: it is the only voice heard (Woodward, and Hayes, 2002). Magona intentionally raises the voice of a woman protagonist over the male voices, and this she does within a chauvinistic world (infested with cultural and apartheid-induced hierarchical practices). She sets out to free the black woman from their marginal position by assuming a feminist and motherly stance in crucial parts of the text.

Magona joins writers like Toni Morrison (*Beloved*, 1987), Sherley Anne Williams (*Soundings*, 1993) and Ishmael Reed (*Conversations with Ishmael Reed*, 1995) who took a revisionist postmodern approach to de-emphasising subjectivity in the history texts (without drastically changing the form and language of contemporary fiction) but by shifting the emphasis onto fiction's ability to recover the identity and history of women who were previously marginalised by the narrative politics of the colonial space.

The uniqueness of Magona's narrative resides in the attention it affords the seldom glimpsed world of the fictionalised murderer's mother whose lament is also a trajectory of her personal life. This inclination - to shift focus from the son to the mother - gives *Mother to Mother* a biographical status in the hindsight.

This strategy is what Rich (1976) suggests in her book *Of Woman Born* that women should customise their maternal role to regain the power traditionally denied them in a patriarchal society: "Powerless women have always used mothering as a channel - narrow but deep - for their own human will to power, their need to return upon the world what it has visited on them." Rich (1976:6)

Motherhood, therefore is a female space that women should use in furtherance of their agenda to liberate themselves from margins designed through colonial and traditional conventions.

5.2 Postcolonial Authorship as Resistive Art

Traditionally, postcolonial writing was largely a patriarchal space, alienated for female writers. They were marginalised in their writing where they had to comply with and were impeded by the already set male conventions of fiction writing which portrayed women in subordinate roles (Rich, 1976). However, women such as Karodia and Magona challenged the status quo by uplifting and inserting female protagonists into the narrative historiography of the nation. Following this newfound liberation in writing, Karodia tells the story of Indian and Coloured women's struggles and Magona tells the story of a black woman's struggles during the apartheid era in South Africa.

Farida Karodia's writing resonates with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's position in *Barrel of a Pen* (1983) where the pen is used as a weapon to strip the mask off the ruling regime of postcolonial repression in Kenya. Karodia uses the pen to voice the struggles of Black and Indian women marginalised by the apartheid regime. Indians were not spared from discriminatory laws imposed on other non-whites. Although they were advanced economically, they faced the same struggles. Karodia's novel is a representation of numerous social and psychological effects and economic inequalities of racial segregation on this ethnic minority. These effects include the relocation, reclassification and the varying degrees of exclusions, belonging and cross-racial alliances predicated on the difference between rural and urban resistance (Pirbhai, 2009).

Like Gordimer states in *The Essential Gesture: Writers and Responsibility* (1984), Karodia accepts the professional responsibility of transforming society by writing about controversial racist and sexist laws. To achieve this, she uses the innocent eyeball of a fourteen year-old narrator, untainted by preconceived ideas and imposed ideologies. The fourteen year old captures the true order of events and challenges faced by women during the apartheid era; and conveys the daily events faced by her family, mainly the women (Delia, Nana, Yasmin) in her household. Karodia shows that young children are not spared from the harsh realities they grow up in, meaning that there is no escaping the fierce tentacles of racism.

Karodia's *Daughters of the Twilight* instructs women about the great potential they possess no matter their status (down-trodden, mother, wife, sister or girl) to rise above their situations. Karodia does not only capture the situations as they present themselves, but brings a beacon of hope by changing the everyday realities that her protagonists face in the text. She presents the changes as a result of a conscious decision made by women. For example, Delia, Nana, Yasmin, Meena are presented in the text as taking responsibility to liberate themselves from the tentacles of the apartheid regime. Even in a small unit as a family, unity and sisterhood amongst women thrown together by their unfortunate situation becomes a stronghold. This unity transcends racial and age differences. The ability to reach out to another woman in distress is the moral lesson of the text. However, the end disappoints the reader in that the options of running away or joining the struggle which had held so much promise are not explored at the end; there is no evidence of the ultimate resolution with either.

Women residing within the transitional space in South Africa – from apartheid to democracy – faced various challenges stemming from patriarchal institutions and as such Magona took it upon herself to convey the story of at least one woman. The women testified at the TRC as mother witnesses; testifying to the loss of their spouses and sons. These testimonies constituted what Samuelson (2007: 159) calls 'national narratives of redemption'. The way the narratives were presented, however, underrated a multiplicity of other roles that women played during the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Through the writing of *Mother to Mother*, Magona stages some form of a literary resistance. The narrative is produced as a testimony outside of the formal structures of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), thereby overcoming the limitations placed on women testimonies through regulation of content (what to talk about) and/or status (in what capacity). This resistance is consistent with the views of other feminist writers who lament the limited roles women are afforded in patriarchal societies. Eleke Boehmer observes: "In the iconographies of nation-states, there are few positive roles on offer for women that are not stereotypical and/or connected in some way to women's biological capacity for mothering." (Boehmer, 1992a:243).

On realising that Manqina's story has been watered down to that of a mother grieving for a son, Magona decides to fictionalise the story - move it from the TRC structures - so that the story enjoys not only the leverage of content, but of the narrative tone as well. The narrative, now called *Mother to Mother*, assumes the status of a biographical work of art that does not only bemoan the loss of a son but most importantly also redefines the institution of motherhood by foregrounding the identity of the mother and relegating the son to the background.

Whilst South African women are content with the mother/wife status that qualified them to testify at the TRC, Magona is reluctant to compromise the feminist ideology by reducing it to the institution of motherhood or wifehood. She wants more: women have contributed a lot to the liberation struggle beyond just motherhood/wifehood. This attitude is typical of the second feminist movement wave. Magona demonstrates the 'robustness' that Mzamane (1991) alludes to, as a necessary requirement if women want to navigate the literary contours of a chauvinistic nation characterised by a myriad of patriarchal institutions in the form of government, the justice system, religious organisations and family formations.

Many authors have cautioned against motherhood as the only platform women can take in literary studies. McClintock (1995), for example, cautions that motherhood should be

seen as a subject position from which women should organise themselves as political agents – not an end in itself. She advises that such a platform should be explored “working strategically within traditional ideologies to justify untraditional public militancy” McClintock (1995: 281), Wells (1998b) affirms this assertion by cautioning women not to confuse maternal politics with feminism: “Women swept up in mother-centred movements are not fighting for their own personal rights as women but for their custodial rights as mothers” (Wells, 1998b:481)

Implied here is that whilst the discourse of motherhood is appealing, the 21st Century woman should see it as an opportunity for advanced engagement with issues relating to womanhood, as McClintock suggests, women should use readily existing structures strategically to pursue issues of a radical nature. Wells (1998b) further advises that these movements should be seen as restricted in coverage, in duration and in accomplishment of their goals and should not imply political maturity.

The writing style that Magona adopts throughout the text is by itself a form of resistance: instead of adhering to one form, she assumes a multicultural and literary performance that incorporates African traditional orature and Western conventional styles as observed from the use of first-person narrative, realism and a linear plot. This approach affords her multifocal and multivocal space over which to inscribe the accomplishments and calamities of her protagonists at the same time allowing for cultural hybridity. She uses at least two other languages along with English to form a tapestry of linguistic magnificence.

The target of Magona’s lament is non-South African (Amy’s mother), which also defies the confinement of locality, thereby establishing literary bridges for a free flow of wisdom between global and local communities. In this way, she rejects the global communities and their often unsolicited intervention by highlighting their ignorance of the South African woman’s plight.

Magona challenges the young generation of women to participate in the exchange of wisdom and knowledge in a way that deconstructs Western assumptions about local women.

Gilbert and Gubar (1986) calls this a 'pen penis' model – an old tradition of writing that recognises male authors and women female ones only as passive objects of man's creation. Magona urges the 21st Century woman to unite, and reject preconceived ideas of what constitutes a literary piece.

The way Magona depicts the life of an oppressed people, is an expansion of the necessary gesture – more than just reporting – on the plight of a black community in South Africa, but heightens the impact by showing the extent of damage the apartheid regime has caused to the black populace: people's lives, perceptions, attitudes and conduct have been sculptured in a way that stirs the nation into hatred and anger.

The reader cannot help but wonder whether the desired ideals of a post-colonial nationhood are attainable. She raises these issues just at the brink of democracy – as if to emphasise the need for the nation to reflect and reconcile the past with the present and the possible future.

5.3 Prejudice and Coloniality in Post-Colonial South Africa

Decolonisation, as a postcolonial strategic agenda, requires the disintegration of white supremacist beliefs, and the structures which uphold them, in every area of African life including the mind (Hotep, 2008). Loomba (1998) laments that the dismantling of the colonial rule did not automatically bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class or the peasantry in most countries that were formerly colonised.

In South Africa, particularly, colonial rule was substituted by another form of coloniality - apartheid - through its policy of racial segregation. Because the newly independent nation-states made available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly, Loomba (1998) claims that there is nothing 'post' about colonization for people at the bottom of the hierarchy. Karodia and Magona's stories are set in the apartheid era when racial segregation was a rule of law; government used racism as a tool to control interactions between whites and other races in the apartheid South Africa.

Many racial groups falling outside the white race were subjected to numerous injustices. Under the apartheid regime, racial segregation was a legal imperative informing the treatment of non-whites. The whites were considered to be superior to other races (Black, Indian, Coloured, and Asian). There were public spaces designated for whites only. The other races were often relocated to desolate areas of the country where life proved difficult. The system of government was rigid and unflinching to the disadvantage of black, white and Indian.

According to Reilly, Kaufman and Bodino (2003) racism is not based on a hate/love premise; it is a prejudice-based enactment and practice. Racism may be personal or institutional, felt or unrecognised but it is generally grounded on the premise that people of 'other' cultural/racial backgrounds behave in different ways. The assumption is that they have no control over it as it is part of who they are. Major themes identified in the texts include racism, identity and sexism.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Indians, like coloureds are non-white, and therefore treated as second class citizens. However, their status is better than blacks – as according to the race classification specified by the Group Areas Act of 1950 – who are taken for the lowest ranking race probably because their skin colour is further away on the colour bar used for exclusions by the apartheid regime.

In both *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother to Mother*, the protagonists, along with people of their colour, languish under the harsh laws of apartheid. Their life is a long series of unbearable physical conditions without any hope for future improvement. Magona's story sharply contrasts the life of black and white and highlights the blatant inequalities through Mxolisi's life in comparison to that of the young white girl who was killed. However, the thesis of the narrative reflects the authoritarian circumstances of the woman and her attempt to carve her own identity and independence in a patriarchal society that is hardly amenable to such gestures.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, the author illustrates racism in the brutal removal of the Mohammed family as stipulated by the Group Areas Act. This is also articulated in *Mother to Mother*. South African Indians are diasporic people who had to traverse cultural and political obstacles in order to form their own collective and individual identities when they settled in South Africa (Dannewitz, 2003).

Karodia's works reveal that the separation and confinement of Indians had contradictory impact on Indian identity: exile prompted the disruption of Indian identity instead of uniting them. Eventually, a significant number of Indian women bridge the apartheid gap and discover their political identity - a resistant identity - in an attempt to separate the physical and mental walls encircling them (Govinden, 2000). For this resistance, they had to be kept away from the 'pure' and 'well-behaved' society.

The Mohammed family forms part of the racially segregated individuals due to their ethnicity. They are deprived of privileges afforded to the white people; they are poor, economically and otherwise. Therefore, the government of the day could do as it pleased with them and they have no voice to fight back. Even if they tried; the odds are against them. Cassimhai, a friend to Abdul, acknowledges this in the text: "We are the Jews of Southern Africa, hated and envied. Scapegoats, that's what we've become." (*Daughters of the Twilight* 56)

This separatist attitude is an impediment to the decolonial project. As Grosfoguel (2007) maintains, a decolonial perspective requires a wider tenet of thought (including perspectives from the subalternised, racial/sexual spaces). From this notion of decolonization, what Karodia and Magona reveal through constant displacement is not only geographical relocations, but gross neglect and disregard for insights of critical thinkers from racialised and gendered spaces in the postcolonial discourses.

The displacement depicted in both *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother-to-Mother* has far-reaching implications at a theoretical level: it is meant to create mental walls that

relegate epistemic insights of critical non-Western thinkers to the periphery; thereby promoting one epistemic tradition – based on one abstract from which to achieve truth and universality (Grosfoguel, 2007). Grosfoguel proposes that a radical decolonial theory can only be achieved through a critical dialogue involving diverse cosmologies from the subalternised locations.

Displacement within postcoloniality refers to several forms of physical movement, for example, the Europeans to the colonies, the Africans as slaves to the Caribbean and the New World, the postcolonial migrant to the First World, and refugees ‘unhomed but not homeless’ (Nayar, 2015; Bhabha, 1999). Some situations such as intolerance and oppression from both home and country necessitate displacement.

In *Mother to Mother*, displacement happens through the forced removals of residents from Blouville to Gugulethu. When the residents resist removals, it should be understood that they do not only resist physical removal, but most importantly they resist the emotional and spiritual displacement and disconnection that spatial relocation entails. Magona dramatises the manner in which the removals are carried out and the efforts to resist them.

Whites are pulling down our houses...

We have to hurry and pack up everything...

Throw away anything for which you have no use... (*Mother to Mother* 81)

When a fleet of police vehicles invaded the location, the shacks are torn down, together with inhabitants sleeping. The stubborn residents who chained themselves to the doors of their shacks are ‘pulled down with those poor desperate souls chained right onto them’ (*Mother to Mother* 81-82). They cannot freely give up the places that they had called home for many years.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, the Group Areas Board would simply declare an area white and evict the non-whites living there, disregarding any developments or money spent in making their houses decent.

They’ve proclaimed this a white area and they’ve opened an area for Indians up on the flats (*Daughters of the Twilight* 57).

Karodia illustrates the brutal removal of the Mohammed family as stipulated by the Group Areas Act. The men from the Group Areas Board arrive armed with guns and dogs to enforce the eviction. Two of the younger constables push their way into the house to forcefully remove the occupants. When they started throwing things around, Delia tried to stop them. (*Daughters of the Twilight* 87).

No! No! Please...

Leave me alone! I'll do the packing.

Why are you doing this to us, Sergeant Klein? Why?

This is our home... (*Daughters of the Twilight* 88)

Delia pleaded in vain with Sergeant Klein not to carry out the eviction but the man was acting on an order:

I'm sorry Mrs Mohammed; I'm only doing my job. (*Daughters of the Twilight* 88)

The Group Areas Board evict the Mohammed family from Sterkstoom and allocate them a place in a desolate area called McBain where they have to start reconstructing home, affiliation and belonging afresh. Even then, they are not secure because there is no telling when the Group Areas Board would strike again.

These forms of resistance - represented by people chaining themselves to their shacks (in *Mother-to-Mother*) and desperate pleas 'No! No! Please...Leave me alone! I'll do the packing' (in *Daughters of the Twilight*) may not have yielded any results, but it is a demonstration of helplessness, despair and tenacity. The kaleidoscope (of people pulled down with their door frames) and breaking people's properties in the process also represents cruelty of the worst kind; where there is no difference between a man and a metal frame.

The extremity of these circumstances is indelibly etched onto the psyche of the evicted, even much later in history when the people at the periphery gain power. The lurid portraits of these removals by both Magona and Farida is a demonstration of how South Africans were robbed of their status as citizens and reduced to migrant labourers who existed exclusively for the satiation of white comfort in the country.

Explicit marginality is often supported by laws or cultural prescripts that are known by victims and perpetrators of such marginalization. It is evident through the eviction process in the texts that marginality is not only defined in terms of a minority group, but relates to imposition over a group at the margins of the socio-political system which limits their freedom to choose, thereby depriving them access to resources, which in turn impoverishes them.

Through the removals, people are thrown into intercultural interactions on family/societal values. However, Karodia and Magona's women prevail even under such circumstances: 'Mama prevailed that day...' (*Mother to Mother* 82). These disruptive and disorienting removals not only threaten the integrity of the black man/woman but family life as well, for in the process some families disintegrated and never came together after the removals. The women and children are abandoned by their husbands and fathers; leaving all family responsibilities to the women; 'a servile figure leashed with children,' as the poet Noemia de Souza describes the role (Katrak, 2006).

What the 21st Century women learns is that if they unite as women - irrespective of their political, economic or racial background - they can overcome gender-based marginality that is perpetuated through patriarchal systems of government. The women Farida puts together at the eviction scene are a very diverse group comprising of Afrikaners (Mrs Ollie), Coloureds (Nana), Indian (Delia and daughter) and Mrs Dhlamini (African). They may not win against the strictly male Group Areas Board, but they have staged a collective resistance. The resistance gains momentum and grows into a novel forum representing women's voices. It has to start somewhere; by women accepting that they have a worthy cause to fight for other than their individual differences.

5.4 Appropriation of Proto-feminist Spaces

Patriarchy and sexism remain recursive systems of oppression for women and manifest in many forms, some of which have been internalized as tradition and ways of life. Katrak (2006) asserts that patriarchy, as observed in postcolonial cultures, was generated from pre-colonial patriarchal practices that have concomitantly been influenced and reinforced by the colonial Victorian morality.

Karodia and Magona do not portray racism, patriarchy and sexism as hierarchized categories, but as interlocking sets of conventions that hinder women development and empowerment. Their narratives participate in the liberation of women from both colonised and indigenous patriarchy. Colonised patriarchy is a dominant/subordinate construction between coloniser and colonised but indigenous patriarchy is a collection of practices which tend to subordinate women through allocation of traditional gender-specific roles (Guerrero, 2003).

Sexism is defined as an action, policy or practice which selects females (or males) as a class to receive unequal treatment; it may or may not be intentional (Hirst and White, 1998). Sexism runs throughout the texts studied here because the South Africa is essentially patriarchal and this virility was intensified by apartheid and marginality is a location connected to the restrictions of a subject's access to power. It is commonly used as a term indicating different varieties of exclusion and oppression (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006).

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, sexism manifests as a secondary problem arising from race, class and economic prejudice. During the eviction, the Group Areas Board is dominated by white males and this group performs acts of violence and hostility against defenceless women. To further exacerbate the problem, the head of the household (Mr Mohammed) is absent so the women are left to their own devices. Mrs Ollie, their white neighbour, even had to intervene because of the atrocious acts in which the men executed this duty.

What are you doing to these people?

I know them. You know them too. They're not criminals.

Why are you treating them like this? (*Daughters of the Twilight* 88).

If we understand that 'them' in the extract above is a racially defined category, it then serves to confirm that a woman of African descent is constantly burdened with the yoke of racism. Nnaemeka (1998:451) observes that: even if women collectively overcome sexism, they will still be faced up with racism.

The men contemptuously ignore the women's defensive screams; ruthlessly push Meena and Delia out of the house and break Delia's most-cherished china set. This is typical male aggression often perpetuated on defenceless women.

The rape incident in *Daughters of the Twilight*, involving Cobus and Yasmin is not only a case of a man forcing himself on a woman: it is a white man on a black woman. Cobus employs his physical strength to overpower and take advantage of the physically weak woman, Yasmin:

He caught hold of me, crushed me, pinning my arms so that I could only wriggle helplessly. He dragged me into the trees over there. I struggled and screamed for help. He clamped his hand over my mouth, threatening to kill me if I open my mouth again. (*Daughters of the Twilight* 122-3)

This attitude of entitlement to the female body has come to define the way women are viewed and related to, particularly in a patriarchal society. Another display of patriarchy that Karodia highlights through Yasmin's rape incident is the need for feminist strategy to challenge patriarchal systems of governance. During the apartheid era, the union between the white race and other races was declared unlawful. In spite of it being illegal, there are children born from multiracial unions involving white people and other races. In the text, Jacobus Steyn takes advantage of Yasmin and her family's class and racial status. Knowing that no action against him will be taken, he rapes Yasmin - an act of defilement and defiance as the law forbade interracial unions. It is evident that governance informed by patriarchal and hegemonic norms has far reaching consequences; involving more than just obvious gender inequalities.

Even at the time the text is produced, patriarchy still persists, notwithstanding educational advancement and modernisation. In both *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother to Mother*, apartheid and patriarchy collude to oppress women. Karodia and Magona subject their woman protagonists to multiple forms of patriarchy against which they have to struggle:

patriarchal practices continue to oppress women through family structures, court systems, churches, schools and marriages. As Katrak (2006) alleges that: "Colonisation colluded with, and re-enforced an indigenous patriarchy to worsen women's predicament, mainly in disempowering women from a political process." (Katrak 2006: 11).

Men reduced women, particularly non-white women, to sexual objects. These non-white women are said to have nothing substantial to offer besides their bodies for the sexual gratification of men's desires. This is portrayed in the treatment of Saartjie Baartman, a Khoisan woman enslaved and used by Dutch farmers for sexual pleasure (Craps, 2008). Baartman was Khoisan in origin and worked on a farm as a servant. Awed by her anatomy, the farm owner, Hendrik Cezar and the British ship surgeon, Alexander Dunlop, took her to London where she was exhibited as a 'Venus Hottentot'. As an artefact on display, she was the subject of an occidental gaze and was treated like an animal, stylising her body for money, which Cezar and Dunlop pocketed.

Hove (2013:9) incisively comments that Saartjie Baartman's experiences in Piccadilly, London, between 1810 and 1811 is deeply pernicious and alienating for those whose histories are deeply enmeshed with hers. The mercantilists later sold her to the French where she performed in music and dance until some French painter - Cuvier and friends - featured her in their art work with titles like 'monkey-like'. Although she was not caged here, she was still treated like an animal. Baartman died in France in 1815 and her remains were dissected to prove her primitivity and difference, till these despoiled remains were returned to South Africa at the request of the former President, Thabo Mbeki in 2002. Hove (2013:9) concludes by stating that Saartjie was provocatively displayed for mercantilist profit and that this was a gross aberration where the female body was gazed at, subjectivised and ineluctably victimised.

Spivak (2012) laments this abuse and marginalisation of women. She emphasises the dominance of males in society and the relegation of women to inferior positions because of patriarchy and cultural communities they live in.

The term subaltern is a military term; however, Spivak used it to highlight the necessity of revising the discourse of women in a postcolonial space. Subaltern represents the lowest rank within the military and social ladder - and it is used to illumine the marginal status of women and the literature exploring it (Sawant, 2012). This persistent patriarchy breeds skepticism around women's liberatory movements (including feminism), for each seems to be framed on patriarchal tenets.

Sangani and Vaid (1989) are justifiably sceptical of any kind of struggle targeting patriarchy. This skepticism stems from the tendency to re-align this struggle within other anti-(something) campaigns in which case the movements miss the target (patriarchy). What Sangari and Vaid (1989) suggest and what the 21st Century woman should pick up is a direct reform strategy 'that consists in effecting a thoroughgoing social change' against patriarchy and does not re-align with patriarchal social stratifications nor political formations.

As evidenced from the texts by Karodia and Magona, the women bridge the apartheid gap by establishing their own political identity – as women – notwithstanding their races and/or cultural affiliations. When these women reach out to one another, there is a cultural interchange, involving practices and mannerisms not characteristic of monolithic cultural groups. In sum, these postcolonial writers refute the notion of purity and its assumed 'supremacy' over hybrid constellations. Karodia and Magona create opportunities for their women protagonists to reclaim control through self-definition.

It is a norm that in narratives, subdued characters often fade into the background and not much is heard from them. Even when they want to voice their feelings, they lack the know-how. In their marginalised status, they suppress their dissatisfaction and do not even voice their aspirations. Meena in *Daughters of the Twilight* is an example: she finds herself relegated to the background – lurking in Yasmin's shadow most of the time. At no point does she voice her ambitions; instead she ponders over them in privacy: "My only interest was to get a fraction of the attention monopolized by Yasmin." (*Daughters of the Twilight* 53)

Karodia refutes the common assumption that women must conform to the perceived understanding of 'strength', often defined in male terms, in order to be recognized as powerful, strong or worthy of note. Meena has always been everybody's baby (probably because she is the youngest), always at home, agreeable to cultural practices and less rebellious compared to her sister, Yasmin. Because of this character, she is taken for the weaker one between the two sisters, and her interests are neglected. This neglect irritates Meena because it seems the whole world revolves around keeping Yasmin happy who is hardly thankful for anything the family provides her. Even though Meena demonstrates her appreciation for the new bicycles that their father has bought for them, her happiness is downplayed:

'Papa, Papa look!'

But Papa had eyes only for one person, and it wasn't me

(*Daughters of the Twilight* 20).

However, Karodia surprises the reader by revealing some depth and level-headedness in Meena's assumed lack of strength. Meena confronts Yasmin head-on when everybody is tiptoeing around her: "What makes you think you're an authority on pain and suffering? What about the suffering of others? What about that baby?" (*Daughters of the Twilight* 146).

It is Meena again who joins underground movements to influence change in the lives of non-white citizens of the country. Karodia demonstrates here that pre-conceived ideas can be deconstructed – what is thought to be weak might actually be strong and vice versa. Equally, Karodia illuminates misconceptions that society has about femininity: because Yasmin likes dressing up and wears make-up, she is taken to be more feminine than Meena when there is nothing in the female biology that predisposes her to develop a liking for them. Meena does not like them, which does not make her any less of a woman.

Karodia shows that much as the society constructs femininity, it can also deconstruct it. When Yasmin abandons the baby, it is Meena 'the less feminine', who loves and raises the baby as her own. She naturally adopts the role without any orientation. Karodia appropriates motherhood as a natural phenomenon, implying that women do not necessarily have to give birth to be motherly. This analogy demystifies the notion that the measure of a woman is her ability to give birth.

Karodia and Magona use fiction works to appropriate proto-feminist spaces by dismantling categories that often put women against one another such as ones that isolate childless women and, or single women. They both support the undying testament that if women unite as women, irrespective of their political, economic or racial background, they can overcome gender-based marginality enshrined in patriarchal systems of the society and government.

The women protagonists that these authors bring together in times of distress, for example when the Mahommeds are evicted (*Daughter of the Twilight*) and when Mxolisi is alleged to have killed Amy Biehl (*Mother to Mother*) show support and care for one another. They may not win against the opposition, but they stage a collective resistance. The resistance will gain momentum and grow into an incorrigible forum representing women's voices. It has to start somewhere; by women accepting that they have a worthy cause to fight for other than their individual differences.

As sisters, women protagonist transcend racial differences through a sisterly solidarity. Dean (1997:8) asserts that solidarity amongst sisters should incorporate their differences as this has the potential to make rational communication possible and desirable. She also advocates for relations that do not create hierarchical or exclusionary relations. It is necessary here to examine how Karodia and Magona redefine the female identity through long-standing relations amongst women: as sisters and as mothers.

Cohen (1988) defines sisterhood as a bond exceeding blood relation. It surpasses the connection borne by siblings. Sisterhood unites two or more women who share commonalities.

Both authors recognise sisterhood as a necessary platform for women to unite and support one another. Bell hooks (2000) highlights the economic plight of women as one of the possible feminist platforms that may be used to unite women. It may become a place of collective organising, the common ground and the issue that unites all women.

Karodia and Magona advocate for sisterhood equivalent to the boy in the striped pyjamas – adopted from a Holocaust novel by John Boyne (2008) which epitomises the essence of friendship. Both *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother to Mother* display a sisterhood that unifies women irrespective of their backgrounds – economic, social, racial and political.

In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa refers to Amy Biehl's mother, Linda, as a 'sister-Mother' to indicate the depth of her empathy. Mandisa, as a mother, can relate to the pain of losing a child (she has lost a son to the liberation struggle). Magona allows her female protagonist, Mandisa, to transcend the racial and national boundaries to express her deepest remorse for what her son did to Linda's daughter. By so doing, she demonstrates the essence of solidarity in difference.

Magona further uses Mandisa and Nono's relationship to illustrate that sisterhood should always resist circumstances to benefit participants. Despite Mama's hatred of Nono, her relationship with Mandisa does not succumb to the pressure of her mother's disapproval; it persisted. Like Audre Lorde (2003) maintains, "For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world" Lorde (2003: 28).

To the 21st Century woman, Magona advocates for loyalty to sisterhood. She cautions against existing forces that continuously seek to oppose and nullify the need for sisterhood. She particularly warns against same-gender interference coming from an earlier generation of women who have internalised patriarchy as a norm and keep

steering young women to the same preconceived ideas. It is for this reason that Magona allows Nono and Mandisa's relationship to thrive in spite of the disapproval of Mandisa's mother. This interference cites difference within feminist movements as a good enough reason for sisterhood to succumb to patriarchy.

Magona also shifts the mentality of individualism to collectivism in sisterhood. In defiance of Western isolationist approach to woman identity construction, Magona adopts an ideology representable through a Setswana expression: 'matlo go sa mabapi' which implies that it is evident that the emotions of sisterhood are contagious. One sister's pain is felt by another, even if they have not experienced the cause of grief. In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa's neighbours (women from the neighbourhood) come to grieve with her after the news of Mxolisi's arrest. The women arrive at a time when Mandisa's wounds of losing her son are still fresh; when she has not yet made sense of the events that took place. Mandisa does not want company, neither does she want her neighbours to pry into her private space and grief and judge her for the actions of her son.

Upon hearing a knock, Mandisa opens the door and is met by four women from her street. The women come to extend to her their heart-felt sympathy. Although they cannot identify with her situation, they put themselves in her shoes. They can fathom the pain she must be going through. At first, Mandisa is not receptive to the women: felt as if their visit was an intrusion and an invasion of her privacy. She assumes they were there to judge and condemn. The first response to their first visit was hostility but Skonana reassures her: "We have come to cry with you...as is our custom, to grieve with those who grieve with you" (*Mother to Mother*, 200).

This is the quintessence of sisterhood, which does not only rejoice in good times but also demonstrates empathy in times of adversity. They leave the comfort of their own homes to provide solace to a woman who is going through trauma no mother deserved. Beyond this being an act of sisterhood, it is an abiding testament to African culture. Again, Magona emphasizes a sense of Africanness by deliberately refuting individualistic tendencies of the West where good fences make good neighbours.

Touched by the compassion of these women, Mandisa relies on these women for her strength and hope during the difficult period: 'It is people such as these who give me strength. And hope' (*Mother to Mother* 251).

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia's sisters are drawn from various races and cultures and are brought together by common interests and hardships. They differ in their economic status and these differences have necessitated a circle of interdependence amongst them. Nana depends on Delia, who in turn has Mrs Olie for a neighbour and support. Gladys works for Delia and depends on her to provide for her family. Meena feels lost without Yasmin and Yasmin needs Meena for support. These alliances are spearheaded by Nana who is the oldest of the women in this text: she creates platforms for women to come together and do such small things as cooking, cleaning or going for walks. These occasions are a necessary break from all the hardships that the apartheid regime throws upon them. The sisterhood does not go without challenges that threaten it, but the women always find solace in one another somehow.

However, Karodia does not leave her female protagonists in the hands of Nana. It is evident that Nana still follows the gender-based delineation of social roles as dictated by patriarchy: where femininity is characterised by submission, nurturing, caring, sensitivity and emotionality. Instead, she hands over redefinition of roles to a younger generation of women in the personas of Meena and Yasmin.

The first pronounced relationship of sisterhood portrayed in the text is that of Yasmin and Meena, the siblings born from an Indian father and a Coloured mother. Yasmin has a strong and assertive personality while Meena has a subdued character. Meena looks up to her older sister whom she sees as beautiful and knowledgeable, especially after she comes back from boarding school. Yasmin returns a graceful and sophisticated young woman. Meena watches with great admiration and listens to her sister's stories and keeps her sister's secrets. The relationship between these siblings is sustained through the text. However, after the rape ordeal, there is a 'power shift' in the relationship.

When Yasmin loses her will to live. Meena steps in to support her sister and get her to move on with her life. At the birth of baby Fatima, Meena showers the infant with love; love that Yasmin refuses to feel. Like every sister-to-sister relationship, it is strained but not broken:

When are you going to grow up?

When are you going to face your responsibilities?

Face the fact that Fatima is your daughter and nothing you do is going to change that.

None of this is my fault.

It's never your fault... You never cease to amaze me.

Do you know what your attitude is doing to this family?

(Daughters of the Twilight 148)

In the end Yasmin leaves behind a shattered family. Even in her absence, Yasmin dominates Meena's life. Although she seems to have found her voice during the latter days of their sisterhood, Meena sinks back into Yasmin's shadow when her disappearance is all the family can think about. Part of her is lost with Yasmin's disappearance. Yet, sisterhood does not fade with absence. Although Yasmin disappeared, she lived in Meena's mind. The child she leaves behind remains a connection that Meena nurtures by adopting the child as her own.

The message for the 21st Century woman is that they should learn to appreciate sisters before them, listen and grab what is useful from them, add that to their natural talent, and run with it. In this way, what is lost is still retained as a legacy for the emerging women. Magona reiterates the same thing when her character, Amy, dies. Amy's friends survive the fatal attack to pursue the good intentions that Amy modelled for them: to acquire education so that they can meaningfully engage the white supremacist government in pursuit of human for all.

Through their narratives Karodia and Magona challenge the truth constructed by the TRC for circulation and national consumption. This challenge is presented through counter-narratives that recognise the role of mothers (and sisters) as agents in the liberation struggle and not necessarily as victims. Like Karodia, Magona elevates her woman protagonist from the assumed passive spectator role (mother-witness) or the 'suffering mother' (Samuelson 2007:161) to active participants as agents of history alongside the male counterparts.

As postcolonial writers, Karodia and Magona create proto-feminist spaces to highlight numerous roles played by women during the struggle, which would otherwise be submerged in the dominant national narrative of sacrificial redemption. This way, they also reverse the prefabricated woman as a secondary player and places her on the same pedestal as heroic male revolutionary agents within the liberation struggle. They affirm Boehmer's (1991: 10-11) assertion that "where women tell of their own experiences, they map their own geography and their own history and so, necessarily contest official representations of nationalist reality". Boehmer (1991) particularly applauds Magona for interrupting and disrupting the language of official nationalist discourse and literature with a woman's voice.

By allowing women to speak, Karodia and Magona afford spaces for women to validate their own life stories which rapture the 'mother witness' trope and disrupt the victim/perpetrator binary constructed by the TRC. They also contribute in demystifying motherhood by bolding the line that divides womanhood from motherhood. In remapping motherhood, the authors - while still acknowledging the biological role of producers - redefine and deploy this basic role in other contexts. While Karodia focuses on mothers as active transmitters and producers of national culture, Magona approaches motherhood from the perspective of symbolic signification of national difference and active participation in the national struggle against an apartheid South Africa.

Karodia locates her women within households headed by women: Mrs Olie's husband has not been mentioned in *Daughters of the Twilight*, we only know that she is married, but Mr Olie does not have a voice. The same with Mr Mohammed: all incidents of confrontation with white oppressors are handled by Delia – a female protagonist. The only time male protagonists are mentioned in the text is when they are paralysed by the injustices of an apartheid system. Mr Mohammed suffered a mental breakdown, leaving Delia to head the family single-handedly. The gardener, who could otherwise help the family to put up a temporary home after the evictions, also falls apart.

The women then take control in their respective homes and in the process transmit national culture to their offspring through socialization in private spheres of their homes. Karodia places Nana (Delia's mother) as a producer of culture. Nana does not only dictate on acceptable behaviour, but also enforces compliance by either speaking vehemently against bad behaviour or rewarding good behaviour. Nana values education and uses her own money to pay for Meena's school fees because Meena is obedient.

Nana also creates opportunities for women to come together to do small things like cooking and feasting as a way of giving them a break from the harsh realities of the apartheid regime. Such occasions become a culture where women would come together, including women from other cultures, (Mrs Dhlamini, for example) to participate in these marathon cooking or baking events.

Karodia emphasises the importance of grand-mothering in a family, that instead of relegating older women to the backgrounds, their guidance and support could strengthen the family, particularly in fatherless homes. Karodia raises an important issue about mothering - that it never ends. *Daughters of the Twilight* is one of those texts that represents this life-long joy and burden. Karodia wants the 21st Century women to redefine motherhood, so that as it lasts it should be a joy not endurance.

Grandmother Nana, is strong and wise; holding the family threads together. Karodia shows how grandmothering is often not romanticized in literature. Even at that Karodia is honest in her portrayal of grandmothering: that though it is done willingly at times, at other times it is out of necessity. Nana loved mothering Delia's girls, but when her granddaughter has a child whom she leaves to pursue her urban lifestyle, grandmothering becomes a necessity.

Through Yasmin abandoning her child, Karodia creates a sense of camaraderie from communal responsibility to raise the child. She demystifies the romanticized nurturing and all-providing mother, implying that mothers need support as well, if not from the husband, then own mother will be of assistance. Karodia echoes the same sentiments with Katrak (2006) who maintains that:

In African culture, the child belongs not only to the parents, but to the extended kin-group, and the responsibility of raising a child is shared more communally than individually.

From Nana to Delia, Meena and the new baby, a long chain of support is created where the destiny of each is shared by all in a cultural setting. Karodia does not necessarily imply that young mothers should abandon their young ones but that child-bearing and rearing should not be a disabling factor in the life of a woman.

The 21st Century women should create a circle of support for shared responsibility to raise children and instil a culture that recognises women (including the elderly) and contribute to their welfare and development. In *Mother to Mother*, Magona stretches the concept of motherhood further. She deploys motherhood as a platform from which to express views from the subaltern; a space of a distinctively feminine articulation, represented by Mandisa. This deployment is Magona's way of subverting the masculine discourse of a South Africa in transition.

The portrayal undermines the patriarchal narrative of motherhood by turning away from nationalist discourse. She also refutes the dominant national narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation. Although presented as a lament of one mother (of the murderer) to the other (victim), it is not necessarily a plea for absolution, nor is it a request for forgiveness. Mxolisi's birth is a burden to Mandisa:

From before he was conceived; when he with lack of consideration if not downright malice, seeded himself inside my womb unreasonably and totally destroy(ed) the me that I was... the me I would become (*Mother to Mother* 1-2)

The story of Mxolisi's birth seems to justify Yasmin's (in *Daughters of the Twilight*) decision to leave the child and pursue her dreams. Although Mandisa raises her son - with all the sacrifices involved, she guiltlessly articulates the discomforts it comes with. To her child-bearing is both a joy and a sorrow integrated into motherhood. Mandisa's experience therefore, constitutes a disavowal to the nationalist discourse that valorises motherhood along with the associated supposed-to-be innate sacrifices.

The criticism often levelled against South African motherhood is that it is theorised in collusion with patriarchy which conceptualises it as a patriarchal constructed platform. Magona warns the 21st Century women not to collude with patriarchy through a culturally-sanctioned version of motherhood. Instead they should seek liberation to articulate their subjectivities and concerns. The 21st Century woman is cautioned against pre-conceived notions of motherhood and encouraged to vouch for motherhood as a social identity. Walker (1995: 418) defines motherhood as a social identity 'involving women's own constructions of their identities, informed by discourses of motherhood and the practice of mothering.'

Walker (1995) also maintains that motherhood as a social identity affords women an opportunity:

... to address women as agents, as well as probe the interplay between individual and collective processes is the construction of subjectivity and determination of behaviour. It draws attention to the subjective dimensions of motherhood and how women who are mothers themselves feel and think about this role (Walker 1995:426)

Although Magona concurs with Walker (1998) through Mandisa's relationship with white mothers, she is reluctant to negotiate or co-construct the mother role with white South African women. Mandisa refers to Amy Biehl's mother (the American woman) as 'sister-mother' and readily extends a discursive connection with her based on the tragedy involving their children. However, Mandisa cannot extend the same to Mrs Nels, her South African employer.

Magona suggests that the perpetrator of injustices should first repent before any talks on forgiveness and reconciliation. It is as if motherhood, though a common factor amongst women, cannot be negotiated if differences (in this case, racial) have not been addressed. In relation to Mandisa particularly, the collective construction of motherhood is inhibited by the fact that mothering Mrs Nels' children is precisely the reason she cannot mother her own. Her domestic work at the Nels' takes her away from her mother role and makes her feel that her parental authority is a 'mere formality, a charade, something nobody else needs' (*Mother to Mother*, 8).

Magona does not see racial difference as an impediment to collective construction of motherhood; but lack of consideration for the other mother is an impediment. This emphasis is a significant interruption to meta-narratives of reconciliation constructed by the TRC.

5. 5 Ambivalence: An Obstruction to Colonial Objective

The concept of ambivalence is a multifaceted mix of attraction and repulsion portraying the relationship between coloniser and colonised. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonised subject is never contracted to and subdued by the coloniser (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006).

Ambivalence is one of the key concepts that Homi Bhabha uses to describe ways in which the colonised resist the power of the colonising master. The anxiety that characterises the power of the coloniser constitutes an enabling factor for the dominated to challenge the dominant. Both Karodia and Magona show how ambivalence disrupts centres of power through hybridisation of cultures.

The authors adopt a deconstructive standpoint by portraying instances that tend to describe a complex mix of repulsion and attraction that characterises the relationship between coloniser and colonised. This tension is achieved in both texts through mimicry and hybridity. Whilst it is the objective of colonial discourse to produce compliant subjects who mimic the morals, conventions and customs of the colonial master, ambivalence seeks to destabilise this objective.

Through ambivalence, the intended mimicry becomes a mockery which intensely disquiets colonial dominance. Ashcroft et al (2008) maintain that although ambivalence (in Bhabha's sense) does not disempower the colonial subject, it does not completely empower the colonial master either; it merely serves as a fundamental disturbance and subversion in the authority of colonial discourse, thereby affording an opportunity for the dominated to fight back.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia demonstrates how the ambivalent coloniser/colonised relationship produces the seeds of its destruction demonstrating that although colonialism changes the social structure and makes the colonial subject lose his cultural identity, this price is reimbursed through empowerment of the female protagonist who comes back to haunt the system that robbed her of her true identity. In order to maintain racial segregation and associated exclusions in provisioning, the apartheid regime employs National Stratification mechanisms through which races could be partitioned. Delia applies to the Department of Internal Affairs to get Meena reclassified as coloured so that she could gain admission in a coloured school – these were better provided for compared to black schools.

The application involves a Comb Rule – an assessment through which a thin comb is run rigorously through the applicant's hair to decide which race he/she is. During the test Delia has to denounce any association with Indians:

We don't associate with Indians. She's Coloured. All our friends are Coloured. His gaze was unflinching, menacing. Although Ma returned his gaze steadily, I suspected that she, like me was quaking. He seemed to be satisfied with her reply. (*Daughters of the Twilight* 77)

Meena passes the test and gets admitted at the school of choice. As Bhabha (1994) asserts, the ambivalent nature of colonial relationships, produces seeds for its own destruction: Meena obtains her education and then uses her literate status to stage some form of spectacular resistance that disrupts the colonial dominance by affording an opportunity for the dominated to gain power.

The government official finally has Meena re-classified after a gruelling interview. This instance in the text is ambivalent because Delia uses the government's strict segregatory law against them without government realising the subversive act; that in compliance, she is actually defying the system.

The government official approves this compliance with satisfaction: "He finished. I shuffled uneasily. He inked the rubber stamp, then banged the approval on the application and dismissed us" (*Daughters of the Twilight* 78). The stamp is a stamp of authority; it creates and re-creates. In this case, the stamp reclassifies Indian into Coloured. Normally that same tool is used to exclude and deprive non-white from educational provisions. And yet in executing this statutory duty, it authorises and provides for the very excreta it intended to exclude. Farida skillfully exposes the absurdity of the apartheid system of segregation.

Every form of domination has weaknesses and inherent ambiguities and it is evident here that an apartheid regime is no exception. The structural weaknesses of this patriarchal institution is exploited by members of the subalternised racial groups to further their own development and empowerment.

Karodia sets the 21st Century woman free from an otherwise eternal trap by conventions. She advocates for negotiation of power which capacitates women towards self-sufficiency, agency and equality. The 21st Century woman is awakened to an opportune time for her to bring forth a powerful, life changing, dramatic and ambitious shift through mimicry and manipulation of power.

When Delia and Nana suggest reclassification for Meena, the objective is not that she should denounce her true identity, but to simply mimic the master's conventions for purposes of self-development. The reason Karodia allows Meena to mimic compliance to national stratification is to encourage the 21st Century woman to seek a liberating form of education against the sort that does not promote emancipation nor independence. She urges the women to seek education that will enable them to attain socio-political and economic freedom.

Karodia condemns South African black education - Bantu Education – for reinforcing indigenous patriarchy and colonial domination. The ambivalent nature of this situation, characterised by a dislike for whites and white culture and a simultaneous liking for white education that perpetuates the same culture, also constitutes a re-appropriation of a prerogative previously available only to the white and coloured bourgeois. It is also congruent with feminist recuperation of the agendas in the education of women in previously colonised countries. Magona brings another angle of ambivalence: moral ambivalence.

The basic tenet of moral ambivalence is that right and wrong are areas of a bivariate scale and not necessarily a bipolar scale (Wong 2010). The study does not regard moral ambivalence as a phenomenon that provides evidence for relativism, as Wong (2010) claims, nor as relativism purports. Moral ambivalence in this context carries a pluralist attitude, branded by the idea that two dissimilar, even discordant, paths of action can both be permissible viewed from a distinct perspective.

In her narrative, Magona puts on the mother lens as she extends a sisterly hand to the mother of the murder victim. Within the transitioning South Africa of the time, one would have expected her to be black and suppress her mother senses, but she chooses not to adjudicate this moral dilemma that befell both her son and Amy Biehl. She is torn between a collective interest and the subjective interest along with the pain of a mother. In the processes, Magona pulls the reader into the same predicament – of moral ambivalence.

Mandisa and Mxolisi are presented as victims of apartheid oppression and violence. Through her lament, Magona also submits that Linda and her daughter, Amy Biehl, should be included in this victimhood. The narrative puts a heavy burden on the reader: is it Mandisa, Mxolisi or Linda who is aggrieved by the incidents leading to, and the subsequent death of Amy Biehl? Do we blame Mxolisi for murder and ignore the apartheid system that brewed his anger? Or blame Mandisa for looking after the white man's children and leaving her own to fend for themselves and ignore her impoverished condition? And Amy: do we blame her for ignorance (did she not know that Gugulethu is a no-go area for whites) and ignore the good gesture she did her black friends by offering to take them home?

Although propagated by the oppressive system of government, Mandisa does not justify Mxolisi's actions as these are met with shock and disbelief. She does not condone her son's actions nor does she proclaim and plead his innocence or justify his actions. In the midst of all this political turmoil, injustices and other hardships dealt upon him, he still had to make a choice. He chooses to act in a way that momentarily stripes him of his humanity and takes on the personality of an uncaring beast. The cruel act of killing far outweighs any justifications and reasoning and nullifies all the efforts of humanizing the killer (even by the TRC). This narrative puts the moral sensibilities of the reader to the test: Mxolisi is afforded every opportunity to have a better life despite the misfortunes apartheid has for black people; he has a roof over his head and caring parents who attend to his every need. The question remains: should we ignore the gruesome act of murder? Magona allows the reader to adjudicate according to their individual morality.

5.6 Wrestling Liberatory Control from the Colonial Centre

Resistance is an act, or a set of acts, designed to rid a people of its oppressors while literary resistance is a form of contractual understanding between text and reader (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2006).

Karodia and Magona engage their women protagonists in various resistive acts against indigenous and colonial patriarchy. Their texts: *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother to Mother*, serve as textualisations of resistance of the black majority along with the coloured minorities within a South African context. Located within the postcolonial studies, the texts also carry the responsibility to redeem fiction work from the 'art for art' sake' that was the provenance of its predecessors in the late 20th Century. To attain this mandate, the authors portray the lives of people striving and aspiring to be independent.

In an environment where inequities have been normalised, any form of resistance towards such disproportions is viewed as a rebellious act or insubordination and the reaction of the official is cold-hearted offensive. The marginalised communities of apartheid South Africa knew better than to voice their dissatisfactions publicly; they could only whisper them to their immediate acquaintances. Karodia and Magona sketch various forms of resistance ranging from subtle murmurs through to blatant demonstrations and how these are restrained by organs of government.

5.6.1 Shifting Power from the Arrogant Hegemony of the Colonial Centre

Traditionally, the white imperialist wield power until such a point the marginalised come together to violently usurp that power and destabilise this centre. For instance, in *Daughters of the Twilight*, two people, who never agree on anything, Abdul and Nana, join forces in resistance to paying allegiance to the Count and the Countess who came to visit Sterkstroom. These dignitaries are normally received with absolute respect and honour by the white community and black community members are expected to do

likewise. People dress up, line up in their pathway and curtsy to them as they pass along. Abdul and Nana make it very clear that they would not play the clown to impress Count and Countess: "I'm not bowing and scraping to anyone, Papa declared. Neither am I. For once he and Nana are in accord (*Daughters of the Twilight* 49).

Again Abdul plays a low profile as usual. He simply declines but Nana, determined to look her worst, accentuates the effect: she intentionally makes her dress dirty by wiping her hands on it to achieve the desired effect. Karodia exaggerates Nana's reaction to show how daring women can be in demonstrating their disgust whilst their male counterparts quietly take endurance. It is Karodia's way of recuperating her women from many years of sleep during which decisions were made for them, roles defined for them and identities created for them. For once, she is putting them in the frontline.

Karodia's women are valiant protagonists. She frequently places them in the frontline, where the battle is fierce, and the men are safely tucked away in the background. The women do not necessarily win the battles since resistance is always restrained by the opposing forces – of government, of patriarchy or some other contradictions. But they are not destroyed; they suffer the brunt of the struggle, but emerge fortified enough to pick themselves up and regroup. From these experiences, the 21st Century women should see failure as an opportunity to build them, strengthen the union and prepare them for what lies ahead. Karodia does not want to project a feeble woman to a democratic South Africa that calls for resilience and fortitude.

The rejection of colonial supremacy is also portrayed in *Mother to Mother* through Amy Biehl's death. This unfortunate situation is symbolic of the rejection of local ideologies imposed by colonial ideologies of feminism. Magona advances earlier assumptions by African feminists that their challenges are unique – different from those of their sisters in the West – and urge the Western sisters not to intervene on their behalf, for in the process, might misrepresent them, or worse, emerge sacrificial lambs for a worthless cause. She also speaks in unison with feminists everywhere: 'What is spoken and who is silenced shapes the perception of reality' (Brisolara, 2003:31).

This feminist attitude is also an attribute of postcoloniality – echoing the poststructuralist viewpoint by shifting power from the hegemony of the centre (as represented by the apartheid South African and the USA of the time) to the initially powerless black masses of South Africa. Within the context of the study, the power shift is also from the patriarchal to the marginalised women in their respective homes, work places and public spaces. This writing strategy is aligned to the deconstruction feature of postcolonial theory: hemming the margins into the centre to destabilise it in a way that reverses the binaries in the relationship of power/powerless.

5.6.2 Violent versus Spectacular Resistance

Disturbing the centre often calls for measures more violent than mere negotiations with the dominating power. Violent resistance to colonial domination is a principle in support to Fanon's (1961) assertion that the only way to restore self-respect to the native soul is through violent means. Karodia and Magona equally condemn colonial subjugation and recognise the need for a more intense intervention (violent resistance). However, they tend to align rather to a more strategized form that clearly articulates the target of such violence. Magona, in particular denounces violent means directed at the marginalised and not at the perpetrators of such marginalisation.

Karodia urges women who have inhabited colonised spaces to assume a rebellious stance and demand their unlimited rights to self-determination. By allowing Meena to participate in the underground movements which pursued violent forms of resistance, Karodia encourages the female indigenes, to participate in a robust construction of a woman identity of the 21st Century woman.

In *Daughter of the Twilight*, a debate ensues between Solly Karim, Yusuf and Thomas Ndlovu. Solly proposes: that it is time for resistance movements to take on a violent approach in their fight against colonial rule; contending that the black people are tired of being at the mercy of whites:

I keep telling you that the time has come to return fire with fire. Guns will do the trick. We need friends who can supply us with arms. You have to meet violence with violence, passivity won't get you anywhere with these people...
(*Daughters of the Twilight* 83).

From the cited quote, Solly seems to follow the Fanonian principle: that African unity is a dream unless Africans are ready to thrust their own people upward through violent means in defiance of the postcolonial nationalists.

Karodia places Meena in the same league with male protagonists: Solly, Yusuf and Thomas. This way, by implication, her narrative sustains the same deconstructive imperative that Fanon (1961) upholds. Karodia seems to be giving a directive to the feminist theories of the 21st Century to be equally deconstructive in their approach if they are serious about addressing inequalities in power relations presented by both colonial and indigenous patriarchies.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, both male and female youth form secret (illegal) alliances for liberation, configured as illegal by the apartheid structures and strictures. Although such discussions are always held in secret and in hushed tones, where no person in authority would get wind of the plans, still information leaks and the resistance is restrained. Solly, the youth leader, is arrested and it is later claimed that he jumped to his death from the sixth floor. There is an uncanny resemblance of such manufactured lies in the death of struggle stalwarts in South African history.

Karodia allows her women protagonists to join the struggle. As if to suggest that alone, the men are losing it. If they are not driven to insanity (as with Abdul and Daniel), they die from radical mass actions (as does Solly in at the hands of the police). It is as if the women should neutralise the situation: knock sanity into their heads and balance out their violent outbursts into more calculated moves (spectacular resistance) towards attainment of

democracy. However, Karodia acknowledges the cost of a violent engagement: she does not guarantee any immunity to such violent engagements. She wants the 21st Century woman to be aware that violence begets violence; that the perpetrator will retaliate violently as well. The underground movements that resisted the injustices of the apartheid regime were also meted out with an equally strong retaliatory force. The 21st Century woman should also observe that her fight is against different sources of domination. Whilst targeting colonial and indigenous patriarchy both in her private and public spaces, the 21st Century woman should anticipate internalised and strategized resistance.

Contrary to Fanon (1961), Bhabha (1994) condemns violence as the means to combating colonial domination. But like Fanon (1961), he describes colonialism as oppression, domination and violence accompanied by complex cultural interactions. However, he subscribes to subtle forms of resistance (such as empowering through education). When Karodia gets her girl child (Meena) schooled, it is in recognition of the value of self-empowerment for future women leaders, thereby implying that violence is but one way and not the only form of warfare against domination.

Acknowledging the need for scholarship, Magona embraces Bhabha's (1994) interrogation and criticism of the Fanonian principle as a naive liberatory conception of freedom. She readily accepts Bhabha's (1994) justification: that adopting the form of combat for which the enemy is adequately resourced is an unnecessary compromise on human life.

In her text, *Mother to Mother* Magona uses Mxolisi and Amy to convey different forms of resistance to the same colonial power. These two are from two totally different worlds. The one world is gloomy, filled with hopelessness, inequality and poverty. The other is colourful, alive with endless possibilities of a brighter future. It is this vast disparity between the two worlds that breeds hatred within Mxolisi and his radical comrades; hatred that developed ever since the arrival of the white settlers along with all forms of injustice. Although he is a brilliant student, he does not complete his schooling because his mother could not afford to buy him textbooks.

Mandisa tries to convince Mxolisi to stay in school but he is adamant he has to look for a job so that he can help her, much to her dismay. Mxolisi actively participates and assumes a leadership role within the resistance movement. He embodies the hatred that has long simmered in the bellies of his ancestors. Mandisa describes him as 'an agent, executing the long-simmering dark desires of his race' (*Mother to Mother* 262).

Amy Biehl is an American Fulbright scholar from Stanford University who worked in South Africa as a woman's rights advocate during apartheid. The author describes her as someone who has no inborn sense of fear: she has a big heart but a small mind as she is blinded by her passion and commitment that she does not stop to consider the possibility of someone ever wanting to harm her. Mandisa acknowledges Amy's good intentions: "To people like your daughter, doing good in this world is an all-consuming, fierce and burning compulsion. I wonder if it does not blinker their perception." (*Mother to Mother* 3).

In this text, Amy is depicted as the sacrificial lamb that pays for the sins of the white settlers who colonised South Africa only because she resembles them. Her murderers have grown up to recognize the hierarchies of power etched in one's skin colour and not the human residing in it.

Both Mxolisi and Amy are opposed to the apartheid practices of the white government, but adopt different strategies of combat: whilst Mxolisi vents his anger in violent attacks on everything white, Amy challenges government through her services as a human rights advocate on a voluntary basis. The reader is likely to interpret Magona as implying that peaceful means are ineffective against an all-powerful apartheid regime – hence Amy's death. However Mxolisi's approach does not earn him nor the country any good either: he is involved in 'necklacing' fellow community members and heartlessly killing an innocent girl. He ends up a fugitive, sought after by the police and he knows that once discovered, his fate is as sealed as his friends who died at the hands of the police. Like Amy's mother, Mandisa (Mxolisi's mother) also mourns the termination of a bright and promising young life.

Magona does not adjudicate over this controversy by elevating one protagonist over the other – Amy over Mxolisi (or vice-versa), although she apportions blame on Amy's ignorance - '*where did she think she was going?*', '*did she not go to school?*' It is implied that the killings were all over the news/papers and American/s should know the country's political state well enough not to venture naively into such volatile situations without precautions. However, she does not intercede on behalf of her son, nor does she plead his innocence or excuse his action.

The 21st Century woman is cautioned not to mediate on behalf of her fellow sisters, especially if she is not knowledgeable of the titanic struggles they face, for in the process, she might misrepresent them and dilute the intensity of their course.

Magona and Karodia advocate for education as a useful arsenal against colonial domination. They accentuate the value of education as a means of peaceful protest and resistance to an oppressive system. In order for Meena to acquire the necessary education, Delia has to manipulate the system and get Meena re-classified as Coloured so that she could attend a school for Coloureds in Johannesburg. This is Karodia's way of intimating that scholarship, which constitutes one of many other forms of resistance, should be a fundamental part of the struggles of postcolonial women writers and their portrayal of women in fiction works (Katrak, 2006:53).

In *Mother to Mother*, Magona also emphasises the value of scholarship. Whilst the male protagonists burn tyres and kill fellow black, the girls seek education. She explicitly criticises violent politics alleging they are barbaric and informed. This is in recognition that intellectual domination is also a constituent of the dynamic tensions between the coloniser and the colonised. If the postcolonial nation and the 21st Century women focus on political freedom exclusively, the nation remains intellectually dominated and freedom can only be a dream. Both Karodia and Magona's diagnosis here resonates with what Said advocates: the need for post-colonial societies to represent their cultural and ideological discourses through supporting institutions and scholarship.

To resist intellectual dominance, Karodia hands over the resistance baton to two young girls in a coloured school who reject a donation of the *Dick and Jane* books by white schools since they no longer had use for them. The books are outdated and the context in which they are written is of no relevance to the pupils of Sterkstroom School for Coloureds.

These books represent white privilege yet pupils at the school have no experience of these privileges. This 'dumping' of books is an imposition of white culture on the Coloured pupils. Non-white learners could not relate to the stories in these books yet they have to read them because that is the only textual material available within their impoverished condition. They could not afford books that tell their own stories - the government did not give inferior races a platform to tell or learn about their own stories.

Through Meena and her sister's support, Karodia demonstrates how women should resist manufactured productions that seek to pacify them into subordinating roles. It is also a wakeup call for women to start writing so that they represent their experiences on issues that affect them directly and similarly, to write stories for children's books

Education should be contextualised so that it liberates people from their daily manacles, one of which is racism. Woolf (2015) advocates for equal opportunities for males and females alike regarding access to education. In one of her fictional works, *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf argues that a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction, yet the lack of education has denied them these privileges. Woolf (2015) associates writing fiction with being educated.

Although Meena starts from humble beginnings, she is a beacon of hope for women development and participation. Through her, Karodia approximates the 21st Century woman. Consistent with Woolf's (2015) assertion, both Karodia and Magona seem to imply that a woman must have a room of her own. They prepare girls to acquire such rooms (implying resources) through education.

The girls in both texts start from nothing, but through educational empowerment, there is great potential for future resourcefulness.

Magona draws a distinction in the way male, as opposed to female youth view the significance of education as a means to resist intellectual dominance. She uses Mxolisi and his friends to represent male students and then Amy and her friends to represent the female students' resistance respectively.

On the one hand, the boys abscond from school and toyi-toyi along the streets at night, setting people and their houses on fire while community members watch and cheer them up: "The young lions! Down with all iimpimpi!" (*Mother to Mother* 76). This is how 'heroic' these boys are and for these deeds, "cheers rose from the crowd" (*Mother to Mother* 76). Nobody condemns this conduct except the victims themselves. Instead they are applauded as innovative methods of killing. The only form of learning they do is acquisition of new vocabulary - *necklace*, *necklaced*, *necklacing* – which does not benefit them nor the struggle.

On the other hand, the girl children, female students, are depicted differently: the setting is a university cafeteria where friends (including three African girls) have gathered to bid their goodbyes to Amy, who is going back home to the US after completing her university programme. Whilst it might appear as if they are not participating in the struggle for liberation, Magona sets them forth as an alternative form of resistance. This form of resistance is a way for the 21st Century woman to overcome white domination and Eurocentric manipulation.

Unlike Mxolisi and others, the girls are at school, they have aspirations to further their studies – go abroad and advance their education – to be of better service to the liberation struggle. Said (1995) advises that whilst political freedom is necessary, intellectual independence is paramount. He urges the postcolonial states to do what the West did – produce massive literature through supporting institutions in order to contest the construct of the empire:

Orientalism is rather that which expresses a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different (or alternative) and novel world (Said, 1995:90).

Magona raises awareness about the 21st Century women's responsibility to empower themselves through education which should enable self-definition and ultimate self-actualisation. This should put them on a better platform to participate actively and constructively in the events and discourses of participation in the country as citizens of a democratic South Africa. As future feminists, they ought to speak to the divisions within the feminist movement/s. Collective development has been the sentiment of feminist movements of the 70s. Like Audre Lorde (2003:1), maintains:

For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection which is so feared by a patriarchal world. Lorde (2003:1),

Unlike Karodia, Magona explicitly articulates her concerns over the youth of the country and warns that in a bid to liberate themselves, the youth have lost sense of humanity. However, she seems to trust that the 21st Century women folk will redeem the society through education and save it from these senseless killings that devour only their own kin and not the targeted enemy.

Magona does not necessarily spurn political freedom, she just does not promote politics that is not informed and barbaric: whilst violently consuming on lives of people, they do not have ideological substance to them. In essence, she implies that ideologically sound politics, supported by scholarly institutions, stand a better chance to earn support from across the globe towards attainment of meaningful freedom for all.

Magona's narrative subscribes to the notion that if you teach a woman, you teach a nation. It offers hope to the hopeless by allowing Lumka and two other friends of Amy's to escape the ordeal that devoured their friend. The reader hopes that they will survive and acquire the education they hunger for, but then come back to take the responsibility to redeem their country from self-destruction. Magona hands the baton to a fresher set of legs – the 21st Century woman – to run with and enlighten the societies for which they are part. This is the war of resistance that Magona suggests women should fight: a subtle, but more rewarding form.

Worth noting is that both Karodia and Magona do not uphold one form of resistance over another; they merely highlight the fact that robust and spectacular forms of resistance are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but that the 21st Century woman should employ them appropriately.

Another form of resistance that Karodia and Magona advocate for is resistance to victimhood. A victim is a recipient of an injustice. It can be explained in social and political terms (Crap, 2012).

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Yasmin is traumatised by Cobus through rape. Cobus has always been a troublesome child. He always treated people of other races as inferior, in tandem with the prescripts of the apartheid government. So he goes after Yasmin with little regard for her feelings. He feels entitled to have her and he does. Although Yasmin fights back, her physical strength is no match for Cobus.

I tried to get away, but he pinned me to the ground. I fought as hard as I could: I yanked handfuls of his hair, I scratched his face and I screamed (*Daughters of the Twilight* 122).

Karodia submits that resistance may not always yield expected results; it will at times bend to a more powerful restraining factor. It may call for a period of recuperation and re-launch itself again. She stretches her protagonist to a point where it appears like Yasmine's limits of elasticity would be exhausted, resulting in total collapse of resistance. This she does by subjecting Yasmin to the cruelest form of violation that sinks her to the lowest point of her life from which there are minimal chances of survival. Yasmin suffers emotional paralysis. She hates the pregnancy resulting from the violent rape and conquest, along with the baby she gives birth to.

After the birth, Yasmin could not name the baby, let alone love and care for her. She is completely detached and spends two months in deep depression where even family could not reach her. Here Karodia overstretches the resistance. Yasmine does not only resist

Cobus and the rape, but motherhood as well. There is an unstated point that motherhood can be a stagnating factor in women's progress to development and self-actualisation.

I can't keep that child. I've tried... I can't, her voice was ragged and tormented.
She took several deep breaths to keep herself from crying.
I'm sorry.

Then on Friday morning, when we got up, Yasmin was gone.
(*Daughters of the Twilight* 149).

It is only after Yasmin takes the decision to be a survivor and not a victim, that she leaves the baby behind and follows her heart. After all, having a baby was never part of her plans so she is determined to take her power back and lead the life that she has envisioned for herself.

The resilience that Karodia affords her female protagonists is contrasted to the rigidity of the male protagonists. In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia uses 'madness' as a form of escape for her male protagonists from the patriarchal government that oppressed them (Singh, 1993). In particular, Daniel goes 'mad' in order to cope with the harsh realities. Normally, it is expected that women would be the first to succumb to the pressure and 'crack' but ironically, it is the male protagonists who do.

Through decades of postcolonial writings, women have always been depicted as the weaker sex – the ones who fall apart when things go wrong – and the men would emerge victorious by saving them (either through marriage or war). Daniel, the male helper in *Daughters of the Twilight*, continued to stay in the garage of the family's former home after the eviction. He attributed this to the "voices" in his head. Like Abdul, it seems as though Daniel is also in denial about reality and finds comfort in the false reality provided by the "voices."

It's a voice, Madam, which tells me not to leave the house. So I have to stay.
The house doesn't belong to us anymore.
That's not what they have told me, he said.

Who told you? Ma asked.

The voices, Madam. His tone was reproachful
(*Daughters of the Twilight* 94).

Again, a man experiences a mental breakdown because of the situation brought about by the South African policy of racial segregation. Like Daniel, Abdul loses his mind and is therefore unable to help the women cope with the relocations. Instead the women must pack up, move their belongings and prepare a new dwelling whilst the men have lapsed into insanity. In addition, the same women must support the men towards recovery: Delia has to knock sanity into Daniel's head about the tangible effects of evacuation and nurse her husband to recovery.

It is as if the male protagonists have a mental sanctuary where they can hibernate until the women have dealt with the most unpleasant of situations. This form of resistance is escapist than a direct confrontation with a threatening state of affairs. It saves the victim from falling apart in extreme distraught, but does nothing towards alleviating the problems at hand. Karodia contrasts the men's (Abdul and Daniel) lack of willpower to the women's (Nana, Delia, Yasmine, MaDlamini) determination and resilience in dealing with societal and individual difficulties.

In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa grows up as a clever child, a good girl who plays by the book. However, much to everyone's surprise and disappointment, she falls pregnant at fifteen. An old village woman, MaDlomo says "she has been jumped into" (*Mother to Mother* 147). Mandisa herself is shocked, wondering how that happened. She wrestles with her emotions of love and resentment towards her child, Mxolisi, whom she blames for forcing himself into her womb. "Not after that first unbelieving shock, his implanting himself inside me; unreasonably and totally destroying the me I was...the me I would have become" (*Mother to Mother* 2).

China (the father), is angry at the occurrence, distances himself from Mandisa and the baby she was carrying. Unable to resist the pressure, he takes off without warning.

This is typical of Magona's male protagonists: they are either driven to insanity by unpleasant situations or they just walk away (probably because they do not have it in them to handle the stark reality of dispossession and repression), leaving the women to think creatively on how to survive with babies on their backs.

Mxolisi constitutes an inconvenience for both Mandisa and China: they have to abandon their dreams and be parents at a tender age. Of the two, it is Mandisa who finally accepts the responsibility to raise the boy. China walks away, never to be heard from. Magona illustrates how women's ambitions are often thwarted by motherhood, something men do not experience.

It is not implied here that women should not bear children but that they should take control and exercise choices in terms of when to have them and how many. Magona advises the 21st Century woman on planned conception; so that women can enjoy their children and not see them as impediments to success. It could also be that the author cautions against adolescent naiveté.

Magona also emphasises the necessity of sisterhood. She accentuates the point that even when in marriage, the 21st Century women can still nurture and sustain the bond of sisterhood. This is imperative because men are often unreliable – they come and go and when such inconsistencies are difficult to bear, resulting in emotional instabilities, compounded by responsibilities that come with single parenting, it is the sister who steps in to bring about calmness, sanity and restoration to the broken soul. Magona allows Nono to be that sister to Mandisa until she falls into another unpleasant relationship. The same way Meena (*Daughters of the Twilight*) steps in to mother Yasmin's baby when she suffers severe depression and abandons her.

Magona presents men as flurry personalities without anchor and therefore less likely to commit to responsibilities that are burdensome and stifle their lifestyles. At the heart of men/women relationships in the text, patriarchy dictates the status men assign to women irrespective of whether or not the women acknowledge them.

The men in *Mother to Mother* like in *Daughters of the Twilight* are presented as feeble and non-responsive to situations, even those requiring a sense of urgency.

Magona leaves massive responsibilities to women. Her male protagonists are not equally burdened and even when they abdicate their responsibilities they do not suffer any consequences. Magona seems to suggest that it is typical of men to live freely whilst women constantly pick up the pieces of their miserable family life and try to put things together. However, women should be adequately empowered so that the natural ability to procreate should not be a burden but joy.

5.7 Conclusion

Both authors emerge as custodians of South African history and culture because they contextualise the politics of South African identities. Magona continues the oral storytelling as a means to educate and carve individual and communal identities in an historical tradition. Magona utilises her work to convey the matrices of African women's identities to future generations (Aegerter, 2000).

Mother to Mother presents a shift in the identity of the African woman from the 'other' or 'marginal' to the centre of socio-economic platforms. In the spirit of 'healing' as the TRC advocates, she wants to move the women folk past all negativity. Magona subscribes to the notion of women representing themselves in literary productions and not being mis/represented by other voices. She accepts the responsibility to free black women and making them to recognise that they are as important, valid and coterminous as the white 'medem'. She calls for a 'humanism' that is primarily constructive and productive and transcends the individual self-conscious in multicultural South Africa (Mirza, 2002).

Karodia's *Daughters of the Twilight* explores the injustices that she suffered as a member of the minority community, which was also marginalised as a member of the non-white South Africa. During her time a lot of fiction works, along with other genres, focused on issues of racism and identity in apartheid South Africa.

Karodia narrowed her focus down to make the subalternised Indians speak; particularly the women (either by virtue of marriage to the Indians or Indian by birth). One Indian family experiences gruesome injustices involving exclusions and non-negotiable relocations. Through such hardships, it is the women who directly take decisions and act towards recovery when the men fall apart emotionally.

Through *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia illuminates the silencing effect of marginality. Farida does not show how male protagonists overcome marginality; we only get to know instances of marginalisation without any effort on their part to resist it. However, women protagonists navigate their way around such marginalisation and claim what is rightfully theirs; if anything, they die trying.

Mother to Mother epitomises the plight of life under apartheid, and consolidates the contribution of women in the whole tragedy as wives, mothers, sisters, neighbours within and beyond the borders of ethnicity. Presenting the novel in the form of a lament from a mother of the murderer, to the mother of the victim, *Mother to Mother* gives voice to the voiceless woman and profiles her identity. This Magona does against the backdrop of government-instituted hardships which present numerous impediments for women in particular, to mould their identities. *Mother to Mother* affords women an opportunity to nurture their sense of worth.

Sindiwe Magona writes during a time when the writing space is male dominated and white. The text features postcoloniality in the way it captures acts of resistance – in the way it is written; the way it portrays communal resistance to the removals under the apartheid regime; and black students through various student organisations in the form of ‘the struggle’. It is also interesting how Magona destabilises the centre – comprising the South African government and the American community (represented by Amy Biehl) – by affording power to the marginalized black as represented by Gugulethu residents. She strategically hems the margins into the centre, thereby subverting the imperial gaze.

Magona starts her narrative with a series of questions which rouses expectations on the reader to look for answers throughout the text. However, the text provides numerous controversial contexts that do not necessarily allow for judgment in terms of what/who is wrong and is right. This ambivalence is a way to opening discourses on issues that were merely glossed over through formal structures like the TRC, for example. The reader gets a different sense of the text every time they wear a different set of lenses.

It is evident from the texts that the mechanisms put to place by the South African government to sustain purity and supremacy of the white minority were all in vain. First, it is not possible to classify people, put them into categories and expect them to stay there. They will always find ways and means to interact; sometimes circumstances will put them together at no effort of their own. During such interactions, something new is formed as relationships develop. The tendency by the apartheid South African government to classify people was never successful. This failure is more evident in the text *Daughters of the Twilight* where people are constantly straddle the racial divide in spite of strict laws promulgated specifically to curb such occurrences. Delia is involved with Dehlia and Yasmine with Cobus. In some case children are born out of relationships that are meant to be kept secret. This is what Bhabha (1994) asserts in his essay *The Location of Culture*, that what is repressed is not lost, but re-emerges as a mutation.

Karodia uses women as catalysts in the struggle against racial segregation. It is the women who conceive, give birth and nurture children. Favoured by this natural process, they have the leverage to influence these children to take membership in any race category irrespective of their skin colour. This influence does not only contaminate the purity of the white identity, but also confuses classification by blurring the racial divide – the very divide used by government in provisioning, and excluding. Karodia highlights this potential in women by allowing Delia to reclassify Meena in a racial category other than her own.

Karodia shows that it is the girl children who grow up and join fellow citizens to resist the white rule. Government also stages counter-resistance through laws that prevented public gatherings but the more they suppress formation of movements, the more they persist. In fact they emerge stronger every time, involving a united front by all sectors (black, white, Indian, coloured). The government's strategy of indoctrination through literary productions that seek to promote white supremacy is also thwarted by women like Yasmin who explicitly demonstrate their dislike of what such books represent.

The 21st century woman overrides the regressive ideas of femininity and womanhood popular in the 20th century. Both authors seek to emancipate women from the chains of patriarchy by encouraging women to participate in societal issues of development and transformation and not have other people decide the course of their lives for them.

CHAPTER 6

THE GRAND DREAM OF LIBERATION

She has done nothing less than her duty, nothing less than fighting for freedom and justice – even though these words have now become difficult. That too, then, is why she cannot speak (Wicomb, 2000:179).

6.1 Postcolonial Promise of Liberation

Due to violence and a strained economy, the goal of one united South African nation living prosperously under a constitutional democracy remains elusive. This is in spite of the constitutional prescript that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. The citizens of a newly liberated and democratic South Africa were elated over this achievement in 1994. The hope for better living conditions was a source of general excitement. The expectations were high:

The land would be returned to those from whom it was taken, a chicken in every pot, peace and prosperity, houses for everyone, an equal education system, and of course jobs, jobs, jobs! (Manusamy, 2013).

Initially there were taps and running water in the backyards of several communities; and colourful RDP houses dotted rural and urban areas. The patriotic dream was heightened through sports, leading to the first World Cup in South Africa in 2008. This was indeed one moment of national pride where rifts and fissures were momentarily suspended by an overwhelming sense of unity.

Out of all the excitement, nobody noticed when the hope began to disappear. It was only when the RDP houses cracked and fell, and when the taps ran dry, and the land and jobs

not coming forth, that the country recognised that the Grand Dream of Liberation had not been realised. The disappointment became more palpable and intense when free access to health services did not come with affordable or available medication. The country awoke to the reality that voting had not put any food on the table.

At this point, political violence regressed, giving way to criminal violence which instilled new fears in the nation. Murders, armed robberies, hijackings, xenophobia, and sexual violence all pointed to a grim reality. A different form of anger stalked and played out on the streets, characterised by flagrant protests and service delivery demands for better living conditions.

Through it all, it is the women folk, particularly black women, who bore the brunt in their private spaces as recipients of anger from disillusioned husbands and children who roamed the streets benumbed from drugs and failure to access quality education. These women suffer divorce, widowhood, single parenting and sexual and physical violence. The institutions designed to listen to women (for example, Gender Commission), are headed by men who see women's issues as petty. The national campaigns like *16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children 2014* is one of the many ways government attempts to protect the women against abuse. The selected texts show women suffering the disillusionment of postcoloniality and post-liberation South Africa along with the nation. In addition, the women also suffer patriarchy in their private spaces and professional spaces.

Wicomb's narrative – *David's Story* – captures this disappointment through Ouma Sarie, a female hotel employee who greatly anticipated the new look of the Logan hotel which she assumed would match the political shift that was taking place. Nelson Mandela had been released from prison and South Africa was adjusting to the end of apartheid. Upon inspection, Ouma Sarie expresses her disappointment. The renovations to the hotel do not reflect the status quo, the hotel is still representative of the old order against the liberation buzz around it. It is still an aide-d'memoire of the oppressive times of the coloniser as it preserves the same décor, the paintings, the geometric tiles and maintains the same ambience of hopelessness:

What a funny idea of fixing up the place, this was no modernisation, the foyer now was ancient as the Bible, and the pictures on the parchment-coloured walls looked as if they'd been rescued from a fire, though she could have sworn that some were the same portraits of the old gentlemen with their horses (*David's Story*, 6).

In spite of the new political freedom, the décor of the coloniser still stands; the coloniser still has a grip on power in other spheres. The bible represents the laws of the old order; power only changed hands but the binaries or power/powerless have not been deconstructed. The pictures on the walls could represent the people in the periphery (the marginalised communities) whose livelihood has not been improved by the attainment of democracy – they are still as impoverished as before. The white men (signified by gentlemen in horses) are still in control, shouting directives from horse backs.

The freedom that had been greatly anticipated did not meet the expectations of the majority. The more things changed, the more they remained the same as some people found themselves in the same position that they had been before liberation. The promises that came with liberation had not materialised; the sweat, blood and tears were all for nought. Gordimer made the same assumption in her novel, *July's People*: she (like everybody else), assumed that the social order would be inverted; blacks would emerge victorious from their struggle against political and economic injustices; they would assume power and whites relegated to subordinate positions (Erritouni, 2006). But all these dreams were to no avail.

The democracy desired in postcolonialism did not materialise. Ania Loomba (2005: 12) makes the following statements to express the anticipations of postcolonial discourse: "It might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because descendants of once-colonized peoples live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial."

Loomba (2005: 16) cautions South Africans not to raise their hopes for a better life, claiming it is beneficial to think of postcolonialism flexibly “as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism.”

Postcolonialism is rooted in the ideologies of contestation and unwavering commitment towards a political transition. The metaphor of the Logan Hotel is Wicomb’s way of rousing the 21st Century woman to robust awakening, dismantling the walls of colonialism and designing new identities for women demands active engagement from the women folk. They should not leave the ‘décor’ to the males and hope their aspirations will be met. For the desired changes to transpire as promised by democracy, women need to take control of their destinies, speak out to all forms of institutionalised patriarchies. This is a lifetime engagement because patriarchal practices often manifest as a culture – accepted by cultural communities as a way of life.

6.1.1 Zoe Wicomb: *David’s Story*

Zoe Wicomb is a South African writer born on November 23, 1948 in Beeswater, a place in the Western Cape Province. She hails from a poor family, classified as coloured under the apartheid legislation. She enrolled at the University of the Western Cape and left South Africa for England after graduating in 1970 to further her studies at Reading University. She lived in Nottingham and Glasgow and returned to South Africa in 1990, where she taught for three years in the Department of English at the University of the Western Cape. In 1994, she became a professor at the University of Strathclyde until her retirement in 2009.

Wicomb’s writing mainly focuses on South African culture and postcolonial theory. Her fiction offers insight into apartheid and its legacies and also explores and interrogates matters of identity, race, ethnicity, representation, feminism, and love. Four of her books are held in high esteem, namely, *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town* (which was shortlisted

for the Commonwealth Writer's Prize), *Playing in the Light*, *The One That Got Away*, which was launched in September 2008 and *David's Story*, published in 2001 and won the M-NET prize. In 2013, Wicomb won the Windham-Campbell Literature Prize for Fiction.

Zoë Wicomb explores South African coloured identity under the apartheid regime. She draws inspiration from her own experiences to shape her protagonists and Wicomb's diasporic identity gives direction to her stories. The protagonists in her novels represent the coloured community and the tensions surrounding their existence during the apartheid era since this coloured race was classified as inferior and poor.

Wicomb also uses her works to advocate for women, giving back their voices that were rudely silenced by patriarchal institutions and apartheid. She also places emphasis on the physical appearance of women. Physical features are significant because they connect to broader matters of identity, racism and prejudice, miscegenation and black/coloured womanhood (Tormena, 2013). *David's Story* in particular brings to the surface the shame brought about by an identity considered inferior. It narrates the torment and abuse that Saartjie Baartman was subjected to. Baartman was a Khoisan woman who was exhibited throughout Europe as an example of the sexualised savage (Craps, 2008). In this way, Wicomb portrays the violent treatment women experienced at the hands of a violent and coldly commercial white masculinity.

David's Story is set in South Africa in 1991 and narrates the story of David Dirkse, an anti-apartheid activist. It explores the secret world of activists, spies, and saboteurs in the liberation movement. The protagonist, David Dirkse, is battling with the effects of his participation in the fight for freedom, simultaneously investigating his roots in the history of the mixed-race "coloured" people of South Africa and their background amongst the indigenous people and early colonial settlers.

On first encounter, it appears that the story is really about David but David is used as a front to interrogate and trouble the constructions and projections of women. Hence the

recurrent theme of women and their struggle to find their voice. It demonstrates how women in a patriarchal society are constantly projected in a stereotypical manner and how modern women are casualties of violent reactions to these stereotypes. Some scholars (Ponzanesi, 2014; Tate, 2005) have referred to the novel as a search for the unheard female voice in a patriarchal society demonstrated through Dulcie. Dulcie, who is a part of a guerrilla unit, surrenders both her voice and her sexuality in order to participate in the liberation movement. This is Wicomb's call to acknowledge women as valuable members of society, other than being depicted as domestic servants and sex symbols.

The women in the novel are the driving force behind the liberation movement yet they are not as highly regarded as their male counterparts. Although Dulcie's voice is not articulated as much as David's voice, she is the real protagonist of the story. She sacrifices herself in order to participate in the male dominated struggle for liberation. In essence, *David's Story* is a window to the former South Africa, an oppressive, masculinist, violent and racially segregated environment. Alongside presenting the theme of apartheid, Wicomb embraces feminism, conveys the powerlessness of females in a patriarchal South African society and makes reference to black womanhood and the representation of the female body.

6.1.2 Angela Makholwa and *Black Widow Society*

Angela Makholwa is the first black woman to write crime fiction in South Africa. She was born on 17 March 1976 in Johannesburg. At 13 years old, Makholwa published her first short story in a music and lifestyle publication called Upbeat Magazine. This was a pivotal moment for her as it set the scene for her career as a writer. She had her sights set on one day writing and publishing an authentically South African crime fiction novel.

Makholwa graduated from Rhodes University with a degree in journalism. Thereafter, she was employed as a magazine journalist and public relations consultant for numerous agencies before starting her own public relations firm, Britespark Communications, in

2002. In 1998, while practising as a journalist, she requested an exclusive interview with a serial killer through a letter. Five years after penning the letter, she received a response from the serial killer honouring her request. She met the convicted felon with the intention of obtaining permission to tell his life story. However, she was soon filled with regret as the serial killer began harassing and questioning her devotion to the writing project.

This encounter with the serial killer led to the birth of her debut novel, *Red Ink* in 2007. In *Red Ink*, the fictional detective, Lucy Khambule, is drawn into investigating a series of rapes and murders. This novel was followed by the entertaining escapades and sexual adventures of modern women in *The 30th Candle*, published in 2009. *The 30th Candle* revolves around four university friends who deal differently with the milestone of turning thirty.

Around 2005, a great number of high-profile cases of women accused of killing their husbands inspired the novel *The Black Widow Society* published in 2013. This novel revolves around a syndicate that helped women get out of abusive relationships by having their spouses killed. The novel *Black Widow Society* is set in South Africa during the transitional period from an apartheid regime to a democratic one. It is during this transitional period that South Africans were beginning to enjoy freedom and independence.

The text was produced in 2013 but it is based on events of the early years of democracy in South Africa – 2007. Although the new Constitution of 1996 ensured quality for everyone, it permitted race-based legislation to redress the inequalities of the past. From this constitutional prescript, Affirmative Action was propagated as a policy. The text at hand also refers to the absorption of black women into the business sectors as a requirement for nurturing entrepreneurial opportunities with government. Although racial inequalities seemed to be a preoccupation in the new democratic South Africa, gender issues also received some degree of attention.

The liberation of women was indisputably positioned at the midpoint of debates that continued in the country recognising that a non-sexist democracy was the objective of the struggle. The beneficiaries of the struggle (the comrades) were mostly male and women were pushed to the periphery, notwithstanding their contribution in the processes and events that culminated in the democratic dispensation currently prevailing. This state of affairs is what Hassim (1991) warned the country about, that transition to democracy does not mean eradication of social and economic inequalities.

The *Black Widow Society* is based on this context of marginalising power relations between people with the result that specific groups - women in particular - remained excluded from socio-economic and political participation and therefore were disempowered. Although the South African Constitution is widely known for it being a 'state of the art' human rights instrument, the cultural obstructions and toxic patriarchies remain untouched by the political changes and government policies.

It is a context within which the process of demarginalisation had not been fully observed, judging by the inequalities that still persist along the lines of gender. This was a context that called for postcolonial women writers to speak transformation to private patriarchies in homes, communities and neighbourhood. This is the space that Makholwa is writing from. She is the first South African woman to produce fiction work from a crime-ridden world. Her work is influenced by heightened newspaper coverage of spousal homicide cases from 2007-2012. During this time the courts were overwhelmed with murder cases involving either husbands or partners. The newspapers were awash with murder coverage:

The young model died at the hands of her famous Paralympian boyfriend, Oscar Pistorious (2013). Gunter and Henderson "The Young"

Jade Panayiotou's husband appeared in the Port Elizabeth Magistrate's Court on Monday May 4th as a suspect in her murder (2015).

The body of Riebeck College Girls' High School teacher was abducted from outside her home in Kabega on April 21. Her body was found a day later (2015).

Angela Makholwa titles her book *Black Widow Society* after the most venomous spider in North America. Only female black widows are portrayed as dangerous to human society. Males and juveniles are projected as harmless. The female black widow spider will, on occasion, kill and eat the male after mating. The book is a treat filled with suspense that abounds within the genre of crime fiction. It is about a secret formation of women who orchestrate the assassination of their abusive partners.

The writer explores the transfer of hegemonic masculinity as an affective appendage in the discourse of self-construction. As a female writer, Makholwa's novel is an abrupt subversion of hegemonic masculinity, particularly reconnoitering the South African literary contours. It constitutes a deliberate deconstruction of women as sexual currency through a retaliatory determinism.

6.2 Reclaiming Power: Dismantling Institutions of Patriarchy

Patriarchy and colonialism share certain features as structures of domination and control, and postcolonial feminists have identified these institutions as ideological constructs that lend weight to the oppression of women (Mullaney, 2010). Postcolonial studies have prioritised education reform as a decolonising strategy that could dismantle persistent patriarchal practices in postcolonial communities. Noddings (2002:39) presents a radical suggestion that instead of critiquing the ways that patriarchy has fostered violence in the home, formal education should enlighten communities for home and private life as much as they do for public.

Patriarchy

At the dawn of liberation, the women warriors were expected to return to their normal roles of mother and wife. The 'normalcy' to which women are quarantined requires women warriors to reclaim the home as their naturalised domain and to render themselves sexually available to men (Samuelson, 2007). In *David's Story*, Sally on the one hand,

transitions smoothly into these prescribed roles as she marries David and has two children by him. However, she soon finds this domesticity unfulfilling and takes up reading to keep herself busy. On the other hand, Dulcie challenges the gendered status quo which then provokes the custodians of this patriarchal enclave to relegate her to the margins where she suffers exclusion and gender-based violence.

After the war for liberation, David settles for Sally because she is more aligned to the gendered status quo than Dulcie. Samuelson (2007) asserts that David figured that Dulcie 'would not be in need of his protection' and opted for Sally 'the girl to be married, a girl in the haze of innocence.'

Life experiences shape the emotional and somatic response of an individual, therefore, requesting the women warriors to return to a 'normal' style is too much to ask (Katz, 2015). There are several aspects that need to be considered, for example, women played a role in the liberation struggle therefore they do not deserve to be relegated to the backline and cease to exist when their services are no longer required in the struggle. The woman is entitled to all the benefits of freedom, including the freedom to choose whether or not she is confined to the traditional standards of what being 'woman' means – a separate entity that thinks for itself, not an appendage to men and children. And since the narrative is set in the year 1991 which was marked as being at "the edge of a new era", this means that the role of the woman had to be redefined by women, for women.

The way Sally is domesticated can be described in terms similar to Dulcie's torture: at her release from underground work and falling back on household management and reproduction, she becomes "an emaciated scarecrow of a woman with uneven, vegetal turfs of hair and liverish spots on her brown skin" (*David's Story* 19). This description does not give an impression that women are better off in their domesticated roles: their houses remain patriarchal institutions that perpetuate torture. Nobody expects Sally, for example, to still exercise the skills she acquired in the military - as if such experience can be wished away just like that.

David, for one, forgets that Sally is a trained spy capable of carrying out surveillance operations. He does not suspect even for once that Sally might get clues about his infidelity. Sally does not question him about it but adopts a defensive mechanism she acquired during her military training: "It is a trick she has learnt some time ago, part of her training to block out all else while concentrating on the physical tasks...So she thinks, and not without bitterness..." (*David's Story* 31).

Wicomb asserts that it is not possible to domesticate women who have suffered massively in the struggle for liberation and pushing them into the obscurity of domesticity does not begin to erase who they were during the struggle even if their contribution is not acknowledged nor rewarded. In their private spaces, women have aspirations to be more than just wives and mothers; they need level playing fields for their active participation as citizens of a democratic country.

The imagery used to describe Sally "spots on her brown skin" and Dulcie "a liverish red crinkled surface of flesh" (*David's Story* 14, 19), give an impression of unsightly women who succumb to, and resist domesticity respectively. Wicomb portrays marriage as another form of violence that consumes on the woman's sense of self-actualisation. She equates Sally's emotional burden with Dulcie's dilemma. She is intimidated by the possibility of domestication through the discourses of rape should she disclose her ordeal in the military. Dulcie prefers to keep her victor status and not compromise it to that of the victim through disclosure.

Wicomb cautions women not to surrender to domestic life that promotes breadwinner-dependent ideologies; not to allow themselves to be pushed back into the roles of 'protected' and 'defended' whilst their male counterparts take advantage of development opportunities presented to them by a democratic government that the women also helped to bring about. Cock (1994: 163-164) observes that at the time the MK was disbanded, male combatants were selected for training abroad to prepare them for leadership positions in the new national army, but no women were included in this developmental programme.

Wicomb also illustrates the need for feminist discourses to examine the numerous ways of conscripting women for militarism and initiate a discourse that articulates the figure of the woman warrior.

Anti-colonial struggles required that citizens of colonised states join efforts to fight Eurocentric practices of dominance and control. In this way the resistance movement of the indigenes compromised divergent forms of resistance in which case feminist ideologies also gave way for national liberation. The common struggle against apartheid in which both black men and women took part was for liberation for all and that meant equal rights for male and female alike. However, the male 'comrades' operated on double standards: they sought liberation from an oppressive system and yet subjected the female comrades to the same oppression they sought to eradicate. If the end goal was liberation, should not women be beneficiaries thereof as well, particularly that they fully participated in the struggle for that liberation? Wicomb affords Dulcie the authority in the status of a commander in chief in a military camp that should earn any recipient of such an accolade respect among her peers.

Wicomb advises women not to comply with male-made conventions of what constitutes honourable attributes, but cajoles them to define their own. They should not seek to please men by acquiring accolades similar to theirs because they might not enjoy the same recognition. Instead of reverence, such attributes are viewed as 'mimicry' – just a simulation of the real thing. Male combatants think that Dulcie tries too hard to look man-like: in her dress code, conduct and fierce participation in what used to be a 'man only' sector. They assume hers is a desperate act to deny what she really is: a woman: feminine, weak and too delicate for the military task at hand.

Implied here is that femininity is but 'a set of socially constructed characteristics applied to women' (McHugh, 2007). And in accordance with the Fanonian principle, what is constructed can be deconstructed. Postcolonial male writers perceive female characteristics that project them as irrational, subjective, nurturing, passive, emotional, dependent and other.

This view about women obstructs the course of action in the struggle for liberation: by virtue of their purposively subordinated role, women also become secondary recipients of the liberation they help to attain.

Feminist Cixous Helene (1976) for example, laments how the 19th Century literary works of fiction tended to place women on the negative side of binaries in comparison to their male protagonists: Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Head/Heart, Logos/Pathos, Intelligible/Sensitive and so forth (Cixous, 1976: 440).

In *Femininity and Domination*, Sandra Bartky (1991) also observes that women are held down by these culturally pre-conceived notions of what it means to be a woman, amply demonstrating that when they participate in autonomous beneficial activities, they are said to be denying their femininity. David and his fellow male comrades subscribe to this assumption about women. They form a community of the menfolk that supports the hegemonic norms of femininity often employed to deter women from reaching their full potential. It is as if Wicomb urges the 21st Century woman to challenge such norms through the literary artefact to capture and make known women's potential and achievements.

The text examines the injustices that a woman experiences and subsequent radical change of her personal make-up – becoming tough where she is weak; her heart losing its affective filters; adopting a tit-for-tat attitude bare of the fundamental human feelings and attributes of forgiveness, compromise and mediation. This transformation does not engender the most admirable of qualities, but Makholwa in *Black Widow Society* uses it to show some of the good-naturedness that women sometimes forego in pursuit of their aspirations as full citizens of a democratic country. It is such good-naturedness that often makes women get pigeonholed for the weaker sex. To evade the harsh violations of human rights and human dignity that often come with widowhood, Salome has had to shed off her womanhood and be man-like in her approach.

When we meet Salome for the first time in the text, she is a lonely woman except for her clients in the salon. Her husband dominates her in every way possible. She submits wholly to his prescripts without question. She is portrayed as a feeble and harmless person whose suffering then touches everybody who knows her. The author uses expressions like 'poor Salome' (49) to endear her to the reader. We also commiserate with her because she is a 'doting mother for her children' (49), is not entitled to inherit any of her husband's wealth (50), attended pregnancy sessions alone and worse, she is infected with HIV from a husband who openly had affairs with other women and threatened to divorce her if she dared raise it with him. What follows is a synopsis of the incidents that that compel the change in Salome after the death of her husband.

Salome is depicted as a beautiful, coloured young model who grew up in the Cape flats and lived a relatively peaceful and wholesome life in spite of all the maladies that characterise the flats she calls home. She marries a wealthy Irish business man, is a doting mother of three and was HIV positive from her husband, O'Leary. She lived with this condition, but her husband denied it and threatened her to 'shut up or shove off' (*Black Widow Society* 50).

O'Leary traveled a lot; Salome only had to look at his itinerary to know the true motive of his traveling. He could not keep his hands off the bikinied beauties of Mozambique, Brazil, Seychelles and Cuba. Poor Salome would be "saddled with her two children and a beauty salon..." (51) with the third child on the way. The author uses 'saddled' to show how women are sometimes restricted from any broad participation because of the children who require maternal love and care. Because culturally, it is women who nurse children, the male counterparts often neglect this important role of parenting and simply leave it to their partners.

The descriptive words that the author uses in reference to Scott O'Leary's cruelty are heavy, laden with emotions and angst at what men do to women and get away with.

The spirit of sisterhood again surfaces here where members of the triumvirate take an *injury to one is an injury to all* approach to resolving women's plight. The diction is a justification for the imminent consequence – '[he] deserves what's coming to him' (52).

The extended metaphor and simile 'He kept prancing around her like one of his priced animals' - gives an impression of someone looking at an object that he owns, which adds value to his status by reducing her to the status of an animal. This metaphor of a prancing horse also depicts someone who wants to elevate himself to a status higher than the actual. This is also a subtle admission that Salome (like one of his priced horses) can also prance, for it is an induced restlessness. The irony here is that whilst O'Leary is showing off his wealth, he is oblivious that in no time Salome would be taking his position, doing everything that he does, and better.

What Makholwa contributes, in the approximation of the 21st Century woman, is an awakening: that if a stallion can prance, so too can a mare –they are both horses. The democratic South Africa must equally afford opportunities for the 'mares' to showcase their 'prancing' skills.

The study observes how the women protagonists attempt to construct their bodies as aggrieved sites by demonising those who wrong them, while re-claiming their own trauma as privileged vantage points from which to launch an assault on patriarchy. The Black Widow Society members are heartless to a point of madness when it comes to revenging their accosters. The women kill their partners without any remorse and it is evident here that the traumatic internal conflict between right and wrong as a result of the collision of two different worlds greatly affects a person's mind and soul.

Wicomb is not that daring, her protagonist's revenge through silence demonstrates how trauma often results in a forced division of self as displayed in David's dilemma. He is torn between two worlds, a patriarchal world in which he is a leader and a world in which he wants to protect and uplift women. With no one to talk to, David bottles up his emotions and trauma over Dulcie's ordeals of rape and torture. Bottled emotions have physical and

psychological repercussions (Jeffree, 1995). He has to deal with these repercussions on his own. Dulcie is a source of David's trauma – not that she disclosed what David and fellow male comrades did to her, but precisely because she kept quiet about their acts of abuse.

It's here in close-up, before my very eyes, the screen full-bleed with Dulcie. Who? Is it you put it in my head? The terrible things happening to Dulcie? It's here, in close-up – and he stumbles to his feet with a horrible cry, knocking me over as he charges out. (*David's Story*, 201)

In hindsight, David regrets the events that befall Dulcie but he eases his conscience by insisting that everything, including rape, is permissible in the struggle for freedom:

Besides, what's wrong with military values? See how far it's brought us all, including the likes of you, who believe in keeping your hands clean at all costs, who reach for lace handkerchiefs at the thought of bloodshed, and choose not to notice that that fine thing, freedom, is rudely shoved through by rough guys in khaki (*David's Story* 78- 79).

At the end, there is truly no liberation for David as he is haunted by his role in Dulcie's torture and possible death. David is a victim of his own actions and guilt conscience drives him to commit suicide at the exact same spot the rapists ordered Dulcie to take her life.

Wicomb decides to climax her narrative with a woman triumphing over the perpetrators of sexual violence on her. The imagery that Wicomb uses of Dulcie at Chapman's Peak and numerous men behind her who could simply push her over is juxtaposed to David at the same peak – without physical factors urging him to go over. It is at this point that Wicomb defines her woman warrior. Unlike her male counterpart (David), she does not surrender to the pressure represented by the male comrades apprehending her. Her fellow military combatant (David) is not presented with the same amount of pressure: nobody pushes him over but his guilty conscience.

Both David and Dulcie suffer trauma of what transpired at Umkhonto. But Wicomb decides to strengthen her female protagonists and afford them the degree of resistance that nullifies the physical muscles that men often flex over their opposite gender. The fact that Dulcie lives on after electrodes are inserted in her genitals whilst her assailant commits suicide is an indication of the loudness of silence. Both Dulcie and Sally tread between madness and sanity because of their military experiences. Despite the trauma, Dulcie refuses to disband and surrender to domesticity and Sally raises her children alone after their father dies. The rape experience lingers on as she juggles the roles of widow, daughter and mother.

Wicomb and Makholwa demonstrate that emotional health is significant; that the measure of wellbeing is not in the physical. Dulcie looked miserable, but her spirit has learnt to focus on the prize. David looked decent enough, but his spirit was tortured. Similarly, Makholwa's women looked good in fine clothing, but are preoccupied by the killings and secrecy.

6.3 Interrogating the Ambivalence of Intent

As conferred to postcolonial discourse by Homi Bhabha, ambivalence does not imply that women are 'complicit' sometimes and at other times 'resistant', but as Young (1995: 161) maintains: 'complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject'. As applied in *Black Widow Society* ambivalence describes the paradox immanent in the creation and expressed objectives of the society and the unorthodox mechanism the society employs in attaining such objectives (the way it deals with acts of dominance and abuse by male protagonists).

The *Black Widow Society* is 'very unambiguous about almost everything it represents. Its core principles are trust, honour, secrecy, sisterly love and protection. Its objectives are set to eliminate the suffering of women at the hands of men' (*Black Widow Society* 36).

The movement is founded on sincere and credible values - a group of women looking out for each other and raising one another out of the pits of despair to greater heights, hope and promise. However, the manner in which the mandate is carried out is morally questionable. And to think that the brain-child of this movement, Tallulah, sees no wrong in her ways is troubling: "The reason I sleep so well at night is because of my confidence in the righteousness of our actions. (*Black Widow Society* 53)

In her language, the 'righteous' actually refers to a series of murders. However, she does not carry out the killings herself as she has a hit man who does that for her. Towards the end of the novel, it is her hitman, Mzwakhe, who makes all the members 'pay' for their actions. The irony is that he is the one who carried out the hits but now feels justified punishing the women who gave out the instructions to have their husbands killed.

Makholwa shows how challenging it is to draw the line between right and wrong, good and evil since it is possible to do wrong for the right reasons. She illustrates this dilemma through the case of the Eastern Cape woman who was arrested after she killed one man and wounded two others who she allegedly found raping her daughter (eNCA News, 2017) – an issue of culpable homicide. This woman was arrested and charged with murder and attempted murder. Of course, the circumstances surrounding this case are not similar to those of the *Black Widow Society* members who could have just divorced their husbands and moved on with their lives, but it demonstrates the thin line between good and evil, between moral right and moral revulsion in the insider-outsider dialectic where patriarchal violence is conflated with the right to a woman's body, however violent the despicable act.

Makholwa gives us a glimpse into the meaning behind the adage "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned". She challenges the traditional role of the crime fiction world which predominantly features males as the main characters when she places female protagonists at the fore. Through her female murderers, Makholwa challenges stereotypical notions of both femininity and masculinity by "doing" gender against the grain (Mäntymäki, 2013).

It is worth observing here that within postcolonial context, violence often results from failure by government institutions to fastidiously address the plight of women. Women then adopt unconventional measures to express their dissatisfaction in the way their challenges and experiences are often relegated to the periphery as 'petty'. The reaction of women in *Black Widow Society* is a demonstration that power is not necessarily monolithic, but rhizomatic: used in Deleuzian sense of making a network of connections under the ground and then erupting when least expected. In that sense, it can only be spoken about in the binaries of more/less and not power/powerlessness.

Based on this analogy, Said (1995) contends that postcolonialism as a theory should involve not only the retrieval of geographical space but also strive towards a recovery of the indigenous culture, identity and being, more specifically the sense of agency resident in the dispossessed. This contribution became very important in the formulation of associated tenets of postcolonial theory. The study epitomises woman as the disposed: the spaces claimed to be female spaces (the home, motherhood and womanhood) are male-defined.

Wicomb, in *David's story*, exemplifies the love/hate relationship between David and Dulcie. Through this ambivalent relationship, Wicomb turns the tables on the discourse of domination between male and female. The traditional male/female relationships are often based on the conventions of all-dominating husbands with submissive wives. However Dulcie is a strong, independent woman determined to participate in the liberation struggle. Although she is female, she does not display any feminine traits. Instead she chooses to be an 'Adam Woman' fighting alongside chauvinistic males. Her involvement in the struggle does not allow her to express her feelings; she becomes devoid of any sexual feeling and although she cares for David, she does not openly show it.

David's Story is laden with dramatic irony which manifests in David's relationship with Dulcie. As a commander in the liberation movement, he feels threatened by Dulcie's upward mobility among the military ranks.

Although the relationship between David and Dulcie is never fully explained, David and Dulcie love each other. In spite of his love for Dulcie, David fails to protect her when she is tortured by the comrades in the movement because she has a reputation to hold her fort.

The narrator does not rule out David as one of the perpetrators in Dulcie's torture which may be one of the reasons he strives to protect her in not relaying her story. The guilt about his role in torturing the woman he loves lies heavy in his heart and he attempts to make up for it by protecting Dulcie's story.

David is one of the men in the liberation struggle who does not approve women guerrillas. He regards women as inferior and considers the movement as a place for males. He has a patriarchal mentality seen in his disdain when Dulcie is sent by the UDF to address a group of elderly people:

They'd sent a woman, a young woman, for heaven's sake, in trousers and an oversized jersey and ugly brown shoes like the old fashioned walkers worn by nurses. Not someone who'd have the respect of the elders' (*David's Story* 126).

In spite of this, through the narrator, David confesses that he cares for Dulcie and holds her in high regard but does not want to admit it to himself:

It is with the greatest difficulty that I get David to admit that there is something between them. Then he retracts it immediately, saying that he does not know the meaning of that coy bourgeois description (*David's Story* 137).

He also wants to protect her, a reason he cites for not wanting her voice represented. David does not articulate Dulcie's thoughts to avoid her being misconstrued; he is willing to protect her even if it means sacrificing a part of himself.

You wouldn't understand the courage and commitment and inviolability of someone like Dulcie, he says, thus placing her on a pedestal, beyond the realm of the human. No, I say, but neither do I understand why Dulcie, like God, must fend for herself (*David's Story* 177).

But no, David does not want her voice represented. That is because he wishes to protect her, he says (*David's Story* 199).

Although David puts on a tough act, some scenes in the novel expose his softer side, especially where Dulcie is concerned. On the other hand, Dulcie is a strong-willed woman determined to have a part in the struggle for liberation. Her assertiveness and participation in the force is admirable. She is the epitome of a woman determined to succeed in her quest and consequently no obstacle deters her or dampens her spirit. David and Dulcie's relationship is a complicated one because it is characterised by distinct extremities, that is, love and hate, friend and foe, lover and torturer.

The novel raises the question of whether David is in some sense complicit in Dulcie's torture, and whether his use of her steatopygous form as a vessel for his meaning approximates the use of Baartman's in both imperial and nation-building projects (Samuelson, 2005). David constantly convinces his amanuensis that there is nothing going on between them but his actions tell a different story. "She is not pretty, you know, not feminine, not like a woman at all" (*David's Story* 80). The same David sings her praises later on in the text:

You wouldn't understand the courage and commitment and inviolability of someone like Dulcie, he says, thus placing her on a pedestal, beyond the realm of the human. (*David's Story* 177).

David is attracted to Dulcie's strength and courage in a way that they are a reflection of his own attributes. At the same time he feels repelled by these very attributes because of the internalised patriarchal ideologies. David has not learned how to be anything else. David is constantly conflicted by his feelings for Dulcie throughout the text. On the one hand, his hatred for her strong attributes enables him to detach himself from his emotions and participate in her torture, whilst on the other hand his love for her drives him to kill himself because he cannot bear the guilt.

Wicomb cautions the 21st Century woman not to build life around a partner, but strive towards self-actualisation that representing a notion of independence. She allows her female protagonists, even the married Sally, to evade the subtle assumptions of breadwinner/dependent ideology that often subordinates women for purposes of material provisioning.

There is a conflict of interest between David as an individual and the male group to which he subscribes. On the moral or social plane, this paradox is manifested in the question of how to resolve the conflict between the interests of the individual and the interests of the group as a whole. This is not a factual paradox for it does not necessarily have any substantial logical conflict to it, except on the psychological plane. It is evident in the text that it is problematic and infuriating for David to find a balance between his personal interests (appreciation and love for Dulcie) and those of the patriarchal society (fellow comrades in the military wing of the ANC) to which he is a member. Even as he resolves to abandon his personal interest (as would any communist) in compliance with a patriarchal dictates of the struggle, David suffers inner conflict that culminates in choosing suicide.

This is a cautionary note from Wicomb to patriarchal societies in general: that often they act immorally because of some flimsy hope for a reward as in a bid to earn the status of a war hero, being a veteran, getting incentives, in kind or financially, or just fulfilling a 'patriotic duty', but these incentives are meaningless if one's conscience is not at ease over the wrongs they inflict to fellow human beings, even if those human beings are members of the opposite gender.

The reverse is also true where the men folk may feel obliged to prioritise the interests of the in-group (fellow males) purely out of extreme anxiety over possible retribution if they do not. The punitive measures in the case of David would mean withdrawal of the hoped-for reward/s. This manipulation persisted over time and became naturalised as the normative practice. But Wicomb brings about changes in the environment, including participation of women in the war zone, and not just in the traditional roles of nurses,

reporters, cooks or any such roles that are deemed 'soft' enough for women, but at the level of strategic planning and appropriating control.

David wants women to be acknowledged and represented in society by removing the inferiority tag from them yet at the same time, he does not want women to access more power than they 'deserve.' As a way of acknowledging women and their struggles, David features Saartjie Baartman in his story and proclaims that he identifies with her, much to the dismay of his amanuensis:

Besides, what on earth has Baartman to do with your history?

But it's not a personal history as such that I'm after, not biography or autobiography. I know we're supposed to write that kind of thing but I have no desire to cast myself as a hero, he sneers. Nothing wrong with including a historical figure.

But she may not even have been Griqua. David gives me a withering look. Baartman belongs to all of us. Ergo, we are all Griquas, I laugh.

(David's Story 135).

Wicomb's women challenge the 'natural,' if we take natural to mean a system sustained over time, notwithstanding the changing environment within which it operates. She demonstrates that systems can be converted if the marginalised take on a radical presence – an affordance of opportunities for women to stylise and perform in spaces that used to be exclusively male. This stance is not only feminist, but also postcolonial as suggested through Franz Fanon's strategy of 'deconstruction.'

Wicomb cautions the 21st Century woman not to fall for partial acknowledgements which are given in relation to the earlier generation of women (e.g. Baartman) but which do not translate into total acknowledgement of women in general irrespective of age, colour, marital status or education. They should recognise men and women as equals and relate to them as equals thereby confusing the strong and positive signifiers in binaries with their weak and negative signifiers. It is implied here that women can also be suns, in the sun/moon dialectic for example.

6.4 Politics of the Female Body

Politics of the female body encompasses the constructions and controls of female sexuality, its conventional and censored expressions, as well as its location socio-culturally, even materially, in postcolonial regimes (Katrak, 2006). Colonialism and the subsequent resistance to it gave rise to a new type of woman, the female activist who challenges traditional stereotype of women as helpless and confined to the mother and wife roles (Craps, 2008). Sally and Dulcie participate in the struggle and are sent to training camps in other countries. The main purpose of these camps is to empower the members even though in this instance they are utilised to point out to the female activist where her rightful place in society. For these women to be taken seriously, they had to abdicate their femininity and behave as men. However, Wicomb frustrates this assumption by portraying an overly feminine (used loosely) character. Despite all the training and assigned tasks carried out within the struggle, Sally still retains her femininity post-apartheid. "Sally splashed out on a new pair of glasses...The glasses are large with a fashionable pinkish frame..." (*David's Story* 25).

It is this 'femaleness' that David is interested in when he chooses Sally for marriage. He deliberately chooses her in spite of his love for Dulcie because he feels overwhelmed by Dulcie's strengths. She is not the type that could be bodily colonised through marriage, nor could she succumb to such socialisation as buttressed through colonial education that promotes gender inequities rooted in 'respect' for native tradition. Her refusal to be part of a male-dominated model of marriage is an act of free will and Wicomb uses her to suggest that women should not by default internalise sado-masochistic roles that render them victims to physical and psychological battering (Katrak 2006:166). Marriage is an act of will.

The real protagonist of this novel is Dulcie, even though it is almost impossible to find her fully articulated in the narrative. Dulcie is a fearless leader of an MK unit and therefore

very significant within the Movement, an achievement that came at a very high price as she endures ruthless brutality at the hands of her male comrades. These brutal acts are inflicted on the female body to concretise the stereotypical roles of men and women. The men had to make a statement that women are helpless victims (Craps, 2008).

Both Wicomb and Makholwa depicted gender-based violence in contemporary South Africa. Such violence takes the form of physical battering or non-consensual sex. In *David's story*, for example, the men who keep violating Dulcie are from all races and they all want to do the same thing - violate her sexually thereby confirming that women only exist as sexual currency:

On the very first visit, one of them, the wiry one who seems to be in charge, spoke: Not rape, that will teach her nothing, leave nothing; rape's too good for her kind, waving the electrodes as another took off her night clothes [...] Yes, the figures in their black tracksuits are familiar; the eyes they cannot always keep averted, the black hands, these speak of such knowledge (*David's Story*, 178-179).

This is an immanent reading that war is not a source of pain for women at war; the comrades are. Whilst men fight with ammunition, the women compromise their bodies for the sake of war. Unfortunately for women, the compromise does not end with the war. Post war, the female activists are expected to repossess the home as their natural domain and to render themselves sexually available to men as they return to 'normalcy' (Samuelson, 2007).

The liberation of South Africa was supposed to bear good fruit for all (men and women) who would equally share in the spoils. However, after attaining freedom, the ambivalence that existed during the days of Black Consciousness, that which regarded women as unequal to men, was even more pronounced. The patriarchal mentality did not die with apartheid as the desire to maintain the traditional male and female role patterns lingers on, and at times becomes even more reinforced (Schipper, 1999).

Women, particularly black women, are relegated to minority positions as the men scramble for the spoils of freedom. The men use gender-based violence in *Black Widow Society* in order to entrench an intimidating phallocentric power.

Gender-based violence (GBV) occurs between men and women in intimate relationships, in the home, at the workplace and in the community. The postcolonial states wrestle through power and control and takes the form of physical, emotional, sexual, economic and spiritual abuse. It creates fear, breaks down the self-esteem of women, and makes the women subjects do things they do not want to do, limiting their behaviour and movement. GBV is physically harmful as well (ADAPT, 2017).

This theme of GBV resonates throughout the novel and manifests in the miserable lives of the women in *Black Widow Society*. To the world, these women present a façade: they are not truly happy in their marriages as they are constantly bludgeoned and undermined by their husbands. The founder of The Triumvirate, Tallulah Ntuli, is all too familiar with abuse at the hands of a spouse:

She continues begging and pleading until the door suddenly springs opens, and a furious Mphikeleli drags her by the arm into the house.

He slams the door shut after her and butts her head with the gun.

‘No. Mphikeleli...please, please stop it!’ she begs, as blood gushes from her scalp and trickles down her face.

He kicks her like a useless piece of garbage and then locks the door and strides upstairs in a furious huff. (*Black Widow Society* 3).

The abuse endured by the ‘widows’ at the hands of their husbands drives them over the edge. There arises from such abuse and humiliation a new kind of a woman – conniving and devious – who takes the initiative to liberate herself from victimhood.

The women in *Black Widow Society* take control of their destinies and decide the fate of their abusive and unfaithful husbands. Such a violent resolution is supported by Fanon (1961:48) in *The Wretched of the Earth*, who maintains that violent resistance to colonialism and in this case (indigenous patriarchy), is a mentally liberating exercise to restore self-respect to the subjugated. Makholwa affords her female protagonists an opportunity to resist colonial and patriarchal subjugated identities:

We have a moral duty to ourselves and each other to protect what we've lost, that innocence we recognise whenever we glimpse those who have not had to endure our baptism of fire... (*Black Widow Society* 19).

The men in the text are responsible for creating the 'monsters' that these women have become. The women are simply 'speaking back' to violence, and when Makholwa gives voice to her previously silenced women protagonists, the centre cannot hold, culminating in what Fanon (1961:39) calls a transfer of 'unfair advantages' (a legacy of the colonial period) into the hands of the marginalized women.

Gender-based violence is shown to have serious psychological consequences such as trauma, which explains why the women feel justified in their actions. Other psychological consequences of GBV include depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, hypertension, substance abuse and difficulties in sleeping (Mpani and Nsibande, 2015). The trauma from the abuse leaves indelible marks and consequently blurs the lines between right and wrong. Makholwa decides not to judge the women for their murderous acts; neither does she advocate revenge as a way for the 21st century woman to liberate herself from the abuse and humiliation they suffer within patriarchal institutions such as marriage. She merely showcases the potential of a woman in fury.

The text succinctly illustrates that the trauma and subsequent madness women suffer are a direct consequence of patriarchy. This 'madness' has been cited in many postcolonial female authors. Bessie Head, for example, had Dikeledi kill her abusive spouse and the

father of her children for neglecting them. On arrest, Dikeledi meets other women in prison who also murdered their husbands by 'cutting off their special parts' (Katrak 2006: 23).

The body and psychological exploitation that result in these radical and murderous actions is ignored by the sexist justice system that condemns these women to life imprisonment. This is the same system that gives a South African Oscar Pistorious parole for killing a girlfriend who jilts him and opts for a less violent partner. (Gunter & Henderson "The young"

Through *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa defines sexist inequalities enshrined in the local postcolonial justice systems. She extends the project and tradition of postcolonial women authors who challenged the notion that wifehood is fulfilling and nurturing.

The whole text is about unfulfilled wifehood, characterised by a long series of physical assault and unfaithful male spouses, culminating in nervous breakdowns, madness and suicide attempts. For instance, Edna Whithead in *Black Widow Society*, contemplates suicide in light of her husband's indiscreet infidelity. His unfaithfulness leads to temporary madness and clouded judgment as Edna resolves that suicide is the only escape from her misery and heartache:

This was the incident that had driven Edna to the edge. She had decided to drive to a quiet boutique hotel and had taken tranquilizers and a loaded gun, hoping to end it all right there... (*Black Widow Society* 39-40).

The reaction of the oppressed women in *Black Widow Society* confirms what bell hooks (1948) advises: that feminist efforts to end male violence against women must be expanded into a movement to end all forms of violence. The *Black Widow Society* can be regarded as such a movement. Their methods may seem unconventional and less than noble, but who should be a judge thereof? The non-conventional might mean the very perpetrators of male violence against women wherein the very same male reconstruct bold mazes out of which women cannot discern possible exits.

Makholwa raises awareness about the unfair situation in which women find themselves after the fall of the apartheid regime due to patriarchal practices. Most women are violated and robbed of the freedom they fought hard to attain. Makholwa calls for the postcolonial and post-apartheid 21st Century women to engage in and devise strategies to eliminate violence against women so that they can enjoy this freedom. Makholwa further calls for the women and the South African society to recognise women and create opportunities for them to solidly contribute to social and political discourses that affect their lives as women. This is vital in reshaping and repositioning the 21st Century woman in the society and affording her the dignity and recognition she deserves.

Women trapped in abusive relationships usually exhibit strength and resilience. However, the convention usually associates abused women with being passive, weak, frail and having some unspecified psychological dysfunction (Rothenberg, 2003; Stark, 2007). Resisting abuse and seeking assistance from key institutions could result in the victim facing challenges of accessing services (Hayes, 2012). This is largely due to the patriarchal nature of such institutions.

In the text, Makholwa portrays resilient female protagonists who negotiate their way within “the gendered space produced by a misogynistic patriarchal society...where violence is prevalent and frequently directed at women” (Orford, 2013). More than 90% of individuals who experience intimate partner violence are females, making it a gender-based crime (Roberts & Roberts, 2005). Most members of the *Black Widow Society* have suffered abuse of some kind from their intimate partners. Women in abusive relationships display extreme strength and resilience, even though the stereotypical image associated with abused women is passivity, where women experience psychological dysfunction as the violence escalates (Rothenberg, 2003; Stark, 2007; Walker, 1979). Research outlines two psychological phenomena that occur in abused women:

- Battered woman syndrome: describing the psychological mind-set and emotional state of female victims of abuse (Walker, 1979), which is the main reason women often stay in abusive relationships; and
- Slow burn reaction: where the women do not react instantly to the abuse, partly for psychological reasons but also because of the physical mismatch between the abuser and the victim, which makes an imminent response seem futile or even more dangerous to the victim. (Rothenberg, 2003; Stark, 2007; Walker, 1979).

The majority of the *Black Widow Society* members, such as Tallulah, fall in the latter category of slow burn reaction. Abusive men often engage in a wide range of controlling behaviors, without resorting to physical violence, to maintain power over their partner and deprive the same partner of certain freedoms. These controlling behaviours encompass intimidation, isolation, threats, constant supervision and manipulation (Hayes, 2012).

Makholwa demonstrates the various forms that abuse takes, for instance, physical abuse is exhibited by Tallulah and Marie's twin, Marilee. Tallulah is thrown outside by her husband with 'her gums...bleeding. Her eyes...swollen. Her sheer silk, knee-length negligee...torn and stained with blood' (*Black Widow Society* 1). Marilee shows up at her sister's place and 'the twin's face was a canvas of colours...' (*Black Widow Society* 120). Edna and Salome's husbands do not respect them: they have extramarital affairs and do not take into account their spouses' feelings. As a result of these affairs, Salome eventually gets infected with the HIV/AIDS virus whereas Edna attempts suicide. Women in such relationships often have to come up with mechanisms to resist the power and control that their abusive partners wield and maintain in the relationships.

Makholwa emphasises the resistance that abused women display in seeking help to get out of the abusive relationship. She also highlights the problems that women face in trying to get help since the institutions that provide relief and counselling services are patriarchal and do not take into consideration the women's unique experiences (Ferraro, 2006; Rothenberg, 2003).

In *Black Widow Society*, the affirmative action move involved co-ownership by black and white business partners. Although the move was well-intended, particularly for black women, the business sector (government) does not monitor this relationship, and instead of benefitting the women, it compromised one woman to accommodate the other. Salome had to share her 20% share of business with Nkululeko (new black partner) whilst her husband owned 80% all by himself. It shows that government-initiated programmes aimed at women empowerment are left in the hands of male officials who do not have any obligation to protect women against oppression. This makes it challenging for an abused woman to become autonomous and leave her abuser if the institutions designed to help her do not provide the services intended (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988).

The patriarchal nature of government institutions sometimes pushes women to the periphery where they have to survive by own means. This could be the reason Tallulah undertakes drastic measures to stop the violence inflicted on her. She goes from being a woman 'beaten, deeply insecure and uncertain of herself' (*Black Widow Society* 176) to an influential person who is economically stable and politically connected. Makholwa uses Tallulah to illustrate the strength and resilience of women; suggesting in this case that the woman could rise up and regain her power and in the same breath encourage and raise other women from their misery. In an interview with Rolf Solberg on September 23, 1996 about *Black Widow Society*, the author is quoted:

The main issue at the core of this book is domestic abuse, which is a very real and painful part of South African daily life. Domestic violence goes on in both the upper and lower echelons of South African society and has ripple effects such as rape and the violation of women's rights in different spheres of life. I believe that we need to engage more with this issue because in many ways it's a disease that gets passed down through generations — it's a cycle we need to break. (Sasolberg, R. 1996, September 23. Personal interview)

This quote explains where Makholwa is coming from with the text *Black Widow Society*. The whole idea is to expose violation of rights that often go undetected because they happen in private spaces.

6.5 Postcoloniality Meets Feminism in *David's Story*

Postcolonial feminist theory encompasses the representation of women in previously colonized countries as well as in Western locations. It emphasises the construction of gender difference in colonial and anti-colonial discourses, the representation of women in anti-colonial and postcolonial discourses with particular reference to the works of women writers (Tyagi, 2014).

The opening line of the text begins with a disclaimer from the amanuensis, 'This is and is not *David's story*' (Wicomb, 2001:99). The amanuensis details the challenges she experiences during the writing process since David keeps vital information from her; preventing her from weaving a coherent and logical piece of writing. Instead, she has to 'invent a structure' much to David's disapproval:

You have turned it into a story of women; it's full of old women, for God's sake, David accuses. Who would want to read a story like that? It's not a proper history at all. (*David's Story* 99)

In using the phrase 'proper history,' David suggests that history only has weight when it is relayed by men (Samuelson, 2007). However, Dorothy Drivers, in her afterword to the American Feminist Press edition of the novel, applauds Wicomb for this rebellious act and label it as a 'reinvention of history' that puts women at the centre stage (Baiada, 2008). It becomes clear ultimately that *David's Story* is anchored on Dulcie, his fellow comrade. Although David keeps Dulcie at the periphery, in the quest to 'protect her' (*David's Story* 199), she keeps resurfacing at the core, thereby subverting David's male order of things.

Wicomb seizes every opportunity available to resuscitate Dulcie despite concerted efforts by the 'author' to keep her in the background. Although he uses women in other faculties to demonstrate their fundamental contribution to the struggle, he does not want them to occupy the same space (Commander in chief of the Mkhonto unit) with him (and other men folk).

Wicomb's narrative forms part of the women's literature that provides empowering content that allows women to form their own, unique feminine identities in an age when a variety of lifestyle choices are available (Gemberling, 2014). Female writers have changed the discourse on feminism by writing content themselves. These texts have served as a reflection of the changing political and cultural landscapes that have influenced feminism over the years. Writers such as Wicomb and Makholwa can be credited with delivering novel feminist ideals to the 21st Century woman who forms part of an ever-developing, progressive female society (Gemberling, 2014).

In its entirety, Makholwa's novel exudes the stylisation of feminism; the *Black Widow Society* is a culmination of a new and subversive feminism. hooks (2015) defines feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. It is founded upon a common hatred of men and a goal among women to 'eliminate the suffering of women at the hands of men' (bell hooks, 2015:36). One of the founding members of the Black Widow Society, Nkosazana Khumalo, is even described as a person 'who had always been a staunch feminist' (2009:39). The text also cites males as feminists, for example Mzwakhe Khuzwayo.

The constant gender struggles between men and women result in the formation of this society. From precolonial societies to date, women have always been regarded as inferior objects at the disposal of men. Makholwa captures the way Stylus looks at Marie. He always had something to say about Marie's appearance:

Well, well, well. If it isn't the sexy blonde lady from uptown. Tell me baby, why do you always look so good? You could make a grown man cry! (*Black Widow Society* 149)

Stylus' behaviour characteristically becomes an offensive marker of behaviour typically associated with males.

It is worth noting how the female subject is sometimes invisible and inaudible until her corporeity appears. This invisibility and inaudibility has been constantly condemned by feminist scholarship everywhere, alleging a deficit of voice in the female subject in private and public spaces. However, when a woman's body is presented, there is a powerful discerning of a subject that has been "traditionally confined to the muted corners of domesticity, to the silenced margins of sociality, to the powerless outskirts of politicality" (Ponterotto 2016). This sudden conspicuousness is what Foucault (1980:186) calls 'a paradox in contemporary culture' characterised by instantaneous and vivid visibility of the female body in the discourses that influence communal interlocution.

Makholwa raises awareness on the male gaze so that the 21st Century woman should not be flattered by the intense recognition of a physical presence which does not equally recognise other faculties of her whole being. Makholwa is in line with feminists who advocate for resistance to this male gaze that reduces women to the corporeal.

The *Black Widow Society* is formed as a response to the unjust treatment that women are subjected to and the on-going gender conflict. Ironically, the founders of the *Black Widow Society* are known as the Triumvirate - a term associated with the three powerful Roman male figures – Caesar, Laepidus and Anthony. The Roman Triumvirate is subverted by the 'big three' women who adopt this military and contested name in their mission to dismantle the patriarchal hold and sway in their lives.

The text also reveals Mzwakhe's feminist inclinations which justify his participation in the *Black Widow Society*. These performances and inclinations emanate directly from the injustices his mother endured from the white 'medems' whilst raising him and his siblings. The text describes him as '...something of a feminist, although he would never consciously refer to himself as such' (*Black Widow Society* 45).

Makholwa writes this text at a time when the feminist movements in the third world have come to accept men as members – that feminism is not necessarily an exclusionary constellation suffused with hatred towards everything male. Rather, it is a feminist grouping against everything that oppresses women, embracing male participants in its oeuvre. The younger generation of feminists (Iboudou, 2007; Adichie, 2014) in particular, does not associate feminism with femaleness, but with intention to advance women's rights and expansion of their roles in societies. Makholwa advocates for the feminism in line with Adichie's (2014) definition, who maintains that a feminist is "a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes." (Adichie, 2014:47). To Adichie, 'a person' in her definition could be "a man or a woman who says, 'yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better'" (Adichie, 2014: 48).

However, Makholwa does not want the 21st Century woman to hand over the reins to men even as they (like Mzwakhe) pledge support in recognition of the mistreatment of women. As the story develops, Mzwakhe becomes an anti-feminist when he murders the woman he loves as 'the last of the good women, no doubt' (*Black Widow Society*, 46).

Makholwa uses Mzwakhe's inconsistent membership to the all-women movement (Triumvirate) to caution women not to hand their liberation baton to men, no matter how supportive or sympathetic they claim to be towards women's suffering and abuse. The enduring commitment to the liberation of women from oppression is one mandate that the women should carry out themselves.

Mzwakhe's growing hatred for the female species boils over, marking the beginning of the end of the *Black Widow Society*. This hatred culminates in the brutal killing of the members of the society. Makholwa allows two of the founding members of the society, Edna and Tallulah, to survive. Mourning the end of the *Black Widow Society*, Tallulah says 'it had managed to eat them alive, just like all black widow spiders do' (273). Tallulah compares this development to the act of the female black widow spider which has a tendency of eating its mates, an entrenched habituation which is what the female society does to its male members in the end.

The text suggests what most men have come to think as fact, that females cannot handle power and thus should be reined in because excessive power results in them becoming self-destructive agents.

Such male attitudes form a different kind of Colonialism: characterized by imposition of laws and cultural practices that emulate colonial masters. This imposition strips the colonised of the rights to speak and decide their own fate. The same principles of colonialism which are coterminous with patriarchal institutions where women had no say in matters that involved them as everything was decided for them by the male figures.

In *David's Story*, Wicomb furthers on women's silences maintaining that silences can loud as well if paid audience to. The text explores the unheeded female voice of the protagonist, Dulcie, whose experiences cannot be fully articulated. As a member of a guerrilla unit, she sacrifices both her voice and sexuality in order to participate in the liberation movement.

Wicomb treads the dangerous territory of the military and unearths the unspoken and despicable gender-based violence that was inflicted on female soldiers. She does this through Dulcie's character and explores the inarticulate nature of language in inscribing such a plight. She etches the problems encountered by this subaltern voice. Given the gendered confusion that Dulcie produces, the narrator recognises that her story may be rendered best in the "middle voice" (Wicomb 2000, 197).

The inability to adequately articulate Dulcie illustrates that representation of the subaltern is problematic, because when they take strides to inscribe the subaltern status, they fall upon the mercy of the 'ruling' power (Tate, 2017). When Dulcie's commitment and accolades earned her prominent status within the military, these acts constitute subversion of the stereotypical order of things: the subaltern speaks - against the norm. Owing to the patriarchal nature of the military, Dulcie's authoritative voice is tossed in the massive maelstrom of resistance from the male revolutionaries over whom such a voice prevails.

In addition, the narrative examines the inadequacy of representation in articulating some of the horrors experienced in the movement. It is important to note that Dulcie's voice is not actively suppressed but the manner in which external factors contest its articulation and embodiment quietens it. Traditionally, the military is a forum for masculinity-defined practices and a feminine presence becomes the nemesis (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2013). Jeffereys (2007) observes that masculinity achieves meaning within patterns of difference, that is, if success for men is associated with 'not quitting', then whoever quits, complains or shows weakness is a target of gendered insults: such male soldiers are called girls, pussies, weenies and wimps by their instructors. By doing this, they 'otherize' the enemy, making them unworthy of compassion hence the use of traditionally 'shameful' terminology (Barrett, 1996; Zurbriggen, 2010).

The males in the narrative do not only target the weak and feeble females because Dulcie, in all her super human glory, was also a victim of torture and sexual assault.

Most victims of sexual violation within the military do not always mention these incidents because it comes with multiple repercussions that, in most cases, do not favour the victim. Victims of sexual trauma are often labelled as weak and needing protection and sometimes accused of inviting the sexual trauma which endorses a sense of shame and isolation (Madriz, 1997). The most prevalent cause of the victim's silence is due to the military unit's cohesion which is a vital component of maintaining solidarity among fellow service members (Martin et al, 2000). Dulcie therefore does not alert the authorities about her abuse.

Dulcie's silence is a weapon that draws attention to the plight of military women during apartheid and nation building. Dulcie remains silent throughout the novel; she fixes her sights on the liberation struggle at hand and the victory that looms in the horizon. Paradoxically, she seems to speak through this silence. Her utter silence suggests trauma so great that it cannot be articulated in words. Negri observes that:

Wicomb's novel creates female characters that, albeit discursively muted by both apartheid and transition, are nonetheless allowed to (un)speak from within the intimate space of trauma (Negri, 2017: 96).

Through such silences, Wicomb, maintains that some things are better left unsaid than uttered since there is no language that can fully express the atrocities experienced. Dulcie symbolises the verbal inexpressibility of trauma and therefore her corporeal experience is given preference over her voice: "Because she endured torture, Dulcie cannot obtain a voice of her own, since her experience of pain cannot be rendered into words" (Altnöder 2008: 72).

Wicomb urges the 21st Century woman to initiate debates that seek to reconstitute the justice system in South Africa. The reason women do not speak is often because the institution that should listen to and act on their grievances are themselves patriarchal – downplaying women's concerns to 'petty 'issues' for which there can be no ruling.

Wicomb does not necessarily encourage women to endure the injustices that buffet them in silence, but rather that they fight for reconstitution of the public and private institutions responsible for justice in the country. Wicomb applies Derrida's deconstruction theory to address the women's discomforts within their African selves. She portrays African beauty as admirable which deconstructs the Western notions and embolden African identity.

Derrida's theory challenges the ideas of Western philosophy which centres on oppositional pairs such as: good versus evil, pure versus impure, with the first term of the opposition being valorised (Redling, 2006). The other term is seen as the inferior antithesis.

Since beauty is viewed differently across the cultures, women should not subscribe to Western definitions, in fact avoid comparisons but create and adhere to their indigenous look. Accepting their beauty removes the discomforts. The coloured identity portrayed in text violates these binaries thereby earning the label of a 'shameful race'.

The disgruntlement of the pure whites with this race expressed itself in the hateful and inhumane treatment they meted out. Women of colour like Saartjie Baartman were abused and tormented because of their bodies during the colonial era. Baartman - whose (un)naming displays her cultural hybridity - embodied shame. After her demise, her body was treated like a science project; it was dissected to 'scientifically' prove "the racial inferiority and sexual deviancy of black and coloured people" (Tormena, 2012).

The existence of a 'hybrid' race required the creation of a new order of things/culture; the coloured race was neither black nor white therefore calling for a new normal. This race had to construct its own identity in the midst of confusion; evidenced by David's search for his Griqua ancestry in the novel. The coloured race was burdened with responsibility of cultivating their own identity; this motivated Wicomb to convey the story of the coloured people to safeguard against the reduction of their identity into mere question marks and uncertainty through wrong definitions.

The text also explored female identity through Dulcie and other women like Sally and Rachael (the wife of Chief Le Fleur of the Griqua). Women were to be submissive and subdued, their voices had no representation. Their feelings are only echoed in the voice of the narrator. Their voices are never heard as Dulcie remains elusive and silent throughout the novel; readers never get to know who she really is. Even David, the person who introduced Dulcie to the reader did not fully articulate her:

But no, David does not want her voice represented. That is because he wishes to protect her, he says (*David's Story* 199).

However, he unintentionally told the narrator about his feelings for Dulcie:

It is with the greatest difficulty that I get David to admit that there is something between them. Then he retracts it immediately, saying that he does not know the meaning of that coy bourgeois description (*David's Story* 137).

Patriarchal dominance on female identity which denies females the autonomy in carving their own identities, resonates throughout Dulcie's story.

The text exposes domination of women in private and public paces which tends to deprive them of a voice to define themselves around the male gender. Patriarchy often defines females in terms of their bodies and their duties (wife, mother and homemaker): placing them in domestic roles with female soldiers like Dulcie being the unacceptable exception (Craps, 2008). Married women like Sally and Rachael are not informed about the political actions of their husbands 'for their own good'. Andrew's quickly dismisses Rachael's inquisitiveness about the deed sale: "It is safer this way, he said. These things are too complicated for women" (*David's Story* 53).

This raises the question of how women are supposed to define themselves independent of male dominance. How do they upheave the rigid patriarchal system and regressive mentality that has them confined? Wicomb calls for the 21st century woman to redefine themselves instead of adorning an identity imposed on them by patriarchal standards. She further cautions women not to compare themselves to males for reaffirmation and validation. But instead, to appreciate themselves for who they are and not seek validation from elsewhere, especially not from men.

David's Story delves into the connection between shame and female sexuality through the eyes of a colonial woman where women's bodies are sites of patriarchy and vulnerable to all forms of disfigurement. The female body was objectified and tortured, peeling away all layers of its human dignity. hooks and West (1991) discussed the Western perception of the black female body:

From slavery to the present day, the Black female body has been seen in Western eyes as the quintessential symbol of a "natural" female presence that is organic, closer to nature, animalistic, primitive (1991:193).

Times of war and violence and rape amplified the plight of women as they were stripped of their identities and voices (Samuelson, 2007). The colonial woman bleeds due to the abuse experienced in the hands of patriarchal forces and institutions.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia depicts a young woman bleeding as a victim of rape through Yasmin's rape by Cobus Steyn:

He caught hold of me, crushed me, pinning my arms so that I could only wriggle helplessly. He dragged me into the trees over there. I struggled and screamed for help. He clamped his hand over my mouth, threatening to kill me if I open my mouth again. (*Daughters of the Twilight* 122-3).

The retrospective account of Saartjie Baartman's life represented the demeaning representations of black women's bodies by Westerners. The White patriarchal hegemony in the context of colonialism portrayed black women as sexualised savages (Craps, 2008); their bodies were reduced to their body parts, their buttocks in particular. Upon her demise, Baartman's genitalia were exhibited to the world for her steatopygia or protruding buttocks (Craps, 2008). Black women's bodies were objects for male sexual gratification.

In the African context, Saartjie Baartman exuded beauty; she was a shapely African woman. In African culture, a curvaceous woman is considered to be an embodiment of beauty. This sharply contrasts the notion of beauty in Western cultures where ideal beauty for females is defined as thinness and corpulence is perceived to be a negative quality (Lemberg and Cohn, 1998). In light of the hybridity in both Sally and Dulcie's lineage, they also displayed steatopygia like that of Saartjie Baartman:

Steatopygous Sally, turning to the tune of the collapsed springs of the mattress, presses a buttock into David's thin hip, offering warmth and well-being that brings a sleep-smile to his lips (*David's Story* 16).

Sally, however, was not comfortable with the body inherited from her line of ancestry. She changed her name from Saartjie to Sarah in high school, and then later, to an anglicised version of the name. Sally's change of name was representative of her rejection of steatopygia and her connection to Saartjie Baartman; an attempt to conceal her roots:

Perhaps Sally's choice to change her name is a reflection of her desire to start afresh as coloured women only, not as a woman with mixed French and Khoi, or Afrikaner and Griqua, or any other mixed-race ancestry. She wants a name that does not identify her racial identity beyond separating her from Afrikaner culture (*David's Story* 28).

Sally's body was not tailored to fit into the Western society's definition of beauty. She was uncomfortable with herself and internalised the definition of beauty as stipulated by the Western society. This could explain her attempt to sever all ties with the women in her ancestry, women who were famous for steatopygia.

With women, appearance is central to self-definition. They are constantly pressured to conform to the male ideal of the female body image. This has resulted in women of colour internalising thinness as the ideal body type and this internalisation has resulted in self-hate. Western notions of beauty have altered the African definition of beauty and African women have neglected their own standards of beauty in favour of the Western perception.

Wicomb uses Sally's dilemma to appeal to the 21st Century women of colour to appreciate and embrace their bodies. Each feature, such as the enormous curves, is not only for beauty but serves as a reminder of the struggles that women like Baartman endured; therefore the natural features of women of colour should be a source of pride and not shame.

6.6 From Natural Enmity to Solidarity

Sisterhood is a feminist principle based on the commonality between women (Ang-Lygate, Corrin and Henry, 1997). In the words of bell hooks (1986) 'women are the group most victimized by sexist oppression.' The preconceived ideas of a predominantly patriarchal society have made women believe that they are less important than men and the only way for them to gain recognition is through their association with men. Women are taught that they cannot rise and prosper together because they are 'natural' enemies

therefore suggesting that solidarity cannot exist between them. hooks (1986) calls for women to unlearn all these doctrines and build a sustained feminist movement which does not only resist preconceived ideas about women, but which also negotiates new spaces for women to participate even in practices of power.

The sisterhood in *Black Widow Society* navigates the legacy of South Africa's liberation struggle which pushed women to the periphery at the dawn of freedom as males exclusively stormed to advance themselves and carve spaces in the political sphere. The postcolonial period saw native males reclaiming power from male whites and re-placing them in positions of authority; in the process, forgetting that in order for nationalism and nation-building to serve all South Africans, women should also be involved. Women also participated in the struggle and assumed leadership roles in some cases as demonstrated through Dulcie in Zoe Wicomb's *David's Story*.

As in the case of the women characters in the *Black Widow Society*, The Triumvirate display a sisterly unity in times of adversity. They draw strength from one another as they execute the mandate of the society; their relationship is the source of each of their strengths. The head of the Triumvirate, Tallulah, informs the women drawn into the society about the sisterhood that they are a part of and their duty to each other as sisters.

Be there for a sister who bears that dark, sad and haunted look that you used to wear...be aware of that woman whose smile does not reach her eyes. Whose burst lip, and clumsy explanation of countless "accidents" rings untrue (*Black Widow Society*, 19).

Makholwa's perspective of sisterhood is based on the same notion cited by hooks (1986). This sisterhood is meant to eliminate threats that her woman characters face, especially their experiences of abuse perpetuated by their husbands.

Sisterhood thrives when there is solidarity amongst women. This solidarity is what is necessary if patriarchal institutions are to be dismantled and patriarchal mentalities transformed. However, Lorde (1984) warns against assuming ‘a homogeneity of experiences covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist.’

Makholwa’s protagonists join forces to fight a common enemy – abusive marriages characterised by cheating, battering and misappropriation of family assets. Through it all women display solidarity, a characteristic of sisterhood although their motives are not quite the same. They also collectively commit to keeping and protecting the secrecy of their society. Makholwa takes sisterhood to another level more concretised than the one Magona displays in *Mother to Mother*. In *Black Widow Society*, women do not only support one another, they also actively participate in the elimination of the oppressors. Makholwa acknowledges differences in that women do not have to exhibit similar viewpoints for them to belong to the same woman’s movement.

The Triumvirate’s sisterhood is contrasted to that of Mandisa and Nono’s sisterhood in Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother*. The bond between Mandisa and Nono is tightened by a common struggle: they were both teen mothers therefore one in experience. On the contrary, Tallulah and Edna’s intentions for forming the *Black Widow Society* are different from Nkosazana’s: “Nkosazana’s focus tended to be more on fiscal matters, how much the *Black Widow Society* made and how much more potential it had to become a highly profitable organisation” (*Black Widow Society* 38).

It appears that the women in *Black Widow Society* are driven by the same goal since they all suffer abuse from their spouses, yet the motives are different. The other women are genuinely concerned about the welfare of the women members of the society. Tallulah, in particular, does not view the society as a business venture: “Tallulah, although a consummate businesswoman, resented such talk as it detracted from the philanthropic ideal she had for the society.” (*Black Widow Society*, 38).

Women may be one through experience, race and class, but Makholwa's Black Widow Society alerts the postcolonial woman – the 21st Century woman - about the importance of knowing the cause that they are fighting for so that the lines between right and wrong are not blurred in the name of sisterhood and idealised solidarity. In the fight against misogyny and the pursuit for a place in society, women should remain principled and not lose focus in the process. In the end, Nkosazana is the first to be targeted by Mzwakhe because of the greed that consumed her in seeking to amass wealth.

The relationship demonstrated by the women destabilises the acrimony, arguments and divisiveness commonly associated with women. These women are no longer defined by hostility and unfriendliness; rather, they are supportive of each other and form a solid community devoid of competitiveness. During the hardest times in their lives, these women in the society harbour the singular hope that spurs the fundamental values that form the basis of their communion.

The members of the society are unified by the pain and betrayal from their partners; their paths come to a confluence only because of a similar experience. The torment and abuse suffered at the hands of their husbands leads to drastic action as they seek to regain independence and sense of worth. In one instance, Thami is distraught when her husband Lloyd leaves her for another woman. She finds an ally and solace in Salome, one of the members of the society, who advises her to have her adulterous husband Lloyd killed. However, killing Lloyd does 'not provide her with the sweet justice she craved' (171). She is regretful and remorseful for her actions.

Thami's experience shows some of the differences between men and women. Women are emotional beings and their consciences are not at ease when they do wrong. The men, on the other hand, are able to detach their beings from the emotional, for instance, Mzwakhe, to whom killing was just another day job. It is, however, too late for Thami to regret her actions as she must still honour her end of the agreement with the *Black Widow Society*.

In the end, things come apart at the seams as Thami's inability to keep a secret jeopardises the existence of the society. Even though this is the case, their sisterhood stands the test of time as the remaining women conspire to get themselves out of the situation. Even during the tough times, the sisters stand together. Their sisterhood does not die with the society as Tallulah and Edna escape and start over again in Malawi as deterritorialised sisters. They build a school for young girls and host their first graduation day.

"Tallulah, for the first time in many years, had tears in her eyes, so true, Mrs Baker. So true, she said, taking hold of Edna's hand and squeezing it tightly" (*Black Widow Society* 278).

Makholwa's depiction of sisterhood indicates to the 21st Century postcolonial woman that it is their turn to impact on the world. The freedom attained from colonial rule grants them the liberty to dream. They are no longer bound to predominantly patriarchal laws and regulations; they are free to empower themselves and each other without seeking validation from men. They should teach and learn how to become influential people in this postcolonial society and how to lead as women. Unlike women in the past, they now have a choice between a career, marriage and children; they are at liberty to choose what is best for them as they pursue their dreams. Women should also learn from the struggles endured by their fellow women in history; this knowledge of past injustices should bind them together. They should grow stronger together as women, lest they fall apart in disunion.

Makholwa portrays sisterhood as a forum for the liberation of women. Through sisterhood, women remain in solidarity even though they have experienced different challenges. The text also presents sisterhood as a nexus for exploring alternative sexual relationships, that is, it enables women to explore relationships outside the 'normal' heterosexual space.

Nkosazana Khumalo, a member of the Triumvirate, is a lesbian even though little is mentioned in the text about her relationships after the revelation of her sexual orientation.

This may be attributed to the stigma attached to homosexuality. It also harps on the insecurities surrounding lesbians who can only 'be allowed' to exist peacefully in society if they appear to be "single" and "asexual" (Katrak, 2006). Nkosazana's sexual preferences are neatly camouflaged by her role in the *Black Widow Society*. In postcolonial societies, lesbians hide their sexual orientation for fear of brutal violence. Just when members of The Triumvirate think Nkosazana has settled, she shocks them with the announcement that she would like to settle with a man. Societal judgment cannot be ruled out as a possible cause for this sudden turn. It can also be said that women who engage in alternative sexuality are not supported against condemnation and preconceived ideas about such choices.

Kaplan (1996) states that feminist theory has a tendency of "sweeping lesbian sexuality and desire under the rug of sisterhood, [and] female friendship..." Katrak (2006:11) also asserts this same sentiment by stating that women disguise their lesbian relationships under "a mystified appearance of sisterhood."

Though the lives of women are constantly under regulation and surveillance by various patriarchal institutions, homosexuality amongst them goes unnoticed because their relationships are always interpreted as love, bonding or friendship. In this way, sisterhood is reshaped; it transcends the platonic boundaries and presents itself as a new form of performative romance. Makholwa awakens the 21st Century woman to the knowledge that her identity is not defined by her relations to males and the preconceived ideas about her position in a heterosexual relationship. A woman's sexual and emotional orientation is privileged because it affects all aspects of her life thus she should be free to choose her own lifestyle.

6.7 Nationalism: Racial Identity and Marginalisation

Nationalism refers to the intense devotion to one's nation; while a nation is a group of people united by residence in a common land, a common heritage or culture, a common interest in living together for the present and in the future, and a common desire to have their own state (Sauers and Weber, 2010). As an ideology, nationalism places the nation at the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being.

The novel *David's Story* follows the protagonist David as he sets out on a quest to unearth his ethnic heritage towards the close of the apartheid era. David is of mixed-race or "Coloured" whose origins lie in the indigenous people and early colonial settlers. He traces his lineage to the Griqua people and links his life as a fighter in the movement to the lives of militant Griqua chiefs: "See, this stuff is in your blood, man, comes out of our ancestor's soil. It's our heritage; it's your rightful heritage, your Griqua birth right" (*David's Story* 171).

History judges coloured ethnic identity to be a source of shame which is why there has been a shortage of coloured writings in the past. In *The Case of the Coloured in South Africa*, Wicomb (1998) states that lack of coloured writings is wrapped up in shame:

This failure or inability to represent our history in popular forms and consequently the total erasure of slavery from the folk memory presumably has its roots in shame: shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation, and shame, as colonial racism became institutionalized, for being black, so that with the help of our European names we have lost all knowledge of our Xhosa, Indonesian, East African, or Khoi origins (Wicomb, 1998: 6).

Being of coloured descent herself, Wicomb takes on the responsibility of conveying the history of the coloured people of South Africa, particularly the Griqua history. She salvages her rich history from the perception of a mere product of distaste. She uses her writing to change the perception about the coloured people and portrays their role in the

struggle of liberating South Africa. She uses characters such as David to explore these racial minefields, the ideology of racial purity that dominated life in South Africa during the apartheid era and the issue of national identity or nationalism. Wicomb's characters have the desire to cultivate and construct their true identities and establish a sense of belonging hence their silent endurance even under unbearable conditions.

Nationalism is strategically used to mobilise people in the struggle, however, this raises uncertainty about events that will transpire once the struggle against white rule is over and with it racial classification and the need for nationalism. Wicomb's portrayal of nationalism renders it contradictory to the struggle of women, represented by the female figures in the text. Nationalism undermines the female body and unseats the gendered paradigms through which nationalism produces itself (Samuelson, 2007). In *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*, Boehmer (2005) affirms the gendered configuration of nationalism as implied in *David's Story*:

As in the cross-section of a tree trunk that is nowhere unmarked by its grain – by that pattern expressing its history – so too is the nation informed throughout by gendered history, by the normative masculinities and femininities that shaped its growth over time (Boemher, 2005:3)

Through the introduction of the Bronwyn Brown Witch in the story, the narrator enthuses David to admit the undeserved cruelty that Dulcie endures. When he finally confesses, in essence he admits the horrors women were subjected to in the name of the struggle for liberation. The trauma that Dulcie suffers post liberation is actually a collective trauma that South African women experienced even as they were pushed back to 'normalcy' through domestication.

Wicomb deliberately revives a legendary woman - Joan of Arc – a title given to a fictionalised story by Maria Warner, depicting a peasant girl who led the French to a victorious siege of the City of Orleans. On assuming power, King Charles VII captured the 19-year old Joan, tried her for heresy and witchcraft and burnt her at the stake in 1431.

Centuries after the cruel act by the Burgundians, Joan was declared the greatest Saint in history and canonised in 1920. Wicomb bestows in Dulcie, the same status: of a woman protagonist in the classical narrative of sacrifice and betrayal of women who have become exemplars of struggle in men's wars and emerged heroic:

She has taken her training as a revolutionary seriously – the vows, the beliefs – without, some would say the necessary pinch of salt. Has her life not been devoted to resisting tyranny? Ah, she knows that she has done it too well for a girl, a woman, but she would, and she clenches her teeth, do it again and again (*David's Story* 180).

This quote is juxtaposed against Warner's (1981) to match Dulcie's and Joan's spectacular defiance of the patriarchal powers. The similarities that Wicomb draws between Dulcie and Joan are carved in their refusal to 'hand over the uniform' and 'she would rather die than relinquish these clothes' (Wicomb, 2000:180) and (Warner, 1981: 145) respectively. The narrator could not repel Dulcie's presence, marked by her absence in the text. She had to resist David's wish and inscribe her as a silent middle voice and a postcolonial agent that embodies gendered misperception that subverts the colonial binaries of the dominant versus dominated. Warner's applause for Joan's representation of womanhood is true of Dulcie as well, irrespective of the differences in age and background of the female warriors. When Wicomb borrows this expression from Warner (1981), it is in furtherance of her assumption that she runs short of the language to articulate Dulcie.

Through her transvestism, she abrogated the destiny of womankind. She could thereby transcend her sex... at the same time, by never pretending to be other than a woman and a maid, she was usurping a man's function but shaking off the trammels of his sex altogether to occupy a different, third order, neither male nor female (Warner, 1981:145-146).

Wicomb informs the post-apartheid South African woman that liberation does not necessarily bring progressive and non-chauvinistic ideas. She seeks to empower and encourage the 21st Century woman to decolonise their minds in relation to nation building, nationhood and nationalism. Women are regarded as mothers of nationalism in terms of biologically reproducing national groups and being reproducers of the boundaries of the nation (determined by marriage) (Yuval-Davis, 1997). However, they should not be confined to 'womanly' spaces (such as the kitchen) but must play a pivotal role in nation building. They are challenged to bring forth meaningful contributions in full transformation of the nation (economically, socially and on other issues that have an impact on nation building) and not wait upon men to do so.

Marginality in *David's story* is presented in two ways: racial marginalisation and gender marginalisation. The women characters suffer both. Through *David's Story*, Wicomb paints a picture of the former South Africa. She provides a reflexive account of the oppression, violence and racial segregation that non-whites endured. David Dirkse, one of the protagonists, is a coloured anti-apartheid activist in search of his heritage amongst the indigenous people and early colonial settlers, much to his father's disapproval: "Look what it's taken your mother and me, sweat and blood, to shake off the Griquaness, the shame and the filth and the idleness and what do you do? Go rolling right back into the gutter... (*David's Story* 23).

Wicomb constructs the coloured identity and presents her characters as normal human beings regardless of their 'racial hybridity' (Jacobs, 2008). She explores the pathologising of the coloured community by the white man under the apartheid regime.

The coloured community often had to exist at the peripheries, the interstitial space between black and white. They were generally regarded as epitome of shame, racial impurity, sexual immorality and illegitimacy. In her essay, *Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa*, Wicomb (1998) illustrates how the coloured community has been burdened with shame.

In the eyes of the rigid chromatic system, this race should not exist yet it does, defying the norm. Wicomb uses this very race to deconstruct the racial hierarchies put in place by apartheid. The mere existence of this mixed race unsettles the binaries (black/white) and brings to the fore the marginalised knowledge against 'the master.' As far as the master is concerned, there can only be white or black, but the emergence of this race casts a shadow of doubt on the master system. The master in turn uses tyrannical techniques in order to deny the existence of this coloured identity, this in-between that is, in Homi Bhabha's memorable phrase, 'almost-but-not-quite.'

Wicomb's portrayal of coloured identity resists the shame associated with colouredness (Ngwira, 2013). She tackles colouredness so as to afford the race the dignity wrenched by the apartheid regime. Wicomb wants to restore their humanness and present them as worthy contributors to the liberation struggle in South Africa.

The women in the *David's Story* (Dulcie, Sally and Rachael amongst others) are also of coloured origin; therefore they are not exempt from the oppression suffered under apartheid. However, the playing field for males and females was not level: in addition to being discriminated against because of their colourness, coloured women were vulnerable to abuse because of their bodies. Wicomb uses the historic figure of Saartjie Baartman to portray the primitive ideas of colonisers regarding women; they were taken for objects of gazing only useful to satisfy sexual desires. Liu (2012) has this to say in affirmation:

Similarly, the 'colonial subjects' tend to be conceptualised as male and the 'female subjects' as white. When parallels are drawn between them, the colonised women's situation is glossed over, not to mention the racial and gendered forms of oppression they have suffered from (Liu, 2012: 24).

David's Story is an attempt to ignore and downplay the female voice. This is clearly portrayed through Dulcie, a female in the liberation struggle of South Africa. Dulcie's presence in the movement annoys her male counterparts: she is objectified and abused

but her desire to be a part of the struggle compels her to endure these hardships as she remains voiceless against the inhumane treatment. The treatment not only involves sexual violations but physical assaults as well. Her male colleagues go to great lengths to let her know that she is unwelcome: “Not rape, that will teach her nothing, leave nothing; rape’s too good for her kind, waving the electrodes as another took her nightclothes.” (*David’s Story* 178).

The repeated rapes along with physical assaults left her scarred – both emotionally and physically. In a bid to give an outlet to this female voice, Wicomb adopts a feminist stance as the novel is narrated by a woman. This is an attempt to find and represent these marginalised voices accordingly (Craps, 2008). Wicomb gives women of colour a platform for their stories which are often left untold and not taught therefore rendered less valuable and unattainable (Alonso, Mota and Muíños, 2012).

Important coloured historical figures like Saartjie Baartman are included in the novel in order to deconstruct the histories and racist ideologies that were archived by the colonisers. This is a strategic attempt by Wicomb to recover and reclaim what was once lost, unspoken, forgotten or ignored (Alonso, Mota and Muíños, 2012). Also, by focusing on the role of women within the dehumanising militant violence, Wicomb challenges the legitimacy of patriarchal practices and accentuates and commends women for their efforts that often go unnoticed.

Wicomb does not offer women a solution or a plan of action on how to make their voices audible; she simply gives them a platform to speak. She makes those around her stand up and take notice of women and their roles. Writing during an era where female writers were marginalised as well, she teaches the 21st century woman not to rely on the masculine other for representation and validation. A woman can make great achievements just as much in spite of differences in physical make or strength. Ideally, she teaches women to cultivate their own strength and not be dictated to by males as to what they can or cannot do, she encourages the 21st century woman to speak out, command respect and be noticed.

Samuelson (2007), in her book titled *Remembering the Nation: Dismembering Women*, examines the manner in which the envisaged postcolonial/post-apartheid South Africa in spite of its promises of freedom for all, has relegated women to secondary citizens.

The end of apartheid in South Africa triggered the need for people to redefine themselves because the system that had once dictated to them had collapsed. The different ethnic groups, including the white South Africans, had to unite, symbolising the birth of a 'new' South Africa.

This transition in turn captures how concepts of 'woman' or 'womanhood' helped redefine new strictures and structures in the new South Africa. The idea of nationhood is completed with the admission of a number of iconic figures such as Saartjie Baartman representing this group of people who came out stronger from the colonial and apartheid era (Craps, 2008). Women embody motherhood and as mothers to the nation, women such as Baartman carried the symbolic weight of nationalism with their bodies and remain contested sites on which national identities are created and national unity is forged (Samuelson, 2007).

Wicomb critiques the labelling of women as mothers of the nation because it implies some form of domestication - the same tools the oppressors used to limit the roles women could take within the communities for which they are members. She also observes that liberation from apartheid does not necessarily translate to lessening on the control of female bodies. Is Dulcie less of a woman because she chose not to have children? Does participation in the military wing strip her of her femininity? Wicomb raises these questions so that they become part of the discourse of postcolonial feminism for the 21st Century woman to ponder over, provide answers for, and act accordingly. She places a huge responsibility on the new generation of women to liberate themselves from the cultural practices that limit circumscribe womanhood to motherhood or wifehood.

6.8 Motherhood Demystified

Grenholm (2011) defines motherhood as a process of creation that is both active and passive. The mother accommodates a creative process and contributes to the act of creating a human being. Akujobi (2011) defines motherhood as ‘an automatic set of feelings and behaviours that is switched on by pregnancy and the birth of a baby.’ With the recent advancements in technology such as surrogacy, feminist philosophers have questioned whether motherhood is a genetic, gestational or caring relation to a child. In so doing, these activists question the standard Western notion, often supported in courts of law, that the biological relation is central’ (Gardner and Deatricks, 2006).

Motherhood is pivotal in an African setting where traditional gender roles still persist. It is seen as an essential role and female children are orientated towards motherhood from an early age. In an African context, motherhood is an expression of womanhood. To be a real woman is to be married and to produce children but all this is due to the strong perceptions of maternal parenting in Africa (Lyimo-Mbowe, 2015).

Motherhood is highly esteemed in African societies such that barrenness is regarded as a misfortune, a personal disgrace, a social fault that often leads to divorce, marginalisation, ostracisation or polygamy (Lyimo-Mbowe, 2015). Marriage amongst Africans is mainly an institution set for the control and perpetuation of procreation (Katrak, 2006).

In Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa is married off to China when she falls pregnant with Mxolisi, so that she does not become an embarrassment to the family (*Mother to Mother* 161). The preconceived and strongly held idea is that one cannot be a mother without a man; that the woman can only belong to a man if she conceives and bears a child whose naming follows a patrilineal biography.

Katrak (2006) shares the same sentiments about motherhood and womanhood by stating that female sexuality is often expressed in the glorification of motherhood. In most instances, female identity is subject to objectifying the female body as defined by different

patriarchal structures. Young women face control and surveillance over their bodies and as adults they live within the strict definitions of wife and mother.

The novel *Black Widow Society* therefore emphasises the complexities of the relationship between womanhood and motherhood. In *Black Widow Society*, Talullah Ntuli is expected to play the role of wife and mother, while her husband Mphikeleli explores the political sphere. These political connections and accolades are attained through Talullah who can otherwise use them for herself but does not because of the dictates of society with regard to wifehood and motherhood. She is constantly coerced to be the perfect wife and mother (*Black Widow Society* 3). Makholwa therefore uses her to depict how women are increasingly marginalised and excluded from making decisions that have a direct bearing on their lives and their bodies.

Talullah struggles with the role of motherhood that society expects her to fulfill as she straddles motherhood and the corporate world. She is estranged from her children (Noxolo and Gregory); there is no mother-child bond between them. She is merely their financial provider focusing her energy on the society and neglecting the emotional well-being of her children. She stubbornly refuses to succumb to the role of motherhood:

She knew that she could not be classified as a mother, “she was not much of a mother.” In fact, she could very well be classified as a “bad mother”; she knew it – it was her cross to bear (*Black Widow Society* 136). Talullah is a victim of the traditional perception of motherhood which is presented as the only desirable state for a woman, even if it occurs without discussion of desire, or knowledge about the facts of reproduction (Katrak, 2006).

Through *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa enlightens the 21st Century woman about the choices available to her regarding procreation. A woman should have the freedom to consciously make the decision to have children and to negotiate and agree with her partner on the number. In this way, the woman reclaims her power from an imposed African normativity and she is able to determine and reshape other aspects of her life.

In the same vein, Mam' Khuzwayo, Mzwakhe's mother, is an embodiment of the traditional definition of motherhood. She is a single mother who manages to take care of Mzwakhe and his siblings on a domestic worker's salary.

Single motherhood reverberates throughout the text *Black Widow Society* as some members of the society are single mothers. However, theirs is a state made out of choice as they murder their partners to escape their miserable marital lives. Edna, one of the founders of the society, straddles single motherhood and business after her husband is killed. However, Edna has long been playing the role of a single mother because her husband, Jake, although alive, is always absent. Makholwa uses Edna's domestic situation to portray how men always place the responsibility of raising children in the hands of women. Jake never really plays his parenting role; he leaves Edna to her own devices as a 'single' mother.

As opposed to Talullah and Edna, Mam'Khuzwayo does not have any aspirations outside being a mother. Her experiences reveal the traditional ideological framing of the social notion of womanhood which is equated with motherhood. As important as motherhood is, Akujobi (2011) mentions that it should not be all that the woman is made for; it should be a matter of choice as some women would rather not experience motherhood.

African feminists such as Buchi Emecheta (1979) and Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) have made mention of the patriarchal constraints in African motherhood. These operate in an oppressive manner at times, thereby calling for other meanings to motherhood; meanings that empower women. These feminists are of the view that 'giving birth bestows a certain status on women – even mystical powers'. 'Mother' and 'woman' should not be used interchangeably because in motherhood the power that women have within the family falls into the boundaries of male dominance (Walker, 1995). However, in many African societies, motherhood defines womanhood (Eviweihoma, 2007). This transmits a wrong notion of womanhood being attainable only through motherhood in Africa.

Makholwa denounces this regressive mentality which sees women as mere 'breeding machines.' She seeks therefore to empower women in making their own decisions regarding their bodies and choosing lifestyles suitable for them.

The concern with how the nation embody women or how the nation is differently embodied as a woman in the production of postcolonial cultural comes, partly, from a principal interest in charting and interrogating the outlines of power in colonial and postcolonial locations (Mullaney, 2010).

African nations, like most colonial and colonised societies, have been patriarchal and gender biased and this is likely to persist in the postcolonial scene where women are silenced by the power structures surrounding them (Hamam, 2014). Makholwa's portrayal of motherhood positions the 21st Century woman with the capacity to dismantle African and colonial ideas of womanhood and motherhood and reconstruct her own identity of a woman suited for a postcolonial and democratic space. This 21st Century woman need not subscribe to preconceived notions of motherhood.

Makholwa calls for women to reinvent motherhood as suggested by Boehmer (2013) who contends that motherhood should not be perceived as a biologically inscribed and conferred role, but a choice, one which involves evoking the mother's intersubjectivity with the child (Boehmer, 2013). Motherhood does not have to be perceived as an obligatory task. It is not an expression of womanhood; it is possible to be childless and still be regarded as a woman. Women should not allow the preconceived ideas of an African society to coerce them into motherhood.

The lesson the 21st Century woman draws here is that: unlike the colonial days, motherhood is a choice, the role and position of women in society is shifting therefore they are not imprisoned by a role (motherhood) they have had no part in defining. They are no longer viewed as objects and machines for reproduction.

Makholwa acknowledges the changes that have occurred in society - from the colonial to the postcolonial period - concerning the position of women. Women are no longer confined to domesticity as they also participate in the corporate environment. For that reason, she calls for the corporate world to be more accommodative to women; it should not disadvantage them on the basis of gender. Women should be allowed to straddle domestic and corporate roles and not choose one over the other. Women's voices in the formulation of corporate employment policies, policymaking and development activities should be loud enough to warrant attention. Their input on how best their services can be utilised effectively ought to be prioritised so that they perform maximally.

What the 21st Century woman learns is that motherhood requires sacrifice. But sacrifice does not mean relinquishing one's dreams and aspirations as a woman. It is possible for women to pursue their dreams and still provide children with all the care they require. They are not bound to choose one and forfeit the other. The pursuing of dreams as a woman does not translate into abdicating motherhood and nurturing children. It is the duty of a woman to develop herself but children should not be neglected in the process. The 21st Century woman should not distance herself emotionally from her children as she develops as it is possible to have children whilst advancing career wise. Motherhood should be a positive experience and not just an obligation that nature requires women to fulfill (as seen in Tallulah's behaviour).

Makholwa further cautions the 21st Century woman that motherhood is a unifying factor for women of different races. Makholwa seeks to delink motherhood and race, as motherhood is universal and has no skin colour. Mam' Khuzwayo's traditional and colonial constructions do not allow her to embrace her son's attempt of transcending the racial line. She would prefer it if Mzwakhe married a woman of Zulu descent, someone she will embrace as a daughter. Her rigidity is one way of protecting her son from the white people who have oppressed her for years and logically she cannot not extend a welcoming hand to Marie as she does not want to override tradition.

Makholwa brings it to the attention of the 21st woman that all women are essential in building a new African society that embraces all women regardless of race and their choices of becoming mothers or not. Race and patriarchal African traditions should not be a hindrance to women joining forces to advance the interests and ambitions of women folk. She advocates for an all-inclusive participation in the continual process of social change, renewal and advocacy.

6.9 Women Building Identities Uncontaminated by Institutions of Patriarchy

Postcolonial nationalism has tended to re-inscribe rather than decisively alleviate patriarchal oppressive structures and strictures for women. The direct implication is that the struggle against colonial domination does not end with the attainment of flag independence from colonial powers; it persists as gender bias and double colonisation in the postcolonial states. The expression double colonisation emerged from postcolonial women's writings to refer to the subjugation of women to both colonial domination of the Empire and domination through patriarchy after political independence. It is for this reason that feminists should attempt to build women identities that are not contaminated by patriarchal institutions.

In *David's Story*, David is presented as a leader in the struggle for liberation, which is nothing out of the ordinary because males are naturally perceived as militant and patriotic leaders. Like the typical male that he is, David makes his presence felt as a war leader and his thoughts are dominated by preconceived ideas that men have about women. He believes that the military is not a place for a woman; the only contribution a woman can make at war is in her subordinate role as an aid to men in terms of cooking, providing health services or reporting the war from a safe wing somewhere – essentially in a supportive role.

Dulcie defies the natural order of things when she becomes an active participant in the war. She even earns a leadership position as a commander in chief in the military movement. She proves that she is just as valuable as the men in the struggle and does not submit to male dominance.

David remains adamant in holding his patriarchal position. He is not impressed with Dulcie's occupation of such a senior position. In his eyes, she is a woman and undeserving of such power and prestige. Although he does not admit it, David feels threatened by Dulcie's achievement in moving up the ranks. Dulcie is more receptive to change; she knows that she cannot leave her future in the hands of men like David but has to take up arms herself and fight. She does not view the liberation struggle as a 'male thing' but as an agenda concerning all citizens under oppression.

Karodia and Wicomb's narratives portray a battle of the sexes (male and female), in fact, it is a war in which the woman seeks to break free from the clutches of male domination. Dulcie endures mental and physical abuse to prove that she is just as worthy as a man, even though ironically she falls for a man who perpetuates the abuse. On the one hand, David gives an impression that he is strong but proves to be emotionally weak when he falls for someone he dismally disapproves of - Dulcie. He does not express his feelings outwardly and chooses to keep them to himself. The male is illustrated in this sense as weaker than the woman who endures physical torture and torment, thereby presenting the woman as strong in her weakness.

Wicomb privileges domesticity as one way women come to consider themselves as delicate, submissive, frail, and adopt physical comportment that mimics this cultural norm. Van Kirk (1990) argues that femininity normalises male domination and paints a portrait of women as subordinate and naively content with being controlled.

The lesson the 21st century women can derive from Dulcie is that women have paid the price, they bore the brunt of the war – evidenced by the horrible scars on Dulcie's body – and younger generations should reap the proceeds of such suffering by female predecessors. They need not subject themselves to further abuse nor degrade their status as women in their quest to prove themselves. They are endowed differently from men and should embrace that difference and capitalise on their strengths and not conform to the standards dictated by society or lose themselves in an effort to gain favour and acceptance.

6.9.1 Dis/Empowering Constructs of Widowhood

According to the BBC English Dictionary (2017), widowhood is the state of being a widow or widower. A widow or widower is a person who has lost a spouse. Most African cultures have rites and mores that are prescribed for the surviving spouse following the death, though many display an uncanny bias towards males. Widowhood has become the main site and arena for oppressing women through elaborate and prescriptive regulations which do not apply to widowers for whom the tradition has prescribed little or no mourning rituals. This section reviews common widowhood practices in the context of South Africa, the empowering and disempowering constructions that come with widowhood and finally what the 21st Century woman should learn from widowhood and its relative practices.

Death and loss constitute an integral part of African women's lives since time immemorial and runs into the apartheid era. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC's) hearings (1996–1998), saw several women testify to the loss of their husbands, children, family, livelihood, human rights and dignity in the face of racial oppression and discrimination (Kotze et al, 2012). In addition, their mourning customs have been shaped by discursive traditional practices, as well as socio-political developments in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa (Kotze, Els, Rajuili-Masilo, 2012). For instance, in most South African cultures, when death is announced the family is immediately regarded as 'polluted' (*isinyama* in Zulu or *sefifi* in Setswana), which portends that a negative and dark shadow has been cast over the family and as a result the family is in a state of disequilibrium (Cebekhulu, 2016).

Within the Zulu ethnic group, and other African ethnic groups in South Africa, the widow is the main focus of the rituals of mourning (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007). Ngubane (2004) posits that the central role of a married woman whose husband has died is designated as the chief mourner. There are several implicit and explicit practices that the widow must adhere to, for instance occupying a sacred mourning physical space where candles are lit (Hutchings, 2007).

This space is usually the widow's bedroom and she has to sit on a mattress surrounded by other close women all wearing special mourning garments called inzila in Zulu, which are commonly black (Mbizana, 2007). She has to shave her head (ukuphuca) and stay at home for the duration of the mourning period which is usually one year.

The widow is not allowed any social or sexual contact. When using public transport such as a taxi or bus, she has to sit at the back so as not to expose other travellers to her back and the possibility of a "bad omen or bad luck" (Rosenblatt & Nkosi, 2007, p. 78). Conversely, when children lose a parent or a husband his wife, they are said to observe ukuzila, but the observances of children require rather minor changes from ordinary patterns and routines whilst widowers (husbands) are largely exempt from the more debilitating bereavement customs (Carton, 2003).

However, in *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa uses her protagonists to resist some of these cultural practices and societal expectations of a grieving wife. None of the women undergo the aforementioned practices except for Salome. The text illustrates that seven months after her husband's funeral, she still wore all-black clothing in public as a sign of her widowhood and the public mourning.

After mentally rehearsing her plea for a few minutes, Thami spotted Salome's trim figure, draped stylishly in black Armani from head to toe, saunter into the half-full restaurant, turning a few heads in the process (*Black Widow Society* 126).

Makholwa demonstrates how women make a comeback and dictate the terms of their widowhood and do not necessarily have to compromise in order to adhere to all the deprecating cultural practices that have been established specifically for widows. Salome can mourn and still look fashionable while doing that instead of looking downtrodden and unappealing as society expects of a grieving widow.

Six months after the death of Lloyd, her husband, the text suggests that Thami does not wear all-black attire as a sign of widowhood, she goes about her daily activities and even has a sexual encounter with a stranger.

She settled on a casual pair of jeans, paired them with a white Gap shirt and black boots and a leather jacket... (*Black Widow Society* 171)

The majority of the female protagonists in *Black Widow Society* are in control of their bodies and resist obsolete cultural practices that do not serve them. Makholwa's portrayal of female protagonists subverts the patriarchal cultural practices that seek to oppress women and in some cases she demonstrates that observing these practices is in vain. Even after the widow has gone through all the rites and rituals, she continues to be referred to as 'umfelokazi', a status that stigmatises her and renders her less of a woman irrespective of her age and abilities because the one man who gave her an identity and status has passed on (Cebekhulu, 2016).

Assuming the role of a widow may be daunting and sombre, however, through the cruel and harsh treatment that comes with widowhood, a widow may re-discover herself. For instance the film Phaniyamma (cited in Katrak, 2006) relays the story of a child widow who is unaware of the restrictions suddenly enforced upon her by tradition. The child's name is Phani which is short for Phaniyamma, the eponymous name of the film. From the tender age of 9, right throughout her childhood she suffered and endured the cruel conventions imposed upon widows. Despite the ill-treatment, Phani evolves into a strong, quiet and wise woman from whom many people sought help and advice. The film asserts a contradictory version of empowerment through her extremely harsh life - for instance, Phani supports a young woman who when suddenly widowed refuses to have her hair cut (Katrak, 2006). She also uses the advantage of her small hands as a midwife to save the lives of several mothers. Phani eventually becomes respected as the voice for the voiceless women in her community. Similarly, Edna Whithead from *Black Widow Society* emerges from an emotionally unstable, glorified housewife to the country's top mining mogul. Nkosazana and Tallulah observe:

To think, just what...fifteen years ago, you were this submissive housewife, living with a man you barely saw, wondering everyday where old whitehead was...'

Which is why what we do matters so much ladies. You two are the seat of my soul... How liberating it is to know that we are doing something that makes a real difference in people's lives (*Black Widow Society* 138 - 139).

Like Phaniyamma, Edna is committed to being a change agent who paves way for young women who have been in her situation to rise up and be the best version of themselves despite reprisals. She encourages them to believe that they are more than capable of being the captains of their destinies and should shy away from waiting for men to come in and save them from distress. Instead, they should be their own heroes.

Edna has learnt to stand on her own two feet and as a result became a self-made woman, who is in charge of her life. She is keen to pass on this tenacity and resilience to other women hence her commitment to the Young Women Academy. This is Makholwa's way of mobilising women of the 21st Century to share their experiences and lessons learnt in order to empower the upcoming generation of women. She emphasises the need for women to pass on the baton to the new generation, so that they may not fall into the same predicament that their predecessors have.

6.9.2 Homosexuality in Postcolonial Feminism

Most contemporary writers avoid some of the controversial issues currently facing the 21st Century woman such as lesbianism. Makholwa, seems to embrace the discourse on this issue. Many ideals of romantic love usually stem from the context of heterosexual and patriarchal social and cultural order, which contradicts the experiences of those who resist the constraints of compulsory heterosexual love (Jackson, 1995).

In *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa depicts one of the protagonists, Nkosazana, as a lesbian. She exposes the challenges that lesbians face, particularly when in the presence of heterosexuals. In the narrative, she voices Nkosazana's view of heterosexuals

following an altercation in which a heterosexual female accused Nkosazana's lover, Lesego, of flirting with her partner who was also heterosexual.

Nkosazana was incensed... This is why she did not like having straight people around her socially. They always felt that their relationships were somehow more authentic and 'real' than gay relationships (*Black Widow Society* 239).

Wanner's narratives such as, *Behind Every Successful Man* (2008), explore issues of same-sex relationships. Wanner's portrayal of a lesbian relationship between Marita and Maria undermines the convention of heteronormative sexuality. She offers lesbian love as an ideal intimacy outside the conventional notions of femininity, without necessarily romanticizing it (Spencer, 2014). She makes use of Maria's story to raise awareness about the dangers that lesbians living in the township face. For instance, in the narrative, Maria is sent to jail for assaulting a man who raped her for being a lesbian. This kind of rape is referred to as 'corrective rape' and is still common in South Africa today.

In most patriarchal societies, 'women have limited powers of sexual negotiation, in conformity with the social values of submission, patience and endurance that characterise ideal femininity' (Diallo, 2004). However, writers such as Makholwa and Wanner (2008) who speak about the modern woman's body and sexual desires, disrupt, undermine and break the silence around traditional constructions of gender and sexuality (Spencer, 2014).

In *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa portrays lesbianism as a sexual preference that does not fall within the parameters of 'accepted' and 'legitimated' forms of sexuality for women. It has not enjoyed visibility even within the postcolonial. Lack of recognition of other manifestations relating to female sexuality is a result of delusions about male-female relationships as informed by patriarchal institutions of religion, tradition and educational systems that suppress knowledge about female bodies and sexuality. It is worth noting however, that women-to-women intimacy is an age-old tradition kept invisible because of harsh prejudices reserved for gays and lesbians whose sexual behaviour is adjudged as aberrant and sinful, which then earns them derogatory social stigma.

Attitude towards this alternative enactment and space for women-to-women love has forced women into secrecy; often camouflaging their love for sisterhood. The secrecy is mostly out of fear for violence.

Makholwa exposes the realities of being lesbian in societies – single and asexual. This deprivation is borne from the assumption that the only socially acceptable form of sexuality belongs within heterosexual marriage. Homosexuality within the postcolonial is always met up with reprisals from patriarchs as well as other women who view such relationships as perverted. However, throughout the text, Makholwa's women suffer massive abuse at the hands of husbands who should give them love and nurture their sexuality. All members of the Triumvirate have one thing in common: their husbands cheat on them and abuse them for personal gain. Makholwa seems to be raising awareness on the alternative space for women to be loved without the compromises that often come with marriage: having to give up their dreams and be domesticated or raising children alone, which then deprives them the opportunities to participate equally in the affairs of the country. She also initiates debates on lesbianism as a worthy topic within both feminist movements and postcoloniality.

The 21st Century woman should participate in these debates for the liberation of women who might be trapped in secret lesbian relationships. Makholwa unmutes the silences in the third world about practices of lesbianism. She puts the lesbianism debate on the agenda of the 21st Century woman to free women from covert means in covering up for their lesbian love against obstinate patriarchy.

The way Makholwa deals with lesbianism in the text, it is only spoken about within safe spaces of women who are enlightened and liberal enough to acknowledge and respect this form of sexuality. She adopts the *modus operandi* of 'invisibility' probably to avoid head-on confrontations that might censure what is meant to be a simple issue of private and intimate love for her protagonist. Her sensitivity arises from common knowledge that breaking the silence or 'coming out' is not without pain and requires courage and support

from family and friends. The safety net afforded Nkosazana in the text is an indication that the 21st Century woman has to promote community, provide counselling and information that will, in turn, encourage self-esteem and self-confidence for women opting for this alternative sexuality.

Nkosazana is a very strong character in the text: a successful and staunch feminist whose position in the WBS has earned her the life other women simply envy. As a practicing attorney, she is a strong litigator; taking criminal and corporate cases and winning them. Unlike other members of the society, she never married, but has on-and-off lesbian relationships. The ladies within her circle have accepted her choice and freely speak about it amongst themselves. At some point, as they settle down for a glass of whisky, Nkosazana proposes a toast, and two other ladies are curious:

Well, Ms Khumalo, I just hope this toast has nothing to do with one of these New Age, bi-curious young ladies that you seem to be so about excited about. Edna Whithead burst out laughing ... (*Black Widow Society* 37).

It is evident from this extract that the ladies do not see Nkosazana's lesbian relationship/s as anything peculiar, but as a voluntary engagement of choice. Makholwa softly introduces lesbianism and seems to suggest that women must first accept it themselves, support one another before they can expect others within patriarchal traditions to follow suit. She is not necessarily advocating lesbianism to the 21st Century woman, but advocates respect for choice, and that difference is not necessarily wrong. However, Nkosazana's announcement shocks the ladies:

No madams. I've actually been thinking about relationships lately, you know...I think I'm ready to settle down with someone, maybe even make a few babies... I've got a gleaming Maserati in my garage, a beautiful home, a fulfilling career but... nobody to share it all with (*Black Widow Society* 37).

Makholwa introduces this contrast to demonstrate that lesbianism is left at a point where it is merely a fantasy that cannot be translated into a well-developed relationship.

Makholwa suggests that this alternative sexuality needs attention. As Thandani (1994) observes in her study on same-sex iconography that: "No attempt is made in looking at the reasons for the construction of lesbian invisibility or researching into histories and languages" (Thandani, 1994:6).

During the national struggles for political independence, women were sometimes burdened with guarding traditions against the colonizer, but even against their personal ambitions and desires. Although postcolonial women writers challenge such 'imposed' roles, they find themselves negotiating and not outright rejecting these regressive traditions. Makholwa's lesbian protagonist can only be her true self around women of her social circle; outside this safe space, she finds herself incurring a heavy cost for daring to transgress 'acceptable' forms of sexuality. This burden of secrecy, in response to negative social judgments on a woman's choice to have lesbian relationship, is not only a deprivation of self-definition and woman autonomy, but also a legitimization of a patriarchal tradition.

On the issue of lesbianism, the 21st Century women should carve their unique theories and not subscribe to the existing theories that rely on the specificity of genders. This way, they potentially drift away from ascribing feminine and masculine qualities as defined, constructed and nurtured by patriarchal institutions. It is evident that the Freudian and Foucauldian understanding and structuring of masochism does not incorporate explicit transgressive nature of women-related issues, including lesbianism.

Makholwa does not place her main protagonist at the centre of lesbianism, but focuses on her apart from her erotic connections with men and presents her in friendly circles with women (and obsessing about their welfare). Talullah is depicted as an atypical mother who remains truthful and committed to the objective of the society: eliminating sources of women's suffering (men).

The only thing Tallulah demonstrates is an unequivocal affection for women and one wonders if such is the issue that the 21st century feminism must resolve. This is so because currently there is thick line between feminism and lesbianism: some African women misconstrue feminism to mean lesbianism and refuse to participate because alternative sexuality is not their portion.

Makholwa does not confront the issue of homophobia head-on. She is not specifically advocating for lesbian sexuality and attendant matters. Instead, she implicitly criticizes heterosexual institutions (marriages) by portraying them as loveless, abusive and a constant source of women's oppression. All her women (Talulah, Thami, Edna, Salome...) suffer common abuse and exploitation in the hands of husbands who use them for their personal needs and then dump them or subject them to constant manipulation.

This criticism implies the need for an alternative form of sexuality that will satisfy the needs and desires of women so that sex is a pleasant engagement to them as well and not duty to the male partner.

Nkosazana's lesbian relationship promises to be an alternative for women who feel unloved in their heterosexual relationships. When Nkosazana resolves to get a man, she is giving in to the pressures that society places on this transgressive sexuality. At some point one gets tired from warding off blows from the cultural communities that have so internalised patriarchal practices that they do not know how to be anything else.

It is upon the 21st Century woman to succinctly define a more compatible relationship between feminism and lesbianism in order to curb polarized debates about sexuality which threatens to divide feminism. Macleod and Durrheim (2002) questions how the points of convergence can be featured into feminist project if feminists are at loggerheads over the nature of sexuality.

6.10 Amanuensis: An Empowering Tool in the Hands of a Post/Colonial Woman Writer

The relationship between David and the amanuensis, and between Le Fleur and his wife Rachel can be associated (Ngwira, 2013). The common factor is that the males request assistance from women to help them articulate and record their ideas. In both cases these women use this platform to subvert men's authority (Ngwira, 2013). On the one hand, Rachael subverts her husband's authority by withholding her services as his scribe, a sentiment enacted by her body. Wicomb uses Rachael to illustrate how women's authority is often systematically "ceded to wifely submission" (Baiada 40) "...her wrist first twitched with pain, refusing to move across the page" (*David's Story* 160).

On the other hand, the amanuensis who was initially appointed to record everything David tells her gradually and actively shapes the direction of the narrative. She confesses to the agency that she redrafted the manuscript before it was published.

Anne McClintock's maintains that "in the chronicles of male nationalism, women ... are all too often figured as mere scenic backdrops to the big-brass business of masculine armies and uprisings" and they "are not seen as independent members of the national community, but as wives responsible to the nation through their service to individual men" (McClintock, 105). The way it is, Rachael works from behind the scenes on a text for which her husband will receive credit. David meant to do the same with his amanuensis but she could not be relegated to the back. The use of a female amanuensis is to dispel the myth that women are supposed to be illogical. In *Conversation*, Wicomb asserts that rationality resides in the feminine (Wicomb, 148).

The Foucauldian notion that "knowledge is not innocent - it is always operated by power" informs Edward Said's famous book *Orientalism* (1978) (Loomba, 1998). In this book, Edward Said explores the traditional trend of Western "construction" of the Orient without consultation; usually distorting facts to advance their own ulterior motives. In most cases the outcomes of this trend depicted the Oriental characters as coward, lazy and uncivilized, while the West is deemed to be culturally sound and civilized (Ambesange, 2016). On a quest to find out about his history and antecedents, David was fully cognisant

of this issue, hence he sought first-hand information from the oriental characters themselves to piece together his past as opposed to consulting texts produced by Europeans.

David meets Thomas, an uneducated hobo and an unnamed receptionist, and between the two, he could only retrieve indigenous knowledge from the hobo. Thomas relays the history of how the Griquas were robbed of their land. At first glance, Thomas may be overlooked or considered a mad man with nothing valuable to say. However, after engaging him David realises that he is indeed a reliable source of information as he is the descendent of one of Captain Kok's right hand men:

That was my own great-grandfather, my very own Oupa Grootjie, strong as anything and a man could do what he liked with an ox. [...] A born voorloper he was, and the faithful, trusted right hand of Captain Kok (*David's Story* 71).

Wicomb's use of irony here is very powerful: the educated female receptionist is empty on matters that should form an integral part of her schooling, instead, it is this 'uneducated, street man (vagrant)' who provides vital information about the Griqua nation. It seems that her education and/or society associates Griqua with 'backwardness' (*David's Story* 23) and she does not want to be painted with the same brush. Wicomb uses David to offer her a platform to have a voice in this story, however she renounces the opportunity. This is probably the reason why she remains unnamed in the text and the uneducated hobo, Thomas is.

Are you a Griqua?

Course not, what you take me for?

There's a Griqua Church here, just like any other church, but I'm Dutch Reformed. Griquas are from the olden times; there aren't any left now. We're all coloured here (*David's Story* 111).

Wicomb highlights the many instances where women failed to seize opportunities to speak up and meaningfully represent the women, instead choosing to speak the masculine language that reduces women to nothing but beautiful objects for use by male counterparts.

Wicomb also climaxes the impact of muteness (often emanating from ignorance) on the part of women such as the unnamed receptionist. She clearly, does not reward such ignorance: the receptionist does not accomplish the attention she was hoping for from David, neither does she gain any approval from her senior in the work-related hotel matters.

Wicomb wants her women to participate fully and shamelessly in the reiteration of their histories, struggles, ambitions and in the construction of their identity/ies. She wants women to interrogate every bit of information they are taught and not be passive interlocutors in the discourse that seeks to reconstruct the 21st Century woman. An interrogative mind will know that: the fact that something is written about, does not make it truthful.

Wicomb illumines the importance of alternative information sources to re-place History textbooks by providing other accounts and points of view that empower the uprooted, the marginalized and oppressed, to reclaim their stories (Ngwira, 2013). Instead of accepting one-sided interpretations, Wicomb urges the next generation of women to seek multi-sided views which they can use to ask relevant questions and form their own identity. Wicomb's fiction works have developmental targets that are realistic and therefore achievable to the universal 21st Century society of women.

When David was asked to write about Dulcie, since he was unable to talk about her, he reluctantly agreed. However, upon submission of his notes it turned out that he had chosen to substitute Dulcie by the historical figure of Saartjie Baartman (Hemer, 2008). He starts off by writing back to Cuvier, the leading scientist of his time, who is mostly known as the one who brought Saartjie Baartman to Europe. Based on sketches of Baartman, Cuvier and his assistant, Henri de Blainville, compared Baartman's anatomy to that of an orang-utan and came to the conclusion that she was the missing link between humans and apes (Gilman 1985, Crais and Scully 2009).

In the text, David takes an opportunity to jeer at Cuvier's ignorant representation of the natural world. "Which he then rightfully came to see as a simplistic act of revenge, the product, to use his phrase, of a mind not fully decolonised" (*David's Story* 34).

Although David has good intentions of writing back to the canon on behalf of the women, he does not represent women meaningfully. He chooses to focus on Baartman, a historic figure and fails to recognize the strong women of his time: Dulcie, for example. David claims that his silence about Dulcie is about 'protecting her' but in essence, he is protecting his male ego that is threatened by Dulcie's involvement in something that used to be exclusively male. Wicomb encourages women to be their own cheer leaders and not wait for men's validation particularly because today's women have access to education and are rising to high positions within various organizations – opportunities that were never afforded to them before. Therefore the woman must be independent; a sentiment expressed by one of the founding members of feminism, Virginia Woolf, when she says "a woman must have money and a room of her own, if she is to write..." (1924).

In the text *Mother to Mother* (1998), Magona writes back to coloniality by allowing Mandisa's grandfather to tell the Xhosa Cattle Killing story in a way that does not ridicule black culture. Magona is known for taking personal stories and elevating them to a national level. She takes a story located in the 17th Century, between 1885 and 1857 at the advent of colonialism in South Africa, (Nkosi, 1998) and resuscitates it in her novel, *Mother to Mother*.

The Xhosa Cattle Killing story is resuscitated and retold to salvage her main female protagonist – Mandisa from self-blame following her son's involvement in the murder of Amy Biehl. She provides Mandisa a new interpretation of her son's crisis to heighten the annoyance white people and apartheid instigated in the indigenous community.

Magona, out of respect for story telling as an art and an earlier form of passing knowledge across generations, affords the space to Tatumkhulu to recount this narrative. The story is different from the way it is presented at school. Magona draws parallels between literary narratives by Westerners about the Orient and the indigenous versions.

As Ashforth (1991:501) posits, the colonial version title the Xhosa Cattle Killing - National Suicide of the Xhosa - already signifies naiveté and ignorance on the part of the Xhosa nation. It does not speak to the nuisance the white people represented in the life of the indigenous. The grandfather speaks back to the canon by providing a recount of the story, highlighting the “desperation of a people long wearied from war...and deeply resentful over their dispossession from the land” (Mda, 2000).

Magona uses this flashback to detail systematic violence and the atrocities that natives suffered even before colonization. It is Tatumkhulu’s version that reveals the fury that the indigenous community felt towards the colonizer, which rendered them susceptible to the course for as long as it promised to drive away ‘the people with hair like silken threads of corn...’ (Magona, 1998:178). In writing back to the cannon, Tatumkhulu sets the record straight against the inconsistencies that pervaded the story through literary misrepresentation by the colonizer. To Magona, it is a restoration of honour to what appeared like a barbaric and stupid move on the part of the ancestors. Magona uses Nongqawuse’s story to ease the burden that Mandisa carries, both on her shoulders and in her heart about the son who murdered Amy Biehl. She equates Mxolisi’s anger to the same ancestral anger that drove them to act ‘irrationally.’ Like his ancestors, Mxolisi is disillusioned over the death of his friends who are shot right in front of him. The same way the Xhosa allowed the ‘perpetrators’ to drive them to poverty and perpetual labour for the coloniser, Magona blames the adults for cheering the boys on and allowing them authority to derail the struggle for liberation into something ugly and beastly – which only devours their own kind and not the coloniser.

The 21st Century woman puts her ear to the ground and is attentive to the voices from the past which provide truer versions of what is being sensationalized. She has a discerning spirit that helps her to distinguish between propaganda and the truth. Most importantly, she will participate in the production of knowledge and not be a passive consumer. Writing to the 21st Century woman is not just art, but art that is used to the advancement of humanity.

However, Spivak alleges that even as postcolonial authors write back to the canon of empire in a way that retells the story from the indigenous point of view, not everything else is recovered. The damage done to the discourse of African culture alone with its reputation cannot be reversed. The same way the story of Saartjie Baartman and Eva Kroota cannot be reversed completely. The shame that goes with Baartman's African features still lingers on through some of the fictional characters wishing they were different – wishing they were Western, like the women they see in Eurocentric literary productions and social media. In essence, Wicomb and Magona encourage the 21st Century women to adopt the necessary gesture to write-back to the canon, even if the effort may not restore the initial glory, it is enough that preconceived ideologies are challenged.

6.11 Conclusion

Makholwa's *Black Widow Society* and Wicomb's *David's Story* are a contribution to the postcolonial writings that have a liberatory and transformative intent, particularly to the previously marginalized women. One important lesson drawn here is that although women appear to be consigned to a position of social helplessness, female characters must be understood as ethical agents faced with choices; they can suffer humiliation and resentment privately, or they may raise their voices; they can forgive their accosters; or they can hit back viciously. Like men, women have these choices available and can exercise them at any point in their lives – consciously.

Women have proven over time that they are more than just wives and mothers. It is longer possible to relegate women to domestic roles. The approximated 21st Century woman is one that declines domesticity, but who claims her rightful place in the liberated South Africa. They should initiate debates that demand recognition of their participation in anti-apartheid struggles. The 21st Century woman is entitled to.

As McHugh (2007) assert, femininity is socially constructed and imposed on women. But Fanonian principle maintains that what is constructed can be deconstructed. The 21st Century woman should engage in deconstructive processes that reverse the binaries about women: from irrational-rational, subjective to objective, passive to active, dependent to independent and many such assumed notions about women and their abilities.

Makholwa and Wicomb subject their female protagonist to the cruelest violations ever: reported gang rapes and infection with HIV, are seen in Dulcie and Salome respectively. However, the authors allow their protagonist to thrive and emerge victorious. Dulcie refuses to return to 'normalcy' even in the post-liberation South Africa.

Since femininity is socially constructed, it can also be constructed if women collectively challenge the assumptions of the postcolonial male writers through their artistic literary productions that portray a reversal of the colonial and patriarchal binaries. It is only through abdicating assumed subordination roles that women like their fellow male citizens, can attain the benefits of a liberated and democratic South Africa.

The 21st Century woman should be conscious of the fact that male and females constantly fighting in what literature calls 'battle of the sexes'. Implied here is that the war is perpetuated and they have a responsibility to hand-over the regalia to the next generation of women to run with into the future. The battle is multifaceted, but Wicomb pinnacles domesticity. Domesticity is one way women come to consider themselves delicate, submissive, frail and all such feebleness associated with femininity.

The authors also caution against the hypocrisy in romantic relationships, where women must constantly prove themselves worthy to be kept. It is as if women must always be on their toes to keep men in their lives. Even if Sally shelves her military accolades and becomes a submissive wife to David, it does not stop him from lusting after other women – Dulcie, for example. The same Dulcie whom he described as not pretty, not feminine, not like a woman at all (*David's Story* 80).

The relationships adopt an ambivalent nature where on the one hand the man hates the woman and love her on the other. It is this instability in marriages that send women to depression, insanity and sometimes suicide. Wicomb and Makholwa envisage the 21st Century woman who will have a worthy course to drive and determined to stay on that course undeterred by a man in her life. Once the woman has self-actualised it becomes irrelevant whether or not there is a man in her life: she does not centre her life on him.

The 21st Century woman challenges maintenance of traditions which are in disharmony with the changing political and social climate. It takes the marginalized women a radical presence and interaction with domineering and oppressive traditional practices to demolish or convert them.

Affordance of participation opposite to women in spaces that used to be exclusively male, constitute deconstruction (as according to Frantz Fanon) and is also a feminist stance. As seen in Wicomb's *David's Story*, war is not a source of pain for women, the male comrades are. Through war women have been violated sexually. In post liberation states, women still submit their bodies to their husband. For women the war does not end.

Other than sexual violence, women also suffer physical and emotional abuse within intimate relationships. Compounding the problem for women is the fact that institutions of justice are also not receptive to women's grievances. These institutions, represented by the courts, churches, TRC, Police stations are patriarchal and perpetuate abuse to women.

The authors bring these issues to light so that the 21st Century woman should participate in reconstructing them so that they become woman-friendly. The reason women stay in abusive relationships is absences of support outside of them.

Wicomb seems to suggest that women of the 21st Century should reunite history and in the process, they should search for sources out of sight because stories about women

and their achievements are often not reported or dismissed as something unimportant – ‘who would want to read a story like that? It not a proper history at all (*David’s Story* 99). Women warriors, heroes can only be resuscitated through a female initiated literature against concerted efforts to keep them in the background.

The texts show a meeting point between feminism and postcoloniality and portray constant gender struggles between men and women with the intention to sustain and deconstruct the status quo, respectively. Makholwa welcomes male feminists but advises that they be adequately informed and nurtured so that their support advantages the movement.

The inadequacy of language to articulate the plight of woman – as in *David’s Story* for example, confirms the idea that representation of the subaltern status, falls into the mercy of another dominating power. Implied here is that women’s studies towards self-actualisation and independence are counter-acted by resistive institutions over whom such independence prevails.

Whilst Wicomb’s narrative illumines the inadequacy of representation in articulating women’s horrific experiences, it is important to observe that such suppression is not actively done (in a way that would invite down right resistance) but rather quietened through external factors that silently come into play. Postcoloniality and feminism seek to protect strong women that are targeted by male domination and suppression – women who dare to challenge domination.

The sisterhood that Makholwa portrays through the *Black Widow Society* transcends boundaries set by patriarchal systems: it is not about women lamenting the inequalities of the apartheid system or and/or consequences they suffer in a patriarchal society , but one that involves practical elimination (through planned murder) of perpetrators of gender violence in this form of husbands and male competitors. Makholwa’s level of sisterhood implies that the time for negotiations is over, and the 21st Century woman should claim their rightful position and meet up violence with violence.

In *David's Story*, Wicomb criticizes women for staying away from their roots. She envisages the 21st Century woman who seeks to know and reconcile with her indigenous self, irrespective of how such origins would further marginalize her. Implied here is that liberation of indigenous communities.

Makholwa implies the same: although her female protagonists are educated and liberated, they unite to fight for liberation of fellow women from the exiling nature of patriarchy. She also cautions women not to compromise womanhood for motherhood. The two roles can easily be observed if the societal institutions allow women to be women – whether or not they procreate.

The motherhood platform can be used – mimicking compliance – but it should be used in furtherance of women issues including support for women who dare to deviate from 'acceptable' traditions of a patriarchal society.

The 21st Century woman is aware that democracy does not necessarily deliver goods for women – they must not be deceived by accolades such as 'mother of the nation' and assume that the struggle has ended. The feminist agenda is far from realized, and the younger generation of women should avail themselves to the course of action. Issues pertaining to women and liberation from dominance should be attended to without compromise. These include widowhood, homosexuality, single mothers, divorced and childless women.

Wicomb envisages the 21st Century women as the one who embraces her Africanness: steatopygia is an African feature, and African 21st Century women should accept it enthusiastically and willingly. In essence, Wicomb discourages the constant efforts by African woman to emulate European looks and upholding them as a trend.

CHAPTER 7

MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This study interrogated South African women writers' fiction as a potential platform and instrument for the development and empowerment of the 21st century woman for active participation in a democratic South Africa. The texts interrogated are produced by South African women writers of the postcolonial period.

The main question the study sought to answer is whether or not fiction produced within a apartheid environment by women of the post-colonial period envisaged the dawn of democracy, and whether the writers articulated the roles women would play in that space. Providing answers to the main question would dis/confirm women's writings as an alternative space and the accoutrement of resources seminal to developing and empowering women for meaningful participation within the postcolonial South African polity. In order to be representative of the women writers, the choice of authors recognised literary contributions by women writers from different racial, social and political groupings according to Statistics South Africa (2014).

The study appropriated postcolonial theory and perspectives of postcolonial feminism in interrogating fiction as a social and creative platform that could transform unequal power relations by inscribing qualities women should nurture to fully participate in a country whose liberation they helped to bring about. It is premised on the understanding that fiction produced by women writers is by itself a genre that could epitomise, through a selection of themes and protagonists of their fiction world, the qualities women should nurture to fully participate in a democratic dispensation. Themes, perspectives and issues generated from the literary works were interpreted through a subjective understanding and interrogation of the lives of women in South Africa. This chapter deliberates on the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the initial research question and related objectives.

In order to answer the question, the thesis analysed a selection of primary texts by female authors in postcolonial South Africa, specifically *The Lying Days* by Nadine Gordimer; *Daughters of the Twilight* by Farida Karodia; *Mother to Mother* by Sindiwe Magona, *David's Story* by Zoe Wicomb and *Black Widow Society* by Angela Makholwa. To respond to the research question, the sub-questions are highlighted here to indicate what significant and novel insight were reached on each through text analyses.

7.1 How relevant is women's literature to the socio-political entanglement and situation in South Africa?

To answer this question, I outlined major themes explored by such literature to assess their relevance to the socio-political situation in South Africa. This ultimate chapter focuses mainly on themes that stood out from the study as relevant to the research question; it does not exhaust all the themes that could be extracted from the fiction works studied. For this study, the selected themes include identity, patriarchy, motherhood, sisterhood and female sexuality. Other themes related to postcolonialism (ambivalence, marginality, and racial prejudice) are discussed in 7.3 of this chapter.

7.1.1 Identity

South Africa is a diverse nation comprising people from various cultural and political viewpoints. All these differences play a major role in shaping the collective and individual identities of South Africans. The texts emphasise the need for intellectual liberation, which should empower the 21st Century woman to take the lead and represent themselves in literary productions lest they (and fellow indigenes) are misrepresented. Through the examined writing spaces, it is also evident that the writing rights for women were hard-earned; women who strove to inscribe specific subject positions of agency under apartheid had to robustly carve space and voice to attain such positioning. The 21st Century woman is encouraged to embody the kind of identity portrayed in these works of art which should develop and empower her towards combative and assertive roles as participants of a democratic South African nation. But in so doing, it is important for the 21st Century woman to sustain an identity uncontaminated by preconceived ideas.

Karodia illuminates the struggle of Indian women in defining and carving their own identity as a nation and as individuals. They identified themselves as the 'hated' nation in South Africa because of their origins and their not-so-white complexion. Both Karodia and Magona afford opportunities for women to close the apartheid fissures by creating their own political identities as women irrespective of their races and cultural associations.

Exploring the theme of an emerging identity, Gordimer places Helen, her female protagonist, on multi-cultural platforms with heightened intercultural relations in order to transform her into the ideal required in a new democratic dispensation - a more self-actualised and socially conscious woman of the 21st century. Although the resulting identity does not necessarily resemble that of her current circle of friends, it neither resembles the shrewd Afrikaner she once was; it is a new hybrid identity that characterises a stoic personality, carved for active participation as a citizen of a democratic South Africa.

7.1.2 Female Sexuality

Wicomb sacrifices Dulcie's voice and sexuality in order to create a participatory space for women in the liberation movement. It is through this participation that Dulcie earns the rank of Commander in Chief for the military wing of the African National Congress, uMkhonto weSizwe. In this way, the woman has made a mark and leaves an identity legacy for the 21st Century women. They can emulate the identity and reap the benefits of Dulcie's sacrifices without going through the same torture again.

The conventional and censored expressions as well the socio-cultural locations of the female body politics continue to construct and control female sexuality in postcolonial regimes. However, from the representation of her female protagonist, Wicomb generates a new identity of woman: the avant-garde who defies traditional palimpsest of women as destitute and cramped into categories of mother and wife roles.

The unpleasant sight of a woman body tortured through rape and assault represents shame through female sexuality that eats away the drive to want to be anything else.

The objectified and tortured female bodies generate a sense of disgrace, peeling away all layers of human dignity. The selected writers join in the fulfilment of a feminist agenda through an artistic redemption of dignity that they afford their protagonists by allowing them to make them capable of rejuvenation after the shame.

A woman's sexual and emotional orientation is critical to her identity because it affects all aspects of her life. Defending the right to choose a sexual identity is paramount in the feminist agenda. Karodia revives Yasmin from acute depression whose genesis is the rape incident. Similarly, Gordimer also allows Helen to date across the races, against her mother's and communal restraints. This sexual liberation is what the 21st Century woman needs in this more urgent bid for the recuperation of agency.

7.1.3 Patriarchy

Within the context of this study, patriarchy colludes with, and is reinforced by colonisation in aggravating the women's plight, particularly by disempowering them economically and politically. The study focuses on cultural and literary productions that influence decolonisation from not only indigenous and colonial patriarchy, but also from other forms of domination.

The writers do not only portray the collusion between colonial and indigenous patriarchy and how they worsen women's predicament; they also afford their protagonists opportunities to resist patriarchy – both colonial and indigenous in nature. The resistance of womenfolk is covertly done from within the system and not necessarily as overtly as staged by male protagonists.

In *The Lying Days*, Mary Seswayo goes to school and she is quite aware of the impact of schooling in her personal development and in the struggle towards liberation. Her reference to the Shaws as cannibals indicates that she rates herself highly against the white community. This resistance is not against cultural (indigenous) patriarchy but against colonial powers as an extension and consolidation of patriarchy.

Makholwa, in *Black Widow Society*, adds significantly to the discourse of resistance: that if precision, caution or strategy is not observed, the risks increase and human life is threatened. She does not exempt her female protagonists from suffering the consequences of adopting violent measures to deal with their situations. The 21st Century woman should self-preserve, not because she is a woman, but because subtle forms of resistance are more productive than their Fanonian approaches. For this reason, Makholwa allows justice to prevail for her women who adopt violent means toward resisting patriarchy. This consolidates her affirmation that it does not necessarily take physical strength, but mental maturity to combat injustice, including patriarchy.

In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Karodia shows that domination, even in public institutions, does not necessarily render women totally powerless and deprived of rights, influence and resources (Lerner, 1989:293). When Meena could not gain admission to a better school, Abdul accepts this outcome, but Delia, through her understanding of segregation, devises the means to manipulate the same system to get Meena reclassified and therefore admitted at a Coloured school in spite of her Indian status.

Wicomb as well, in *David's Story*, gives Dulcie the accolades that women do not usually attain, particularly in the army. The position of a commander in chief in the army for a woman protagonist is to the acme of achievement against institutionalised patriarchy. The male comrades may complain and reject her authority, but the reason she earns the title in the first place can be traced to her determination and hard work. Wicomb prepares the 21st Century woman to work hard if she wishes to contest this form of patriarchy. In the end it is Dulcie, through fortitude and willpower, who reminisces the harsh conditions of a military camp. This victory is not only for Dulcie but for all the women who hesitate to take responsibilities because of eerie hangovers of self-doubt and inferiority complexes constructed through patriarchal practices.

The selected authors allow their female protagonists to own their private spaces and resist private patriarchy as the “main site of women’s oppression” (Sultana, 2011:9).

Traditionally the household is the chief source of women subordination as it domesticates and appropriates women’s labour. The selected texts portray women as heads of families (Delia in *Daughters of the Twilight*), Mrs Shaw (in *The Lying Days*) and Mandisa (in *Mother to Mother*). These are women of stature, who are in control of their private spaces and their partners heed their lead. One very important factor that often subordinates women to male domination is lack of resources. This lack entrenches material dependence of women. The texts examined emphasise self-sustainability in order to redeem women from the breadwinner ideology that privileges men, on which basis they oppress women.

The study concludes that South Africa is not exempt from patriarchal practices – both in private and public institutions where women are victims of subordination. This form of oppression is manifest through simple actions such as restraint from travel, lobola, unequal salaries, religious beliefs and negative portrayal of women in the media.

To raise the 21st women’s position, patriarchy should be targeted and assiduously resisted. It is impossible to resist patriarchy if one is not aware of how it operates. Oftentimes patriarchy parades as culture or tradition and submission to these is an automatic compromise to autonomy and freedom from patriarchy. The 21st Century woman should renegotiate cultural practice, in private and public spaces, so that the pre-conceived patriarchies should not define who they are or what they can do.

7.1.4 Motherhood

Motherhood is a socio-economic institution constructed within historic time and spaces. The selected postcolonial writers unmask the glory that is often projected as motherhood. They also deviate from the colonial female ideals that uphold the notion of ‘good wives and good mothers’ which compels women to abandon their dreams and aspirations in place of the welfare of family. The authors also lament the disheartening factor that although women compromise their personal growth and aspirations, these sacrifices are

usually not reciprocated. Instead, motherhood becomes another institution that subjects women to constant manipulation and oppression.

Magona (*Mother to Mother*) urges the 21st Century woman to prioritise self-actualisation so that her identity is not solely anchored on her role as a wife and mother.

The texts also highlights the African philosophy that 'it takes a village to raise a child.' Magona and Karodia advocate for collectivism as opposed to individualism hence when Yasmin in *Daughters of the Twilight* abandons her baby, her family steps in to raise the baby. These authors illustrate how giving birth does not necessarily make one a mother - motherhood extends beyond the biological ties and obligations. Equally, when Mandisa in *Mother to Mother*, is distraught because of her son's involvement in the death of a white woman, the neighbours remind her that they are equally affected (as other mothers) and have come to 'cry with her.'

7.1.5 Sisterhood

The texts demonstrate to 21st Century woman how true sisterhood transcends contending factors such as race, class and religion. The texts also warn that these sisterly collaborations do not just happen: they require nurturing and sometimes compromises. Although the 21st Century women differ in their economic, social and political status, (and other dimensions), these differences should necessitate a circle of interdependence amongst them, not competition. They should also be reminded that sisterhood does not go without challenges but the women should always find solace in one another. The 21st Century woman appreciates sisters within her reach; listening and growing from the narratives of development and emergence from a ruthless and entrenched patriarchy.

The concept of sisterhood needs to be redefined in order to dispel the myth that women are natural enemies. Therefore, the 21st Century woman is called upon to create her own definition of sisterhood that transcends archived sentiments and limitations related to asserting being-in-totality that should drive a sustained feminist movement. The appeal is that they embrace each other's struggles and forge unity in spite of differences. The works explored in this study project the potential to transform women into self-sufficient human beings who refuse to be social appendages of men and children.

The texts affirm the shift from crafting women as mere objects to projecting self-assured, independent and assertive subjects.

On the question of reconciliation with sisters who were perpetrators of injustices to the 'Third World' sisters, Magona suggests that the perpetrator should first repent before any talks on forgiveness and reconciliation. It is as if sisterhood, though a necessary connection amongst women, cannot be negotiated if differences (in this case, racial) have not been addressed. In relation to Mandisa particularly, the collective construction of sisterhood is inhibited by the fact that the colonial sister enslaves the indigenous sister: Mrs Nels could not allow Mandisa any time-off for her to raise her own children, instead she lived her own fully at the other's expense.

7.2 What agency do writers assign their protagonists?

The biological differences between men and women have long been used as a justification for forcing them into different social roles which limit and shape their attitudes and behaviours. Women and their role in the family unit have evolved immensely throughout the years. Literature shows how the early 1960s concluded the so-called "Golden Age of the Family" characterised by high marriage and birth rates, at relatively young ages, few divorces and low prevalence of non-traditional family forms (Oláh, Richter & Kotowska, 2014).

Contemporary authors portray women as being more independent, even though they are often condemned when their female protagonists take on male characteristics such as aggression, ambition and assertiveness. These authors include the likes of Zoe Wicomb, in *David's Story* who depicts Dulcie, the female protagonist as having superpowers that are equal, and at times beyond, that of a man. Karodia's Yasmin, in *Daughters of the Twilight* walks out on her baby to explore the greater world out there, a typical chore for a man to do. And in *Black Widow Society*, the powerful character of Tallulah breaks the mould of female representation in literature as she wields and embodies political and economic power. She is revered by her community and has connections that span the globe. She uses these connections to evade (in) justice.

The books examined in this study span from the 1950s unto the 2000s and show how women's roles within the family evolved. In the 1950s men were perceived as the more superior gender. Women were assigned the role of 'nurturer' which included duties such as cooking, cleaning, raising children and other home-based chores. This can be attributed to the patriarchal orientation which dictated over family structures, court systems, churches, schools and marriages.

From the texts examined, women make major decisions within the homes and the men only held the position of 'head' of the household (in principle). The women come up with solutions whilst the men are relegated to the background. This can be seen in the roles of the various women portrayed across the texts i.e. Mrs. Shaw in *The Lying Days*; Delia in *Daughters of the twilight*; Mandisa (and her mother) in *Mother to Mother*; Dulcie and Rachel in *David's Story*; and Tallulah in *Black Widow Society*.

These women are portrayed as strong protagonists in control of their households and of public matters. The women's strength is a demonstration to the 21st Century woman's innate leadership skills which they can deploy to the development of self and others. These women who choose to be stay-at-home mothers are leaders in their own right.

The texts conscientise the 21st Century woman to the potential she has to influence situations (private and public spaces) in her favour and be the voice of reason in the face of adversity. Mama, from *Mother to Mother* convinces some of her male neighbours to help a lady who had just given birth to twins. Similarly, Delia in *Daughters of the Twilight* demonstrates emotional maturity and deals with forced removals that are sanctioned on their house whilst Abdul collapses in denial.

Women who are mothers within the 21st Century are advised to embrace their role of being the glue that keeps the family together despite all the challenges facing families of the century. The authors place their women protagonists in trying situations to demonstrate the resilience and tenacity required for meaningful participation in a democratic South Africa.

The texts studied refocus the feminist intent to liberate women from the colonial and indigenous patriarchy. They portray women's roles beyond just the functional as home-keepers, caretakers, gatherers, children-bearers and as objects of desire for the menfolk. The study reveals that as women become wives, sisters and daughters of men, they fulfil certain expectations endowed by patriarchy, specifically submission and subordination.

The 21st Century woman is cautioned against patriarchal influence on the female body image through control and definition of beauty; controlling the mobility of women; exerting violence and constructing social norms that dictate women's role and status within respective communities.

Patriarchy has played a significant role in influencing body image as it strives to exercise control by defining what beauty is, controlling the mobility of women, exerting violence and constructing social norms that impact on women's lived experiences. A woman's body is a contested terrain in contemporary societies, where battles for control take place.

Tradition, particularly African, has accustomed women to molding themselves according to expectations defined by men. Women are made to feel "less than" compared to other women in every physical way such as age, height, weight, hair, teeth and voice. However, it is important to note that if a woman's only social currency is her body, then it is inevitable that other women become threats. The fiction works by women writers of the 21st Century play a significant role in redefining what is ideal and acceptable according to Afrocentric conventions so that the women feel secure about their African selves.

The 21st Century women are reminded not to submit to judgment, ridicule and humiliation by their male partners or fellow women who subscribe to patriarchal mentalities just because they are not aware of the power they have in their own right. Isa's happiness (in *The Lying Days*) does not depend on a man in her life, unlike Helen who feels ashamed that she does not measure up to Paul's expectations and is constantly worried by the

attention that Paul receives from other women. Similarly, Dulcie (in *David's Story*) is comfortable in her khaki (men-like) dress despite the disapproval of male comrades.

Gordimer warns the 21st Century woman about insecure men like Paul (In *The Lying Days*), who, threatened by a woman's intellect, go out of their way to make such women feel inadequate, less than what they really are in order to have them subordinated. The 21st Century women do not have to dim their light so that men will not have to feel insecure about themselves.

The war on women's bodies ranges from acts of extreme violence to regulatory bills against 'indecent dressing.' Dulcie from *David's Story* is a perfect demonstration of the 'war over the woman's body' as she is physically tormented by her fellow male colleagues in order to break her spirit and to keep her in her place. They try to get her to commit suicide but, being the epitome of strength, she does not succumb. David, instead, is driven to suicide due to a guilty conscience over the inhumane acts of torture he participated in.

The triumph of women amidst adversities is a demonstration that strength is not always measured in the physical but also manifests through willpower, resilience and tenacity. Dulcie goes through several horrors including rape and still she does not give in to her enemies. Yasmin from *Daughters of the Twilight* is also raped by Cobus but emerges a victor. These horrid acts, still continuing in South Africa today, reduce women to sexual objects. The fiction works by South African women writers of the post-liberation South Africa redeem women from victimhood while apportioning agency to these same women.

The texts have the potential to challenge the earlier portrayal of woman as either the Madonna or the whore creating a dichotomy which is still reflected in contemporary works of art and literature leading to the creation of the binary virgin/whore. Instead the women, for example Nkosazana (in *Black Widow Society*), adopt alternative sexualities. The 21st Century is a temporal and spatial topos where these women feel free about her sexuality – even against the traditional expectations for her to be chaste, virgin and asexual.

The 21st Century women writers such as Makholwa in *Black Widow Society* challenge this notion of women as asexual. Tallulah is portrayed as a self-made woman who commands tremendous political and economic power. She explores her sexuality through her engagements with younger men. In addition, Nkosazana explores alternative sexuality through lesbianism. The 21st Century woman therefore takes full control of her body and does not allow patriarchy to dictate over it.

In *Black Widow Society*, Mzwakhe goes from a 'somewhat feminist' to falling right into the trap of categorising women into distinct binaries i.e. good/bad and whore/angel without allowing room for a combination of the two. He starts off criticizing men who abuse women, but ends up killing the one woman he loved, labelling her a 'cold bitch.' Therefore, despite progress in deconstructing patriarchy and promoting feminism, the derogatory binaries still persist. This poses a challenge for the 21st Century women to continue running with the mandate of feminism and reversing the binaries that reduce their status.

The roles played by female characters show the evolution of women through struggle. Patriarchy still plays a major role on how women turn out but contemporary writers are making great strides in doing away with gender stereotyping. Women like Dulcie (*David's Story*) and Yasmin (*Daughters of the Twilight*) have paid the price and the 21st Century woman should reap the proceeds from the suffering by their female predecessors. They should know that they are legitimate beneficiaries of the freedoms attained by their predecessors.

Because they are endowed differently, women are encouraged to embrace this difference and capitalise on the strengths instead of conforming to patriarchal prescripts dictated by society or lose themselves in an effort to gain favour and acceptance. Indeed the 21st Century women are portals to life in their procreation role but that is not all they are good for. By virtue of being favoured by this natural process, they have the leverage to influence future generations on the values and norms that they envision. However, if the 21st Century woman decides not to have children or even get married, such as Nkosazana

that should be equally an ideal that the woman should protect.

The authors also assign the responsibility on the 21st Century woman to reach out to one another through global sisterhood. This responsibility is executed through sisterhood. The texts examined in this study all present sisterhood with a variety of impediments in the form of race, class, locations, political affiliations and marital status.

In *The Lying Days*, the sisterhood transcends racial boundaries between Mary and Helen. However, Helen does not consult with Mary who is the 'other' on how best to be a sister to her and this lack of consultation turns out to be a total misrepresentation of the sister's interest. Although the sisterhood is not fully exploited, their relationship gives hope to the 21st Century women, especially those coming from different races on how to communicate effectively with the 'others' in order to reach common ground on how to move forward with the liberation mandate.

The women in *Daughters of the Twilight* and *Mother to Mother* are subjected to injustices through relocations which seek to unify white people at the expense of blacks. Through it all they hold onto one another through shared activities such as cooking and talking about their children, it is this sisterhood that sees them through the difficulties they find themselves in.

Sisterhood and collaboration are dominant motifs in *Mother to Mother* and *Black Widow Society*. Magona's female characters all have someone they can talk to in times of trouble. Growing up, Mandisa has Nono to confide in and when she is all grown up and goes through the most difficult time of her life, she has the support of her neighbours. Makholwa's female protagonists are robust women who actively solve their problems as a collective; an injury to one woman, is an injury to all. They help one another rise above challenges and take charge of the direction that their lives will take.

The lesson that the 21st Century woman should learn is that there is strength in numbers (collectivism). They should not see each other as contenders but as collaborators, for great things happen when women collaborate.

7.3 Analysis of personal lives of the writers

The texts analysed here portray the challenges encountered by women during the postcolonial era and the transitional period to democracy. These challenges are not only confined to domesticity and the perceived roles of women in society but extend to the writing space as well; women writers were not held in high regard in the male dominated field which was largely informed by patriarchal ideologies. Literary commentary and critique in most postcolonial nations focus on writings by males, prompting feminists such as Boehmer (2005) to critique the misrepresentation of women by male writers. Smith (2008) states that writing and earning remuneration was forbidden for women because it was considered a violation of feminine good manners and morality.

The patriarchal environment alienated the intellect of women as it had them relegated to domestic roles. However, the twentieth century saw the genesis of recognition and acceptance of female writers in literature as the first female Nobel Prize in literature was awarded. Women writers such as Nadine Gordimer, Farida Karodia, Zoe Wicomb, Sindiwe Magona and Angela Makholwa defy the dominant cultural and patriarchal philosophies. Their stories portray the evolution of women, from their captivity by patriarchal institutions in society to their emancipation and the deconstruction of these patriarchal institutions. For the 21st Century woman, the life stories of these authors are a manual for navigating and overcoming various challenges encountered by women in a predominantly patriarchal and prejudiced world, challenges that threaten their feminism and womanhood for the 21st Century woman.

Nadine Gordimer's *The Lying Days* is an autobiography written in the 20th Century. Gordimer constructs her protagonists using her experiences as a white young woman in apartheid South Africa. These struggles become Gordimer's prism of her identity and they are depicted through Helen Shaw. As Helen comes of age, she is awakened to the African life around her. She gets involved with young blacks, leading to complicated relationships and fissures in culture.

Gordimer's writing propels modernisation where writing is permeated by political statements and positioning. She becomes a political activist through her writing and uses it as an outlet for her disgruntlement with the apartheid government. The multifaceted patriarchies determining and shaping the future of women in colonial situations are significantly interrogated in her work, seeking to equip the 21st woman with the necessary negotiation skills for her independence. The most singular objective throughout is that of crafting an identity for herself in a patriarchal society.

Gordimer's exasperation with the status quo compels her to join the liberation struggle. She cannot participate in physical combat but she takes up the 'mighty' pen instead and writes about the political injustices surrounding her. Gordimer awakens the 21st Century woman to the different platforms of combat and resistance. She demonstrates to the 21st Century woman that physical weakness is not a hindrance for there are other means available for destabilising the status quo.

Farida Karodia's *Daughters of the Twilight* also finds motivation from politics, mainly in her opposition to the apartheid regime. Her concerns in particular are the themes of race and identity. Karodia is of mixed race therefore she identifies with the struggles of the black female body. Coloured women were not 'pure' whites therefore they were discriminated against and segregated because of their hybridity. Like Gordimer, she critiqued the apartheid government through her writing and was exiled to Canada where she continued writing. Her creative writing communicated the distresses of women in those unfavourable political situations. She riveted her gaze on colonialism, patriarchy and its oppressive attributes and aimed to reposition and advance the woman in the face of patriarchy and other oppressive practices.

Karodia's work moves women of colour from the periphery towards the centre as the marginalised woman acquires a voice. She desists from portraying the woman as a passive victim. Karodia achieves this by narrating her story through the youngest female protagonist in the novel (fourteen year old Meena).

Pamela Jooste, in *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, also uses a child protagonist as a narrator. This narrative technique of a child who matures into an adult narrator allows writers to express multiple viewpoints and sustain an innocent eyeball technique that offers the undiluted story without judgment or partiality. These viewpoints are often a reflection of the writer's attitude to the narrative and in turn, influence the reader's attitude. This allows Karodia to express various experiences of women, from Meena's childhood to the point where she is forced into adulthood when she mothers Yasmin's child. With Farida Karodia's work emerges the 21st Century woman who is in control of her body and whose identity is free of the influence by patriarchal ideas.

Zoë Wicomb extends Farida Karodia's identity of women of colour through her exploration of Coloured identity under the apartheid regime in South Africa in *David's Story*. Wicomb draws inspiration from her own experiences; her diasporic identity enables her to identify with her protagonists as she advocates for women's voices to be heard. Wicomb places women's corporeal bodies at the centre of the text which connects to wider issues of identity, racism and black/coloured womanhood. Women's bodies are sites of abuse, discrimination, violence and traditional stereotypical mentalities. Black women's bodies in particular are repositories of the history of a black woman as etched in the atrocious display of Saartjie Baartman.

David's Story allows women to rewrite their history, sexuality, perception of their bodies and social status by placing Dulcie as a leader in a war zone dominated by males. This representation of a woman leader challenges tradition and the males respond violently through abuse, disrespect and condescension towards Dulcie. Spivak (2012) criticises the abuse and marginalisation of women and advocates for a revision of the discourse of women in a postcolonial space.

Wicomb uses Dulcie to project the resistance to patriarchy performed by women thereby encouraging the future woman to take control of their own destinies. In the end, Dulcie dies but she is a hero in her death, symbolising victory for women and the fall of patriarchy

while her male counterpart succumbs to his guilty conscience and commits suicide.

The text raises awareness in the 21st Century woman, that in as much as resistance can be achieved through literature and other platforms, without actions supporting it, this is in vain. Dulcie refuses to be relegated to domesticity after the war as she chooses to resist motherhood. Her actions should not be viewed as failure as she was well within her rights to choose what suited her. *David's Story* is a call upon the 21st Century woman to actively participate in processes and procedures (for instance, policy making) that protect their rights in a democratic country.

Mother to Mother by Sindiwe Magona concretises the victory attained by women in *David's Story*, for example, Dulcie's refusal to be domesticated. Magona's story is inspired by her own hardships as a woman: she had to pull herself from her position as a domestic worker to a school teacher and eventually becoming a renowned author. Magona writes therefore from a domestic and political experience. She tactfully assumes a feministic standpoint with an African perspective in conveying the marginalisation of women in Black societies and the country as a whole. Magona gives the 21st Century woman the mandate to overhaul cultural and patriarchal hegemony as she propagates the transformation of the African woman into an emancipated, independent and self-assured person with the ability to survive in an environment of her own creation.

In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa is the protagonist who symbolises an African woman, fully transformed after the domineering parochial institutions in society have dictated to her entire existence. Magona rediscovers the woman's body and raises a 21st Century woman who is not intimidated by a husband expectant of sex, food and a well maintained household. This new woman reclaims her body and liberates herself from mistreatment and male dominance.

Black Widow Society by Angela Makholwa presents a fully developed and evolved woman of the 21st Century. As a Black woman writer, Makholwa embodies emancipation as she is the first woman to write crime fiction in South Africa. She presents new attitudes

towards tradition and its patriarchal systems that are informed by gender, power hierarchies and dictatorship. Her fiction is written in the postcolonial period as a result her concern is the role and place of the woman post-independence.

Makholwa's writing presents a paradigm shift from the 20th Century woman whose life was shaped by preconceived patriarchal and traditional ideas. She destabilises the centre by allowing her three protagonists (Edna Whithead, Nkosazana Khumalo and the Tallulah Ntuli) to obtain power and wealth. Hers is a new perspective about what truly defines a woman and the essence of such womanhood. In a patriarchal society, women are often understood and categorised into the binaries: angel/demon or virgin/ whore and there can be no middle ground (Murray, 2016). However, as the reader encounters Marie's character, one can deduce that she is not a bad person. She simply finds herself in a bad situation and as a result, connects to her 'demonic' side to resolve an issue for a sister. Therefore, it is very naïve for society to categorise women into discrete boxes, instead they should realise that women can straddle the binaries.

Makholwa's women attain the independence that colonised nations yearned for: liberating the 21st Century woman from the constraints of patriarchy and related forms of abuse and oppression. The woman Makholwa ushers into the 21st Century is free to negotiate her place at home and in society. She has the liberty to choose what sacrifices to make in order to find fulfilment, inside and outside the home (corporate world). Makholwa's fiction encourages the 21st Century woman to seek self-fulfilment, independence and self-actualisation without validation from her male counterparts.

7.4 The Writing Spaces for Selected Authors

It is evident that the selected authors employed their writing talents as deconstructive tools in opposing the injustices of racism, patriarchy and marginalisation. The authors allocated their female protagonists roles as girl children, mothers, wives, writers and as leaders in their own right. The selected women writers have had to strike a balance between conforming to the already set literary norms and a deliberate deviation from those standards. In so doing the writers did more than just bringing feminine qualities to

the body of established male texts. Gordimer, for example gave all the authority and control in the family to her female protagonist, Mrs Shaw. The same is true for Dehli in *Daughters of the Twilight*, Mandisa in *Mother to Mother*, Dulcie in *David's Story* and Tallulah in *Black Widow Society*.

For the selected writers, observing the responsibility to write involved compromises, willpower and fortitude. They have measured up to the task and remained resolute through representation of women in their fiction. Like other writers of the postcolonial period, their work was not without challenges and compromises. Gordimer for example, decided that if objective writing calls for alienation from cultural community and family, then she should liberate herself from the comfort and security that her home and community offered her and open herself to other cultures. Similarly, Farida Karodia and Sindiwe Magona also wrote during an apartheid era where reportage on the unrests were made by male writers and journalists. Karodia and Magona had to leave South Africa for Canada and America respectively to evade censorship which saw many texts by black writers banned from circulation in the preservation of white supremacy.

The texts used in this study represent revolutionary writing expressing discontent with the apartheid regime. They also confront issues of patriarchy: Karodia quietened her male protagonists. They are muted for the entire text, if they try, it is without any authority or they are ridiculed in the process. Magona demonstrated a robust creativity by pulling Mandisa's story out of the TRC structures and giving it the attention it deserves as fiction. This is another form of literary resistance that epitomises women's issues as worthy of attention against the overwhelming masculinity. Equally, when Wicomb writes about participation in the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), she employs an amanuensis. This is not only to dispel the myth that women are illogical, but to afford the silenced subalterns a strong voice that reports truthfully about women, thereby deconstructing the impressions about women that male literature often constructs. Makholwa takes extremes by writing crime fiction based on a female hero with all the qualities of literary attributes, including a flaw in character which leads to her downfall later.

7.5 Fiction works by South African women-writers: Are they aligned to postcolonial theory?

After examining the contribution of fiction works by South African women in the approximation of the 21st Century woman, the same texts are evaluated on the extent to which they are postcolonial in their approach to fiction. To do this, features of coloniality as outlined in the theoretical framework of this study, are teased out. Two ideas that surface repeatedly in post-colonial literature and theory are representation and resistance. All forms of resistance against white supremacy (colonial practice) are met with opposing resistance in the form of reprisals from family and brutality from white government and partners.

The selected authors allow the marginalised to gain retaliatory power, which confirms the rhizomatic nature of power: it is not monolithic, but forms an under-surface network that produces offshoots in places other than the centre. This way people may appear powerless, meek and helpless, but once the limits of humiliation have been exceeded, the offshoots gain power and the resulting resistance can be subtle, spectacular or outright radical.

Within a South African context, resistance to white domination often resulted in imprisonment or death at the hands of police. All the texts studied are produced on the advent of democracy in South Africa and they all culminate in massive actions involving political demonstrations. For women, the resistance is not only meted against government but also at various institutions that tend to adopt the patriarchal practices as a way of life. At an individual level, authors allow women to stage some form of subtle resistance for their survival in patriarchal institutions of marriage, work and society.

The Lying Days by Nadine Gordimer constitutes postcolonial writing that also incorporates features of a feminist literary production. The entire text is a long series of subtle and robust forms of resistance mechanisms and attitudes by individuals in their

home settings and in public spheres (for example by Helen and Mary) and the radical forms by masses in Greater Johannesburg.

Nadine Gordimer allows Helen to defeat her mother through conduct that violates family 'morals' constructed and internalised by an older generation of women who have come to accept patriarchy as a way of life. The conduct by itself is an act of resistance. Yasmine, in *Daughters of the Twilight* adopts the same attitude when she gets involved with Andrew, knowing full well that interracial unions were banned by the segregatory policy of the apartheid regime. After conceiving a child, Yasmin abandons this child, thereby resisting the restrictive role of motherhood that often compromises self-actualisation. In the same vein, Meena resists racial classification when her mother manipulates the system and gets her reclassified as coloured when she is Indian so that she could gain admission at a prominent school.

When Gordimer relegates the black women to the safe space (to mind the children) during restless and incessant demonstrations, Farida puts them in the front and Meena is the first generation in that family to join a resisting (political) movement. The same uprisings are staged in *Mother to Mother* (Magona) where female youth opt for a more subtle, but effective form of resistance when they flee the country to seek education. Magona disapproves of violent resistance that does not yield any benefit, instead compromising on the course of action.

The 21st Century woman evolves from domesticity to self-actualisation and an independent self. This move renders the 21st Century woman adequately empowered to participate actively in the emancipatory discourses of a democratic South Africa.

In *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa elevates resistance to another level. Her women do not talk about abuse and seek comfort with one another. To resist abusive relationships with ungrateful spouses, they take the responsibility to eliminate them forever. In the process, they secure money to start an academy for girls which will empower them so that from an informed position, they can reap the benefits of a democratic country;

observe the choices they have and not feel forced to plod the constricted route designed for them by patriarchs. This is Makholwa's ideal 21st Century woman.

Inevitably, the novels are also evaluated on how satisfactorily they epitomise an indigenous people in terms of representation. Postcolonial theory cannot refute the fact that even after the coloniser left, the post-colonial nations were still dominated culturally and intellectually. While political freedom is real, the economic, social and intellectual independence are far from reality. Taking clue from Said's *Orientalism*, the selected authors take the responsibility to 'write back' and represent the South African culture, even if the damage may not be undone (according to Spivak), they give the women folk a more nuanced and affirmative representation.

Through Helen, Gordimer fulfils her promise to give the 21st Century women a renewed hope through representation in fiction work that acknowledges them as equally gifted, strong and capable citizens along with their male populace. Her text has a liberatory and transformative intent garnered through postcolonial theorisation.

Although *The Lying Days* ends with Helen leaving for Durban – as if defeated – it gives hope to the 21st Century woman through the resolve to come back and write, reporting from an objective stance on the mistreatment of women even within a post-colonial and new democratic South Africa. Gordimer liberates the 21st Century from restrictive ideologies and regressive traditions to self-actualisation, empowerment and independence.

Farida Karodia also responds to what Edward Said suggests about literary representation that reclaims the culture and histories of indigenous people. She does this through children's outright rejection of the propagandistic literature as prescribed work for coloured pupils. The rejection represents not only the physical texts, but most importantly, the ideological and white privilege represented in the texts along with stereotypic attitudes of older generation of women to whom white supremacy is legitimated and esteemed.

The 21st Century women should write genres that represent the histories of indigenous people. As Ngugi (1983) asserts, they should participate in the form of art that is of service to mankind.

Zoe Wicomb transcends the traditional practice of representing women in their dependent roles – as timid brides or abused girls whose dreams do not extend beyond marriage and providing for family. She stretches and blurs acceptable, mainstream gender boundaries and traditional societal expectations (Rubinstein-Avila 2007). She laments the way male authors often misrepresent women in their literary productions. In her text, *David's Story*, Wicomb decides to have an amanuensis who will always monitor the representation of women. Wicomb observes how David distorts history by refusing to acknowledge Dulcie's status and political accolades as a Commander in Chief. This is a call for the 21st Century woman to be 'amanuenses' and be the middle voice for women in distress.

On the question of marginality, the study adopts a deconstructive approach (within postcoloniality) to challenge the centres which are accepted as the universal truths. It looks for exceptional counter value/s of South African women that are often unacknowledged and which, if taken seriously, would displace the dominant principles (truths) which privilege one signifier of a binary over the other. Within the sub-theme of feminism, this deconstructive approach also serves as an ideological critique directed at patriarchal thought and institutions.

In the context of postcolonial theory, marginality is used in the same sense as 'othering' which means relegation of non-Western ways of knowing to the margins of intellectual discourse. In this sense then the people who hold such marginalised knowledge are 'othered' meaning they form part of a society suffering from domination by a hegemonic elite class that denies them basic rights (Louai 2012). Gayatri Spivak uses the term 'subaltern' to refer to this marginalised society.

Marginality courses both covertly and overtly in all the texts studied. The texts depict the segregation policy by the apartheid regime which was meant to sustain the 'purity' and 'supremacy' of the white nation. At a national level, women suffer the segregation policy which marginalises black majority to the periphery which then subjects them to horrid injustices for the benefit of the dominant centre. Other than racial, women are also marginalised by patriarchal institutions on the basis of gender. These include government structures like the TRC, the church and the institution of marriage, along with motherhood.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was established to afford an opportunity for all victims of apartheid (women included) to come forward and give an account of such incidents so that the perpetrators could confess and be granted amnesty also relegated women to the margins. Women could only testify on behalf of their husbands and or sons, but they could not do so if they were direct victims of the apartheid injustices (and injustices from liberation movements). This is the reason Magona moved Manqina's story from the TRC and presented it as *Mother-to-mother*. It is such marginalisation that deprives women the voice – individually and collectively. The 21st Century woman should resuscitate women's stories often watered down by patriarchal systems. This reawakening can be achieved through creation of support spaces in the physical and through literary representation.

Another institution that marginalises women is that of marriage (including religious prescripts from churches about how women should conduct themselves and how they should dress within this sacred institution). Here the women are only as important as their procreation abilities. This role has an 'othering' effect also because women who cannot have children, or who choose not to, are constructed as less than women.

Equally, women who are not married, divorced, widowed or who have different sexuality, are relegated to a class of women less revered by society and given derogatory names like 'lefetwa', 'moopa', 'return soldier', 'stabane' and many such referents that relegate women to marginality by virtue of their choices (and sometimes by circumstances) which are seen as peculiar simply because they do not follow the pre-designed definitions of

womanhood by patriarchal societies. The new generation of women does not judge, but respect the choices of others and defend them.

The study also illuminates the ambivalence of the relationship between the coloniser and colonised as portrayed in the selected texts. The concept of ambivalence provides a lens into the multifaceted mix of attraction and repulsion that frames the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Ashcroft et al, 2006) assert that the ambivalent nature of this relationship rests on failure by the colonised to challenge the colonised.

In *The Lying Days*, Gordimer places Anna (the black domestic) in the Shaw household where she represents the colonised. In this coloniser/colonised relationship, the Shaws are impressed by the way Anna has completely 'acculturated' to the white values when in fact through interaction, she has emerged a hybridised product of this intercultural relationship. Unknown to them, given a private moment, she invites her fellow black women over and becomes her black self with them. Anna exploits this relationship by earning Mrs Shaw's confidence and assumes a position higher than other family members in Mrs Shaw's heart. When the family thinks Anna depends on them, it turns out they depend on her - for everything.

Farida, in *Daughters of the Twilight*, depicts the same ambivalence through the attraction/repulsion attitudes of the white colonisers: Hermanus and Kobus could not keep their hands off the coloured women (Delia and Yasmine respectively) despite the apartheid ban against interracial marriages. Whilst the relationship is exploitative, it is also appealing for the women who enjoy the attention which they otherwise would not get from their coloured men who are emotionally stifled by apartheid injustices. Bhabha (1994) asserts that these relationships generate seeds of their own destruction because then the purity and/or hegemony of the dominant culture becomes questionable since all become contaminated in the process of hybridity.

Wicomb captures the same ambivalent relationship between David and Dulcie in *David's Story*: David is attracted to Dulcie's strength and courage in a way that they are a reflection of his own attributes. At the same time he felt repelled by these very attributes because of the patriarchal ideologies that are ingrained in his mind.

David is constantly conflicted by his feelings for Dulcie throughout the text. On the one hand, his hatred for her strong attributes enabled him to detach himself from his emotions and participate in her torture, whilst on the other hand his love for her drove him to kill himself because he could not bear the guilt.

Mother to Mother, by Magona, depicts moral ambivalence as an essential mediation at the dawn of a democratic South Africa. This narrative puts the moral sensibilities of the reader to the test: Mxolisi was afforded every opportunity to have a better life despite the injustices he suffered as a member of a black race; he had a roof over his head and caring parents who attended to his every need. The question Magona raises is whether Mxolisi's murderous acts should be justified on the basis of the wrong that an apartheid government did him. The reader is torn between sympathising with Mxolisi, and then with Amy Biehl for her underserved death.

Magona seems to be saying that the 21st Century woman explicitly articulates not only her ambitions but also the means to attaining them. The controversy surrounding Mxolisi's actions could have been avoided if he had clearly articulated the path towards liberation from white supremacy. Magona's woman distances herself from what she calls 'acts of barbarism' and adopts effective and progressive strategies towards her and others' liberation.

7.6 Summary of Conclusions

The study concludes that the texts are relevant to a South African context as the authors are all opposed to apartheid, have used the transitioning context to raise issues of concern surrounding both to the marginalised majority and the subalternised women. As authors, they present their narratives from personal spaces as women equally dented by the injustices of colonial and indigenous patriarchy. From their experiences, the 21st Century woman can learn resilience, and the willpower to pursue a social responsibility even when the odds are against you. The roles the authors assign to their protagonists re-imagine hope for disillusioned women who assume that their situations are irreversible.

The women protagonists triumph over their tragic circumstances, emerging from victimhood to a collective sisterhood of love, nurture, care and actualised intellectuals.

The texts respond to postcolonialism as a principal theory of the study. They constitute a liberatory and transformative intent and are adequately representative of various aspects of South African women's lives.

7.7 Recommendations for Future Study

The study confirms the need for writers to continue empowering women through creative art. The narrative has the potential to liberate women from colonial and indigenous patriarchy. However, what must still be investigated is whether in essence women read the texts intended for their personal growth and development. Art is not only for art's sake, but has been proven to be an institution for empowerment of women for active and meaningful participation in both private and public spaces. Readership should inform choices and issues raised in women literature. A future study should inquire after women readers' interest and whether they read in the first place.

Authors of the texts examined here have shown commitment to the development of society, particularly the development of women and advancement of their participation in the democracy. A further study might look at what drives the 21st Century women writers. It could investigate whether they accept the responsibility to participate in the production of literature for human advancement or merely for personal authorial accolades. The times have changed and so have the writing spaces within a South African context. It would be interesting to observe how feminism and postcoloniality coincide within the democratic environment to advance women for full participation as citizens.

7.8 Personal Growth

As a researcher, I have grown both at a personal level and academically. At a personal level, I am humbled by the responsibility that the selected authors took to produce texts to which I can relate. It has opened my eyes to the relevance of fiction to me as a woman.

I have come to realise that women's issues are common, what differs is their degrees and the vigour to pursue them.

At an academic level, I felt overwhelmed by the limitations presented me by the prescripts of dissertation writing. I learned a lot in undertaking the study, particularly that I still had to express my voice in the midst of a myriad of informed and mature voices that wrote before me. I have appreciated the space to be wrong in my assumptions, to unlearn the misconstrued truths that life has taught me. Most importantly, I appreciate the scholars, my promoter and examiners who pushed me to develop new insights and perceptions about 'order of things' and not just mimic what has already been said.

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