

(Re)constructions of the Self and the Nation in Selected Auto/biographies of South African and Zimbabwean Women

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April 2021

Declaration

I, Mercy Precious Mujakachi (15018433), declare that this thesis is my original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any other university for a degree. All reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged and referenced accordingly.



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29/03/2021

Signature

Date

Abstract

This thesis examines and interrogates auto/biographies of six African women in the ways in which their selves and the nation are constructed. The selected autobiographies and biographies are largely by and about African women with some measure of political power and or relatively successful career. The study employed Smith and Watson's (2001) view that autobiography is self-life writing which is porous in nature, in that it accommodates various narratives. Life narrative genre is fundamental in the literary body to interpret social, cultural and political constructions of South African and Zimbabwean identities.

The study supports the notion that the self emerges from its gendered private space into the public domain, inadvertently transforms autobiography to protest writing, as well as a political project. The study explored how auto/biographies enable the recovery of women's voices silenced by history and the specific forms of identities of selves and nation-hoods that they depict. To achieve that, the study employed a panoply of theories which include autobiography, postcolonial, womanist and feminist theories to argue that the life narratives by women are a quest for gender equity as negotiated within the two specific postcolonial nation states of South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The study disclosed that women as writers have to negotiate the multiple binds of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. The study concludes that it is not possible to deploy a singular self to tell a story but rather to include the lived experience of others differently positioned provides a holistic view of the predicaments and prevailing situation of the society. The study further determines that nationalism is a gendered discourse and that violence against women and resistance are shaped by specific cultural contexts and ideological forces.

This research adds value to the existing corpus of knowledge in the field. It focuses on recent auto/biographies by Southern African women as these intersect with liberal notions of democracy and the discourse of human rights. The selected auto/biographies have not been subjected to solemn academic and literary scrutiny. It thus adds a voice to studies that were trailblazers in this area from a new perspective. The study focused on the African patriarchal society and called for its modernization so that women can take their proper place in it. This adds to the calls made by scholars and critics for opportunities to be afforded to women to prove their merit. There is a loud cry for African nations to put structures in their societies to make the system work. This study makes a contribution to the growing field of autobiography in South Africa and Zimbabwe and especially recognizes women's life writing. Also, it further

forms part of the critical scholarship that seeks to understand how authors frame various issues affecting women in and how their experiences have contributed to the positive social and political development of Southern African communities.

Keywords: Auto/biography, memoir, nation, postcolonial, womanist

Acknowledgements

The production of any literary work is a result of the concerted effort of many people. These selflessly gave of themselves their time to make the work a success. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and extend my profound gratitude to them, for their invaluable assistance which saw to the completion of this study.

My deepest appreciation goes to my promoter the late Dr G. S Mashau who believed in this project from the beginning and for his criticisms, ideas and guidance throughout the years of my doctoral studies. He stood by me in the most difficult time when I felt like I was drowning, and motivated me to keep going. I am grateful to my Co-promoter Dr L.M.P Mulaudzi for her professional guidance and intellectual support. I am indebted to her for her practice of close reading of the research.

This journey began with Dr I Ndlovu, I would like to acknowledge his advice and constructive criticism that this thesis benefited from. Your office was always open for me, thank you for your support, it is much appreciated. My appreciation goes to the late Dr B Dube for her encouragement, selfless advice on academic and social matters, I will forever cherish. My gratitude to Mr. P Tshuma for the academic support and he had the most eloquent and profound things to say to help motivate me to keep going.

I am grateful to my friend and colleague Mr H Masete for his support; we shared many experiences, tears and laughter, lending each other support when needed. To my friends Saneliso Thambo, Melody Thendele, Shylet Nyamwanza Shumba, Dr L Nyathi, Dr R Chinyakata, Dr F Takayindisa, and Dr Chirobe -thank you for your moral support. I am grateful that our paths crossed.

A special thank you is due to my family, my parents, Mr and Mrs Mujakachi whose love is like no other. They never miss a moment to pray for me. I can never repay them for what they have done for me. To my brothers Michael and Simbarashe Mujakachi thank you for your moral support and encouragement. All of you gave me the purpose I needed to keep going. Lastly, my special gratitude goes to my friend at heart Mr. K. Kalobo for providing a shoulder to cry on, for all your comfort, you are indeed a great friend. Thank you for your unwavering support throughout this journey. Without all these people the process would have been so much harder.

To all those I did not mention but who contributed in one way or another in my studies, I sincerely thank you. You were all truly the wind beneath my wings! Above all, Glory to God who makes all things possible.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Mujakachi family for trusting in my abilities. May the good Lord bless you. To all females, all who stand up against inequality, this is for you.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction and background

This study seeks to examine a genre that has not been given adequate literary attention: the auto/biographical writings by African women. The selected narratives by South Africa and Zimbabwean women written after 2000 narrate life stories in a manner aimed at empowering women in a male dominated society. For a long time, women, have been relegated to the margins of nations. Assertions from womanist and feminist discourses insist that women are at the margins and periphery of existence in most communities, a standpoint that seems to have been universalised (Magosvongwe and Nyamende, 2016). Women's issues have become fecund ground for scholarly reflections. It is in view of this trend that this study also investigates how oppressive socio-cultural practices, religious, political, violence, unfair economic systems and other factors leave women at the bottom of society and how women in the selected auto/biographies navigate these institutions. Despite the tendency to treat women as a homogenous and unified group, they hardly constitute a monolithic group with identical problems. Women live in countries with diverse historical experience and development levels, and within each country, the issues pertaining to women vary according to race, ethnicity, class, religion, tribe, residence, and educational levels. Despite these differences, the common denominator of women in all societies, including the industrialized ones, is their subordinate status. Women compose the poorest and the least powerful segment of the population throughout the world (Anunobi, 2002).

The post-2000 period has seen a significant proliferation in female auto/biographies in the mentioned countries and hence my preference for this period. Given the continued disenfranchised position of women that has continued into the 21st century, auto/biographies by women can be seen as a "quest" (Gilbert and Gubor, 2000:76) for self-definition in societies dominated by men. The fact that women themselves self-narrate lived experiences from specific cultural oeuvres in their own voices, give women agency in negotiating and creating a niche for themselves in areas that the modern heavy patriarchal system would have naturally preserved for the male voice. In addition to the latter, apart from documenting lived socio-historical experiences, the very act of self-narrating inadvertently assures revision of practices that have till now favoured and privileged certain sections of society above others. The dialogic quality of these autobiographies is, in part, produced by the way in which they speak back to dominant discourses that seek to (mis)represent women discourses that span the entire

historical period from precolonial to postcolonial times in Africa. For women self narration provides a counter discourse to the Zimbabwean and South African narrative of self and nation as well as interrogates the individual's conception of self and of nation.

From the early 1990's, Zimbabwe has been entangled in a serious economic crisis (Muzondidya 2009) that has seen the status of women in Zimbabwe being negatively affected. Pachiri (2016) states that in Zimbabwe, post 2000 period is packed with events. Zimbabwe went through political, social and economic turbulence marked by increased polarisation between Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the state's response to the oppositions drive for power. During that time ZANU PF led Zimbabwe government embarked on the Third Chimurenga which was characterised by the Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) which resulted in political violence and collapse of the economy, exodus of citizens and unprecedented censorship of news by the ruling political party. During this period, Zimbabwean women were further marginalized as the period was characterised by the violent land seizure associated with the FTLRP as well as the unprecedented power contestation between ZANU PF and the MDC. Media focus, therefore, was not necessarily concerned with women's issues and concentrated on the power dynamics between the ZANU PF and MDC parties. Outside its most visible forms, the crisis was more of a calamity of national values and morals; of the borderlines of what is lawful and what is unlawful being blurred (Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012). The exclusion and victimization of women delineate the deep inequalities, corruption, disenfranchisement and development crisis of Zimbabwe. Hungwe (2013) examines the textual portrayal of women within the context of land distribution program and concludes that the program was a masculine narrative with women presented as dependents. Women suffered and fought inequalities induced by patriarchal political and cultural system that limit women's opportunities. Amidst the injustices that women were and are facing, the post-2000 period has witnessed some advancement of women's rights.

However, for women, South African History Online (SAHO) (2011) points out that this period in South Africa's history is marked by women filtering back into politics as there was no need to conceal their political commitment. Many women took leading positions and participated in the discussions of the CODESA. Mbeki (2004) stated that no government in South Africa could ever claim to represent the will of the people if it failed to address the central task of emancipation of women in all its elements. Furthermore, in South African, women are faced with a wide range of issues such as the high crime rate, domestic violence, child abuse,

corruption, poverty, poor service delivery by local governments and unemployment. However, some have earned themselves a place in the new South Africa, South African History Online (SAHO) (2011), yet still attitudes towards women have not changed as their positions have been viewed as tokenist representations (Hogg and Vaughan 2008).

The selected auto/biographies are largely narratives by and about African women with some form of political power, activists, how they have made a success of their political careers and whose genealogies depict a history of colonial subjectivity. Some of the autobiographies advocate education for everyone and the empowerment of women and the girl child. The study explores their experiences in a male dominated world and how they construct and negotiate their identities in a troubled postcolonial space. It is argued here that the writing of these autobiographies is a political act that gives agency to diverse agendas. Ironically, the crises in these selected countries appear to have resuscitated literary creativity, such that a large body of new writing has emerged which engages with the multiple aspects of the post 2000 crisis. The recent rise in auto/biographical writing in the country is a testimony to the quest for more subjective interpretations of experience. The burgeoning interest justifies the need for a scholarly scrutiny of why auto/biography is central to identity construction processes. My research forms part of the critical scholarship that seeks to understand how authors frame various forms of issues affecting women in the post 2000 millennium. All the selected narratives seem to respond to the dominant discourses that (mis)represent women and are therefore concerned with the expression of different aspects of feminisms. While the study analysis each text in its own right, significant themes and points of commonality are illuminated and highlighted across the chapters.

The study will explore the following selected texts, *No Longer Whispering to Power: The Story of Thuli Madonsela* by Thandeka Gqubule (2017), *Khwezi - The Remarkable Story of Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo* (2017) by Redi Tlhabi, Betty Makoni's *Never Again not to any Woman or girl again* (2012), *The abduction and trial of Jestina Mukoko; the fight for human rights in Zimbabwe* by Jestina Mukoko (2016), *The Awakened Woman: Remembering & Reigniting Our Sacred Dreams* by Tererai Trent (2017) and *Memoirs of a born free: Reflections of the new South Africa by a member of the Post-apartheid generation* by Malaika wa Azania (2014).

1.2. Objectives of the study

- To insightfully explore the specific forms of identities of selves and nation-hoods depicted in the selected female auto/biographies.
- To analytically examine how the selected South African and Zimbabwean women construct and represent their auto/biographical identities
- To deeply investigate whether there are connections between femininity and the various subject positions that the selected female authors occupy.
- To critically utilize/employ the selected auto/biographies a means to recover women's voices silenced by history.

1.3. Research questions

- What are the specific forms of identities of selves and nation-hoods depicted in the selected auto/biographies?
- How do the selected women authors construct and represent their auto/biographical identities?
- Are there connections between femininity and the various subject positions that the selected female authors occupy?
- How do the selected auto/biographies recover women's voices silenced by history?

1.4. Problem statement

A significant body of auto/biographical narratives, which demand a gendered rather than a racialized reading from South Africa and Zimbabwe, has become increasingly available since the year 2000. Beyond superficial reviews that either heap praises on these texts or offer rabid criticism, most of these auto/biographies have not been subject to serious literary scrutiny, for instance, what they seek to tell the readers at the moment of their production and the insights they give about the future. Paying particular attention to the clearly feminist agenda of these texts, this study hopes to contribute to the literary examination of these narratives as a way of surfacing the various gendered discourses that continue to structure contemporary South African and Zimbabwean societies.

1.5. Justification of the study

The increased production and availability of female auto/biographies in South Africa and Zimbabwe, especially after the year 2000 is a recognizable but yet under-theorized

phenomenon. It is further aimed to shed more light not only on the auto/biographies by women already mentioned above, but many more whose lives have been subjected to narratives since 2000 which will be used as my secondary texts. In doing so, this study hopes to contribute into the multiple discourses about women liberation and empowerment that are explored in the selected texts. The rationale for studying auto/biographical writings by women of diverse cultures, historical backgrounds, ethnicities, races and gender is a way of trying to understand South African and Zimbabwean realities from various female positionalities.

This study borrows from Jvangwe, 2011 and Were, 2017 who wrote extensive doctoral theses on auto/biographies. Jvangwe's (2011) thesis focuses on *Contesting narratives: constructions of the self and the nation in Zimbabwean political auto/biography* exploring how white Rhodesian auto/biographies depend on the imperial repertoire to construct varying, even contradicting, images of white identities and the Rhodesian nation, which are also contested by black nationalist life narratives and concludes that autobiography in Zimbabwe is marked by contradictions. Were's 2017 thesis on *Negotiating public and private identities: a study of the autobiographies of African women politicians* interrogates how the African woman's political autobiography represents the public and private subjective identities of African political womanhood and concludes that public and private are hybrid notions that intersect with the literary form, autobiographical subject, and discourse of African women's political autobiographies. Given this resurgence of interest in autobiographical narratives, I wish to add my voice to already existing research on life writing by exploring South African and Zimbabwean women's experiences in a male dominated world and how they construct and negotiate their identities in a fraught postcolonial space. Chitando (2011) in her thesis, *"Narrating gender and danger in selected Zimbabwean women's writings on HIV/AIDS"* (2011), in its focus on women and their survival in the face of HIV/AIDS, discusses the brutal reality of violence against women. Although Chitando analyses novels, she however, like many other critics, portrays women as passive recipients of violence. She fails to acknowledge the salient forms of resistance exercised by women characters in response to violence. Similarly, Jvangwe (2011) chooses to view gender-based violence through the same limited lens as Chitando (2011, 271) and many of the other scholars who view women as simplistically "vulnerable", innocent victims who always bow to their circumstances. Hence, as much as their contributions are helpful to the assessment of gender violence in the Zimbabwean context, these scholars do not address important ways in which women resist violence and seek to reclaim their agency. They do not move beyond the reiteration of the discourse of victimhood,

while my study explores the violence experienced and women's complex responses to the culture of gender violence portrayed in the selected auto/biographies.

In particular, the scope of this study has been narrowed down to an analysis of political autobiographies and memoirs because to include all life documents would make the study unmanageable. The selected autobiographical narratives are all encompassing and rich in content as they include in them the diary, pictures, letters, newspaper cuttings all of which contribute to the strategic uses of narrative in the presentation of the self and nation.

1.6. Review of literature related to primary texts

1.6.1. Women and auto/biography

Brownley and Kimmich (2000) argue that the field of auto/biography as it has traditionally been defined raises questions about women's place in it. They also point out that women's writings have been excluded from the tradition of auto/biography in that their writing tends not to have the same form as that of men in that women's stories were thought too trivial and too personal to be important. However, recent theoretical interest in women's autobiographical writing considers the ways in which women explore and develop the genre beyond the boundaries of the male tradition of writing autobiography. Autobiography, as a literary genre, has been used by women writers to make possible the development and the expression of the self, but they have remained invisible for centuries. The invisibility of the subject does not mean a non-existence of the individual, but it implies the need of the subject to be expressed, explored, known and told (Gilmore 1994; Smith 1987; Brodzki and Schneck, 1988; and Benstock, 1988). This invisibility does not uniquely affect the South African and Zimbabwean space, rather it is a global phenomenon.

African women writers have protested against the marginalisation of women in African literature. With the passage of time, women writers appeared on the scene. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) has made key observations regarding the determination of African women writers to challenge male dominance. She says:

African women writers have not just openly lamented, questioned, and criticized the neglect of their work; they have also attacked this neglect through their ongoing exercise of the act of writing. They have slowly but surely used their writings as weapons to invade the battlefields that had hitherto been occupied and dominated by male writers, making tangible gains along the way. These women writers have beaten

and are still beating their drums and are letting their war-cries be heard side by side with those of their counterparts at home and abroad (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997:148).

In their quest to “let their war-cries be heard”, African women writers have played a major role in African women’s struggle for dignity. African women writers have sought to weaken the patriarchal hold by articulating women’s voices. Where previously the discipline was dominated by men’s voices and visions, women have sought to alter the face of the discipline. Women’s voices and experiences have become an integral part of African literature. They concentrate on women’s struggles against suffocation by patriarchal dictates. The selected auto/biographies analyzed in this study depict how females reject powerlessness through narrating their experiences of female and creating a new identity for themselves. Ogun-dipe-Leslie (1987: 5) takes note of the following issues: “first to tell about being a woman; secondly to describe reality from a woman’s point of view, a woman’s perspective.” These observations are of remarkable relevance to this study, I interrogate whether the narratives describe what it means to be a woman and tell about being a woman.

Feminist critic Showalter (1979) paved a way for critiquing women’s writing, from the alternate female-perspective. Showalter coins the term “gynocritics” to describe literary criticism based on a feminine perspective. In her explication of gynocentricism, she notes that:

In contrast to [an] angry or loving fixation on male literature, the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adopt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture (131).

She further explains that the goal of gynocritics is not to erase the differences between male and female writing; rather gynocritics aims to understand the specificity of women’s writing as a fundamental aspect of female reality. She makes a call for women to write about their own and other women’s experiences, as they understand what it means to be a woman. Women’s autobiographical practices have become a terrain for feminist analysis because they are “a fruitful ground in examining the recent theoretical debates concerning ‘the self,’ ‘the subject,’ and ‘the author’ (Stanley 1992: 3-4), and because they articulate both women’s life experiences and feminist theory (Smith and Watson 1998:5).

In an interview with Veit-Wild (1989:105), Dangarembga defines feminine writing as “women writing about the things that move them [...] Female writing comes from the consciousness of being a woman and the problems that arise as a result of that”. Vera (1999:2) also opines that women “without power to govern, often have no platform for expressing their disapproval [...] Words become weapons”. This suggests that writing is an act of fighting back to oppressive patriarchal conditions and images. She states that writing “offers a moment of intervention” (Vera, 1999:3) for women to negotiate their position and envision new possibilities for men and women to build an inclusive nation. Thus, women writing not only challenges masculine “turf”, but also challenges notions of what it means to be a woman in Africa.

The writer of the autobiography acts as an investigator of their own life and uses different methodologies and strategies to find the real sources of power in her life. Autobiography writing is shown as a means of personal empowerment when the author examines their own life retrospectively and from the recent status. Writing one’s own life not only challenges the stereotypes, but it also quits the silence and turns a person into an agency to protest or confess. Autobiographies show women’s agency in their life writing have the ability to ensure that their side of the story is told, and to document the life of women in a space of men.

Hunsu (2017) opines that auto/biography occupies a central space in African women’s writing as the primal genre through which African women have participated in the representation of African experience and the shaping of African literature. The reason why I chose auto/biography is best explained by Kolawole’s (1999) observation that “women’s written literary texts, especially auto/biographies, provide avenues for implicit and explicit gender conceptualizations” (253).

1.6.2. Agency

For this study, agency is articulated in the very construction of the self (Butler, 1990). Life writers talk about what they have done and can do which is their agency. Their narratives are acts of agency whereby they have the freedom to tell their own stories. Gaidzanwa (1985) argues that agency is the ability to act. She contextualises agency by stating “the kinds of calculations and choices a woman creates are the mark of liberation and freedom” (1985:13). In this sense, agency points to the freedom and ability to make choices as well as the potential effectiveness of those choices. Agency in life narratives may be politically driven. If a life writer highlights some significant action for example protest or leaving, there may be a political

agenda behind it. Selected Zimbabwean and South African female writers in this study seek to represent their life experiences. Some of them depict representations that demonstrate that their lives have been shaped by violence. As is shown in this study, women are both vulnerable and resistant agents. In their narratives, the South African and Zimbabwean women writers that I examine, depict violent scenarios in various contexts of women's lives, but their representations also suggest the possibility of a more gender equitable world where women are no longer victims of violence. This perspective of agency is useful in the life stories I examine as it allows for an exploration of the complexities that emerge when women resist gender violence in patriarchal contexts. The texts in this study lend themselves to agency and the vocalising of female experiences in male dominated societies.

1.6.3. Postcolonial and Post-Apartheid female auto/biographers in Zimbabwe and South Africa

Lebdai (2015) states that through self-telling, women clearly affirm and reveal their individuality, their personality and the reconstruction of their lives, all with a genuine impact on 'literality' and politics. More than a mere representation of one's life, autobiographical writings are a powerful quest for identity, self-knowledge and self-recognition, particularly meaningful in colonial and postcolonial times.

According to Boynton and Malin (2005), postcolonial nation states are characterised by the struggle for political and cultural autonomy. Postcolonial autobiography, especially those works written before and immediately after decolonisation, usually reflect their social milieu. To understand autobiographical works of women from postcolonial countries, the term postcolonial needs to be explained. Bhabha (1994:171), postcolonial criticism "bears witness to the unequal and universal forces of cultural representation" that are involved in a constant competition for political and economic control in the contemporary world. Rukundwa and van Aarde (2007) view the postcolonial theory as a means of defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged (see pages 15-16). Boynton and Malin (2005) observe that two themes come to mind when discussing autobiography in the postcolonial context. The first one is the role of politics, especially anticolonial politics, in shaping cultural productions. Lastly, the role of women in the decolonized nation state where women were marshalled into working for the anticolonial movement. Their enlistment gave them a leeway to emerge from the confines of the domestic and enter the realm of politics and public life. The process of liberating colonies endangered

the emancipation of women. After independence, the question was how were the newly formed nation states going to accommodate the newly independent woman? Postcolonial women's autobiography often reflects these symbiotic tensions.

Autobiographies of influential and or politically involved women take on a different life after independence when women were less preoccupied with the fight for national freedom and more with the fight for individual freedom. The African continent is more diffuse in terms of postcolonial women's autobiography. This is because the modes of colonial domination in Africa varied from settler to occupation. In South Africa, women's auto/biographies engaged with the tyranny of apartheid. One of the most famous testimonials is that of Poppie Nongema, a black Xhosa woman who asked Elsa Joubert to write her auto/biography for her in 1987. Poppie articulates Spivak's famous query of the Subaltern that has now become a major concern in the postcolonial studies; "can the subaltern speak", or do those who attempt to give it new life always mediate its voice. In South Africa, the thematic constraints that structure the ethnography of the self are always determined by the unique racial situation of apartheid (Boynton and Malin, 2005).

Ngoshi (2013) states that autobiographic writings have burgeoned in Zimbabwe and notably these can be categorised as political. Javangwe (2011: 2) notes an increase in auto/biographical writing in the country as "a testimony to the quest for more subjective interpretation of experience, especially after the political and socio-economic crisis that Zimbabwe went through in the last decade". This suggests that moments of national crisis invoke more pronounced responses to national experience, and ultimately, contesting voices. The Zimbabwean crisis is thus manifest in the way in which there are competing narratives of the nation; more so life-narratives in which the Zimbabwean experience is not only articulated but also contested. Zimbabwe's history of colonialism and anti-colonial struggle complicates conceptions of both personal and national identities. Complex conceptions of self and national identities are hallmarks of the political autobiographical genre. Javangwe (2011:2) further contends that political autobiography in the Zimbabwean context employs subjective renditions of those who were part of the struggle for liberation and can therefore contest what he terms the "narrative monopoly of ZANU-PF". The autobiographies under discussion show that female life-writing establishes identity as relational; conceiving of the self in relation to others.

Women's auto/biography in a postcolonial context reveals some shared concerns, most texts muse over experiences of colonialism and oppression by indigenous patriarchy. Many

postcolonial women's auto/biography also discuss what it means to be not just female but also a female artist who needs to fuse colonial culture with indigenous tradition. Given the flourishing of postcolonial autobiographical writing in Africa, in India and among a growing diaspora, the selected narratives aim at providing the reader with timely and lively analysis of this increasingly appreciated genre (Lebdai 2015). Smith (1998:108) notes that, "for the marginalized woman, autobiography may serve as the coinage that purchases entry".

To sum all up then, autobiography has emerged recently as a significant field of study, in response first to feminist and then to postcolonial preoccupations with marginalized voices, evident in the work of Stanton (1984), Smith (1993), Marcus (1994), Chennells (2005), Linstead (2004) and others. Several theoretical conceptions derived from studies in autobiography are useful in exploring some of the issues in this thesis. The first theoretical concern involves the relationship between fact and fiction in autobiography. Eakin (1985) draws attention to the way in which autobiography is deemed to be based on verifiable facts of a life history but treads a thin line between empirical facts and imaginative (re)creation. In his view, autobiographical truth is never fixed but is an evolving awareness in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation. The self that is the centre of all autobiographical narratives remains, for him, a fictive and continuously evolving structure

1.6.4. Patriarchy and the abuse of women

Women abuse is often said to emanate from and rooted in patriarchy. Igbelina-Igbokwe's (2013) defines patriarchy as a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females; with various taboos to ensure conformity with specified gender roles. Considering this definition, patriarchy manifest in the values, attitudes, customs, expectations, and institutions of the society, and maintained through the process of socialization. In most societies, men have been socialized to control and dominate women "politically, socially and economically" (Onyango 2006: 36). On the other hand, women have been socialized to be submissive to men. Through complex socialization processes, male dominance has been portrayed as the natural order of things. Cultural ideologies have been used to maintain male dominance. In other words, patriarchy is a social arrangement that privileges males, where in men dominate women as a group structurally and ideologically. Walby (1990:20) defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" both in public and private spheres. In this way

patriarchy enables one to understand women's realities better. Selected autobiographies for the study reveal how women negotiate their way in male dominated societies.

The domination over women is reflected right from the process of contracting a marriage during which a man pays a bride price for his wife, which makes her the property of her husband (Ademiluka, 2018). The idea that the husband owns his wife is symbolised in various ways. For example, Masenya, (2012) notes that in Africa, "the sexuality of married women is perceived to be in the domain of the control of their husbands." Women's sexuality is thus made the first tool of control. McFadden (1992) also observes that patriarchy as an ideology thrives on men's control of women in all spheres of life, especially the sexual one.

Robins' (2008) article on Sexual politics and the Zuma Rape trial offers an entry point to the analysis of Tlhabi's biography as it focuses on post-apartheid developments in relation to the sexual politics that surrounded the 2006 rape trial of South Africa's former Deputy President, Jacob Zuma. The trial served as a mirror reflecting the tension between sexual rights and patriarchy. The article reveals just how deeply contested sexual rights are in South Africa that the future of sexual and gender politics in South Africa's public sphere is far from clear and settled. Robins' analysis is valuable as it offers key perspectives, however for this study I focus on how Fezekile was betrayed silenced and how she reclaimed her voice even in death.

Women's domination is also, seen through patriarchy, which pre-supposes the natural superiority of male over female, shamelessly upholds women's dependence on, and subordination to, man in all spheres of life (Sultana, 2011). As a result, women are deprived of their legal rights and opportunities in that patriarchal values restrict women's mobility, reject their freedom over themselves as well as their property. The term 'women's subordination' refers to the inferior position of women (Cobuild 2010:1559), their lack of access to resources and decision making. Sultana (2011) avers that patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development. Despite differences in levels of domination the broad principles remain the same, men are in control.

Ifechelobi (2014) observes that the underlying factor in patriarchy is power and status. Struggles over power and control are often struggles over whose views get used. Therefore, in order for men to assert their power over women, women must be silent. On that note, silence represents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status" (D'Almeida, 1994). In patriarchal societies, many voiceless women

abound and many have gone uncelebrated. According to Uwakwe (1995), silence comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure resulting in the mistreatment of women.

Maltreating women is argued to be an inherent feature of every patriarchal culture (Ademiluka, 2018). Women abuse or violence against women is better understood in the context of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). As defined by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), IPV encompasses acts of stalking, psychological aggression, physical violence or sexual violence-behaviors and tactics through which an intimate partner seeks to establish and maintain power over another. These violations against women are reflected in the selected narrative in the service to expose patriarchy for the emancipation of women in the future. Patriarchy is a system that thrives through keeping women subordinated in a number of ways. Gender-based violence (GBV) for example wife beating seems to be the most prevalent of physical violence towards women, perhaps because in many places corporal punishment for wives is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline (Ose, 2009). Hence, when men beat their wives, they believe they are instilling discipline in them [as women] are regarded as children who can be prone to indiscipline if not disciplined (Agbonkhese and Onuoha, 2017). African women writers have sought to weaken the patriarchal hold by articulating women's voices.

1.6.5. Nation

Nation is defined by geography, both physical and cultural. However, a nation is a complex, multi-layered concept. A nation is not only a term implying a physical place with borders and common government, but also refers to the structural ideology that inhabits those borders. Therefore, it has been a site of analysis. The nation has, since this date, been described as "invention" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983:1 and Bhabha, 1990) that is inseparable from narration. This study adopts this assertion. The nation is a constructed entity, that owes its origins to "western capitalism and industrialization" (Mcleod, 2000:68) in its modern sense. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) argue that nations are not "rooted in antiquity and are not self-evidently natural", and that they are, if anything, "products of invention and social engineering" (1-3). This means that nations are not naturally fixed entities rather they are a creation. This study show South Africa and Zimbabwean nation owe their reality to narrative processes. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983:1-2) refer to invented traditions as practices that instil values, norms behaviours that seek continuity of the past. Their observation is that every society has

antique norms that make use of these invented tradition. The study shows how the South African and Zimbabwean narratives reveal these traditions for identity construction.

Bhabha (1990) discusses how writing and literature make a nation. He argues that it is an illusion that narratives are a representation of what is there rather narratives are active in creating a nation by those in power. Hence, nation and literature share an inherent relation. The study of literature comes under a discipline with its roots in a philosophical tradition formulated with the idea of the nation in mind. Literary narratives share an intrinsic relation with the concept of the nation. Bhabha (1990:1) commences his text with an exploration of this idea of the correlation between nation and narrative:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation or narration- might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force.

Bhabha (1990) observes that the nations and narratives have simultaneous origin. Nation, according to him, is a metaphor synthesized from political thought and literary language of any age. This synthesis is synchronic in its nature.

Through the invention of tradition and the selection of memory, the identity of a given nation-state became standardized. According to Renan (1990:18), the unifying essence of a nation is "a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound implications of history". It is the result of the profound complications of history: a spiritual family beyond the divisions of language, race, religion, culture, territory, and so on. This is a way of referring to the bond of experience and national memory, which largely forms national identity. Renan (1990) claims that the nation is its memory, and the nation in this way becomes an imagined construction. Because nations tend to have selective memories, choosing what will and will not be added to the national canon of memory, nations are formed through the will of the people, and through collective memory or loss. The shared will to memory and to hope is one of the most important aspects of nation-building: "the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future [...] the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together [...]" (Renan, 1990:19). The mythical identity of the nation is thus constructed through various forms of national memory. Anderson's (1983, 2006) seminal work *Imagined Communities* analyzes the ways in

which nations are formed through imaginary ties and conceptions. Anderson (2006) builds from Renan's (1990) foundation of national memory and elucidates some of the ways this memory can be carried out in daily life. Anderson calls it imagined as the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members. But the image of their communion still lives in the minds of each person. It is imagined as limited because even the largest of the nations, boasting a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. The adjective imagined signifies the lack of intimate understanding among the members of the communities on the one hand and the elastic nature of nation's boundaries on the other. The nation has been imagined as sovereign; the nation is a paradigm of resistance to imperial and colonial hegemony. Lastly, the nation is imagined as a community because, despite the inequality and exploitation that may prevail, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. It is the sense of community that inspires people to feel proud in the achievements of compatriots and to feel sympathy in their miseries and misfortunes. It is the spirit and unity of this imagined nation which makes the members willing to make sacrifices for it.

Bhabha (1994) views the nation as a construct is multi-faceted. On one hand, he would agree with Renan's and Anderson's assessment that the nation is constructed but on the other hand, Bhabha interrogates the nation-space as a limiting construct for our modern world. Bhabha sees the identity of a nation as narrated and subsequently constructed by those narrations. This means that the nation for Bhabha is always changing and always due for change; subsequently, nations are falsely reduced to static identities. Nations are constantly changing: "It is from this instability of cultural signification that the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities - modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native' - that cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in its enunciation [...]"(Bhabha 1994:218). The unstable knowledge pictured here creates a problem for the nation, because the nation claims to be stable and whole.

According to Bhabha (1990), nations are created as if they are one homogeneous group with a coherent culture but there are slippages intentionally left out as they do not drive purpose of retaining power. This is seen through Mcleod's (2000) observation that the gender issue tends to hold a complex position in nationalism concerns. The gender question surfaces at a subtler level that is beyond the identity categories of race or the ethnic. Mcleod (2000:114) avers that "nationalism is very frequently a gendered discourse." The implication is that in terms of gender, nationalism is not ideologically innocent it allocates different spaces to men and women in the nation project. He further argues that nationalism "traffics in representations of

men and women which serve to reinforce patriarchal inequalities between them” (ibid). There is thus the need to explore women’s position within the nation. The autobiography allows writers not only to narrate their life experiences but also to weave their personal stories into those of their societies and nations. By examining the life writing of these six women, I confirm women’s involvement in the ‘making’ and ‘imagining’ of South African and Zimbabwe story.

1.6.6. The self and autobiography

At the center of the narrative is the self which should be understood as identity. The self as the narrator and the narrated; the subject and object of narration, hence the definition of the genre as the true story of a person’s life, told by him/herself. In his attempt to define autobiography as a genre, Lejeune (1973:299) also starts with the fundamental: “[t]he identity of the narrator and the principal character that is assumed in autobiography is marked most often by the use of the first person.” It is safe to say that first person perspective is the most basic element of the self-narrative in the mind which can be incorporated into an autobiography by the use of the first person pronoun. The centrality of the self as an identity enables one to understand the autobiographical genre. These identities are formed, configured and shaped by social experience and through the concept of narrative.

It is important to explore the meaning of self in relation to itself, its surrounding and constructions in auto/biography. Giddens (1991) notes that the self is not an essence, the self as a category does not exist of its own. It is through narrative that we create selfhood Bruner (2002:3). Hence, self-identity is born out of and nourished through sustained narrative which give it form and content at different times and contexts (Giddens, 1991). The auto/biographical genre provides historical background of ancient cultures which did not prize the individual. (Gursdorf, 2001 and Giddens, 1991).

The self is a product of the past and future (Javangwe, 2011). To retrieve the past events, one needs to remember. Lynch (2010:209) avers that memory and the self lies at the heart of auto/biographical writing. It is impossible to talk about the self without talking about memory. Memory plays a vital role in the existence of our sense of self. Therefore, critical experience is recovered from the past to inform on the present self as well as the desired self in future (Giddens, 1991). The individual appropriates her past in light of what is a project of the future. Hence the self uses selectivity to licence to visit the past.

Dennett (1992) and Giddens (1991) contend that self is reflexive in which the individual is responsible of. This provokes the idea that we are what we make ourselves. Thus, Butler (2005) suggests that in matters of the self, insight is perilous, perception is flawed, and judgment is weak. This speaks to issues of bias and subjectivity in self-narration. It also provokes the ideas of elisions, silences, omissions and exclusions when telling the story of the self. It suggests that some things have to be given up, borne, or suffered in order to tell the story of the self. “Telling a story about oneself is not the same as giving an account of oneself”, (Butler 2005: 12). There is always a presumption that “the kind of narrative required in an account of ourselves accepts [...] that the self has a causal relation to the [...] others” At every turn the individual strives to construct, and reconstruct, a rewarding and self-fulfilling sense of identity. This way of reading auto/biography as it guards against naturalizing identity categories and allows them to stand as creations or constructions. With such an understanding, the selected auto/biographies are responsive in the manner in which they narrate the self and other. They all speak to Butler’s (1995:12) argument that “a narrative that responds to allegations must, from the outset, accept the possibility that the self has causal agency, even if, in a given instance, the self may not have been the cause of the suffering in question”.

According to Mead (1934), selves image from social interaction, they are formed within society. Individual consciousness with all its intentions desires is formed within the contexts of social relationships. De Castro (2004: 471-2), like Dennett, views the self and other as “tacit terms of a dichotomy that sets them apart in a hierarchical scale” in which the self as an identity is the immediate subject while the other is the debased object. In spite of their socially constructed differences, the self and other are identities that survive on each other’s capacity for mutuality, flexibility and social relationships. Hood (2012) stresses that, among other things, that the self is shaped by context, by culture and by the reflected opinion of those around us through social interaction. Zenenga (2012:165) observes that identities are “socially constructed, fluid, open to negotiation and always shifting”. The self and other, according to De Castro (2004) have a relationship that is permanently saturated by power and conflict. Through exclusion, which is often calculated, the other is marginalized and abject, and through power, dominance, human subjectivity and exploitation the role of the other is downplayed. This is the kind of exclusion, marginalization, power, dominance, subjectivity and exploitation that is challenged by Makoni, Trent, Mukoko, Khuzwayo and Madonsela.

1.7. Theoretical framework

The study is based and informed by many relevant theories in its endeavour to understand how women construct the nation.

1.7.1. Postcolonial theory

The life narratives used in this study employ different ways of recounting their life experiences from pre-colonial times to date. Therefore, these were interrogated as postcolonial literatures. Postcolonial theory incorporates various approaches Huddart (2006) and theorist have taken different views of it. However, its nature makes it appropriate to include other insights for an indepth analysis of the study. Postcolonial theory is a critical study of colonial texts, both literary and non-literary, cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands. It contends with various forms of oppression. (Ashcroft 1989). Also, Bhabha (1994:171 and Rukundwa and van Aarde 2007), argue that postcolonial theory “bears witness to the unequal and universal forces of cultural representation” that are involved in a constant competition for political and economic control in the contemporary world. Moreover, he sees postcolonial critique emerging from colonial experiences. Such an understanding of the postcolonial theory enabled me to question identities of the self and nation in the selected texts. This shows that postcolonial theory frames its analysis on cultural differences, political discrimination and social histories that are practised and normalised by colonial and imperial machineries.

According to Young (2001:1-11, 57-69), postcolonial critique is concerned with the history of colonialism “only to the extent that history has determined the configurations and power structures of the present. Therefore, it allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their sovereignty it gives them a negotiating space for equity Bhabha (1994); Spivak (1988:197-221); Ashcroft et al (1995); Sugirtharajah (1996:1-5); Dube (1996); Segovia (2000:11-34) and Punt (2001, 2003). Such a scenario affords those who are marginalised in terms of gender, race, and studies of human rights to break the suppressing situations. Young (2003:7) observes that the language of postcolonial theory is uncompromising, as it “threatens privileges and power” by rejecting and challenging the superiority of some cultures over others. This is because its priority is to administer equality and justice to people.

The postcolonial theory not only seeks to salvage past experiences but also to chart how the world can move beyond colonialism towards equality and opportunity for all Shenmugasundaram (2017). It claims intellectual authority by claiming space for multiple

voices. For instance, as evidenced in Spivak's voicing of the subaltern ('Can the subaltern Speak?', 1995). Spivak (2005) incorporates the subaltern voice of the marginalized and silenced as a strategic and necessary position from which to speak and to be heard. By speaking on behalf of a group (representation), postcolonial discourse is able to carve out a clear oppositional identity. The selected life narrative show that marginality is seen as a site of resistance.

Huddart (2006) argues for the continued relevance of autobiography as a central explanatory category in understanding postcolonial theory and its relation to subjectivity. This study makes use of this view and demonstrates incidents of such moments on issues of gender the self and nation. The nation as 'unified' is inclusive of the marginalised although not give the chance to represent themselves. Gopal (2004:154) states that the nation is considered as "contract between individuals based on the purely rational calculation of advantages." In this course that some clusters are pushed to the margins showing those who belong in the centre and the borders.

1.7.2. Auto/biography

The term auto/biography is a Greek word, with three components auto-bio-graphia meaning, "self-life -writing", Smith and Watson (2001:1). When combined the term describes a literature already existing under other names (memoirs, biographies and confessions) (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2012 quoted in Smith and Watson, 2001). Berryman (1999: 72) asserts that autobiography is inclusive of various accounts "that authors make of their experiences". For that reason, the preferred context adopted the demarcated term "auto/biography" in order to cover its variants. It is imperative to note that these modes of self-life-writing have distinct features (see page 9 and 10 of this study).

Lejeune (1989:4) has expanded the definition "it is a retrospective prose narrative written by a real person about his own existence, where the focus is on his own existence, where the focus is his individual life in particular the story of his personality. It is a self-representation characterised by the fact that the author whose name refers to a real person and the narrator in the text are identical. Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang (1989) also identifies three discrete selves: author, the narrator and the protagonist, to have an autobiography. He writes:

Each self can be identified by its activity. The author writes, the narrator tells the life-story, and the protagonist accomplishes and experiences within the narrative, the

story that is plotted and told. The author can be identified by the name on the book of the autobiographical text, while the narrator can be seen in the voice and shading of the narrative, and the protagonist's in the unwinding of the action (14).

Therefore, there are three discrete selves: the author, the narrator and the protagonist, to have an autobiography. The authors in the selected narratives are seen putting accent upon their lives as they endeavour to show their lived experiences in their life stories. It is important to note that since autobiography is a retrospective narrative, it means that it draws heavily from the events of the past. This is indicative of a going back in time, which is part of the basis of this study. Moreover, Lejeune (1989) argues that one can only speak of an autobiography when the above stated threefold identity is established. Through presenting a text as an author declares commitment to the reader to write in a truthful manner about his or her own life that the reader trusts, and thus autobiographical, story. According to Lejeune (1989), what defines autobiographical writing as such is the assurance given by the author that the story which he relates is the story of his real life narrated as authentically as possible.

Protagonist in this study are privileged autonomous selves or "sovereign selves" (Smith & Watson, 2001:3). The privileged autonomous self is located in the genealogy of the Cartesian self who privileges his narrative of ordering knowledge regimes that advance his self project by designating the other as object of the Subject's knowledge and by universalizing this knowledge. In this context, Anderson (2001:14) argues that 'In so far as autobiography has been seen as promoting a view of the subject as universal, it has also underpinned the centrality of masculine and, we must add, Western and middle class modes of subjectivity'. Privileged autonomous selves promote their view as subjects whose views are underpinned by the centrality of the masculine. The selected autobiographies for this study challenge this view showing that it is not only of the masculine, even the feminine have autonomous views. Brunner (2004:694) notes that in the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. The protagonist under study become the auto/biographical narratives they are. What they are telling about their lives become what they are. Ultimately it becomes their identity. For instance, Madonsela becomes a Makhadzi because of what she says about her roles, Mukoko and Makoni become an activist because of what she did for women and girls and Trent becomes empowered for confronting the institution of marriage and patriarchy to mention but a few.

Olney (1980) notes that auto/biographical narratives should be examined beyond truth and fiction. He is stating that there are elements of truth and elements of fiction in auto/biographical narratives. As a genre auto/biography cannot exist without these elements. The study explores the interrogations that exist between truth and fiction produced by fictional narration in the genre of auto/biography. For Olney (1972), autobiography is also an act of self-realization, a metaphor of one's own self. To the reader it brings an increased awareness through an understanding of another life in another time and place of the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition. There can thus never be a dull autobiography.

Fiction has the critical capacity to apprehend cultural reality (Javangwe, 2011). Hence, the border between truth and fiction in auto/biography is be scrutinized because the unstable relations of truth and fiction are what give auto/biography its distinct form. These are some of the elements found in the selected narratives of which one might think that they are far fetched yet that is what auto/biography is all about. In addition, Olney (1980:60) argues that in auto/biography the truth of facts is subordinate to the truth of men. What the narrators state is the auto/biographical truth. This is what the auto/biographical pact by Lejeune (1989) converses for.

Smith and Watson (2010) aver that an auto/biography is a historically situated, highly subjective practice of self-representation. Since life writing necessitates a retrospective look into the author's life, it gives an explanation of how the writer arrives at a certain stage in life. In auto/biography, the author remembers and narrates, which means "situating experiences of the past [...] in accordance with and in relation to what has happened since, as understood and reunderstood from [...] the moment of narration" (Sigvartsen 2013:3). Also, Baumeister, Stillwell and Wotman (1990)'s argument puts a seal on this line of thinking when they describe autobiographical narratives as stories that are "selectively constructed, selectively retrieved, and distorted, they shed light on subjective biases, perhaps most especially people's motivations to reconcile events with their desired self-concepts". This is because the telling of a life story marks the telling of one's presence in the world, in a particular society and epoch. All these are recounted from a strategic point of looking back, the end-point of the life-story. This is usually the edifying life moment the autobiographer chooses to look back. It is usually the epitome of achievement or a moment a final or stable identity has been arrived at. The end-point provide the subject with an authoritative or definitive standpoint from which to look back (Omuteche and Kesero, 2016). Such an understanding shows that life writing is political.

Nyanda (2016) observes that auto/biography is a political machinery closely aligned to functionality and intention. The selected narratives by the protagonist under study were seeking millage in their political affiliation or endeavours to change things or using their auto/biographies as political weapons. Therefore, the narratives under study can be called political auto/biographies.

The self simultaneously inserts itself into history or autobiography as it narrativizes since ‘autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of the past: [but] also the attempt and the drama of a man struggling to reassemble himself in his own likeness at a certain moment of his history’ (Gusdorf, 1956). Gusdorf’s allusions to ‘drama’ and the self’s ‘assemb[ling]’ of itself attest not only to the artifice of autobiographical narratives but also to the self’s deployment of a range of narrative devices in its quest for an ontological grounding and a justification of the same narratives that are mobilized to bring it into existence (Tshuma, 2021). By this, Gusdorf (1956) is stating that auto/biography is drawn from the selected women struggling to reassemble themselves in their own likeness at a certain time of their history. It is recreation, reconstruction, a remembering of oneself in their own likeness at a particular time of their history. These women are looking back from the archives of their past. However, these are not neat shelves where they just pull out their history. They are digging back into memory which is fraught with eventualities for example amnesia and forgetfulness. Mandell (1980) notes that ‘[...] even the most punctilious critic expects truth as well as illusion in autobiography’ (Olney: 62). Also, Opoku-Agyemang (1989: 5) puts Mandell’s stand more forcefully when he claims:

Even the mistakes, lies, lapses in memory, ambiguities, confusions disorderliness, missed ironies, conjectures, stupidities and perplexities of an autobiography remain special and epiphanic because they are the literary embodiments of a person’s way of seeing the world and this [...] is not duplicable.

Auto/biography is overlaid imbricated in the selectivity of events. It is a retrospective construction of events and projections of the self into the future. That is why the narratives under study are not stating everything. The protagonist selects events such as marriage, education, political affiliation and endeavours, segregation issues, apartheid, rape and political machinations.

The study argues that the understanding of the self and nation is from the interpretation of life narratives. Therefore, autobiographies could then be viewed as the narration of a nation as experienced and imagined by the author. This is because life writing gives readers a glimpse

into the lives of individuals as social beings delineating their presence and presentness, a signature of their being or having been. Life writing too produces and reproduces different discourses of the community. It discloses, interprets, and records experiences that readers relate to their own life experiences and as members of the community (Omuteche and Kesero, 2016). This shows that the thriving of auto/biographies located within a culture a given society. Also, this speaks to what Gusdorf (2001:29) say “autobiography is not to be found outside our cultural area”. This essentially means that life stories are reflective of cultural norms and values of a given community. In addition, to Agyeman (1986), notes that African autobiographies are particularly useful for studying African culture. In the African context, autobiography is characteristically the representation of the individual in the service of the community. Hence the African society is commonly organized around the notion of the community.

Given the diversity of life narratives, I chose to add a memoir as part of the study as memoirs qualify as auto/biography. Autobiography is generally conceived as a written form and, according to Lejeune (1989:4), classified under life writing together with the memoir, biography, personal novel, autobiographical poem, journal/diary, and self-portrait/essay. McArthur (1992:650) defines memoir as a “written record of people or events as experienced by the author; a form of autobiography that gives particular attention to matters of contemporary interest not closely affecting the author’s inner life.” Essentially memoirs mainly focus on others whereas the autobiographer focuses on the self (Cline and Angier, 2010).

Like autobiography, biography depicts the subject’s life (Possing, 2017). Biography is defined as ‘a story about and an interpretation of a life [...] a depiction of a historically real, lived life of a central character [...] told by somebody else’ (Possing, 2017, 22). Commonly, biography is a written account of the life of a particular person. Bourdieu (1994) asserts that biography’ is a form of literary production, but it is also a form of cultural production as biographical texts reflect social reality and also help create it Nadel (1984). From this understanding biography is a representation of a life lived. Bourdieu (1994) argues that a biography is an artifact a construction. Such an analysis provokes questions of biographee representativity and biographer’s subjectivity, objectivity and neutrality which are interrogated in the study. Locally and recently, according to Daymond et al (2003) ‘no people can rise above the standard of its own women’. This dictum sums up women’s place in society and creates an expectation of the grounding of most writing by women. This is particularly true of autobiographical writings in the sense that these writings bare the soul of that society through its women. Black South African women are as diverse as the continent itself; ethnic and regional differences,

predominant religious influence, specific local traditions, the extent of modernization, and post-colonial conditions impinge upon and give shape to an individual writer's consciousness.

The writings of black women signify all that, as well as empowerment and entrapment, division between 'school people' and 'ochre people', spokesperson and observer. They incorporate all these heterogeneous contexts and influences in the process raising questions around empowerment and disempowerment, agency, passivity, speech and silence, participation and spectatorship.

Magubane (2004) states that 'to be black and a female writer has its own particular frustrations because it was never intended for us to be here. We are in spaces that have been appropriated for us'. She further argues that black women writing exists everywhere where black women exist; it is the writing of the most disempowered articulating their skill and writing themselves out of marginality. This marginality may stem from neo-colonialism and other forms of race and class oppression, coupled with respect for certain features of traditional African cultures. The tensions that arise from all these double allegiances are most evident in women's autobiographical writings.

Coullie (2004) and other prominent writers see life writings or narratives of the self and a century of black women's self-representations as one great emancipating stride in black women's writing. Stories of women's roles in pre-colonial society, femininity in relation to national survival, and commitment to the struggle at great personal cost for some, are stories that have to be considered not only for what is said but how it is said. Ranging from mediated testimonies- where the mother tongue was not English - to adopted self-representational prose narrative modes of the dominant culture that may read as detached anthropological accounts, the questions then of self-knowledge, objective representation, self-invention, repression and confession then abound. There is thus some voyeurism and an inbuilt inherent paradox in these exercises of self-dramatization yet subjective introspection of these older selves (narrator both a subject and object of the story).

The space occupied by African women's autobiographies in contemporary discourse is still a domain that has not been adequately explored despite the increasing interest in the field from the continent and beyond. This study aims to interrogate further this invention of the African woman, the voicelessness, absences, assertions, empowerment and all the other contradictions that are inherent in this break of the yoke of silence and self-retrieval for black women.

These definitions of autobiography and the parameters; the interplay between fact and fiction, auto and autre biography that they set are the informing point of departure in this exploration of black African women's autobiographies.

1.7.4. Feminism

Hooks (2000:6) defines feminism as a "movement to end sexist oppression" and a belief that feminism influences and shapes perspectives. To this end, feminists are people (primarily women) who want to see sexism, and other forms of oppression, eradicated from society. While feminism is often discussed in mainstream media in a singular manner, feminist culture is not monolithic; there are many strands of feminism. Freidman (2011:244) asserted that since the early 1980s there has been "an acknowledgement of different feminist theories and movements" and that the "plural form of the noun feminism forced a recognition of difference as a way of refusing the hegemony of one form of feminism over another". Concepts of feminism include perspectives from women of color, as well as international women (Kezer & Lester, 2008). Some have referred to these distinct ways of viewing feminism as strands. There are numerous strands including womanism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, African feminism and more.

1.7.5. Womanism

This study conducts a womanist appraisal of the selected auto/biographies by African women to interrogate self-representations of the general African women writers. Focus is on African women who are originally from Africa, whose genealogies depict a history of colonial subjectivity. Women writers' discourses challenge the construction of womanhood in dominant ideological discourses like apartheid, patriarchy, and religion, among others. My reading of the selected narratives dialogues with identity politics of African women and my interrogation of these issues allows me to consider how discursive practices (Foucault,1972) as sites of knowledge production generate conceptions of African womanhood that either silence or make visible African women's political agency.

Of interest is how African womanism sheds light on the political nature of women's experiences. As a political movement womanism was first advanced by Walker (1983) about black women in America calling into question their suppressed role in the African American church, the community, the family, and the larger society (Thomas, 1998). Theoretical origins of this theory stem from Walker's first utilization of the term "womanist". Walker (1983: xi)

notes that a womanist is a "black feminist or feminist of color [who is] committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker, 1983: xi). Walker implies that womanists are concerned with overcoming not only gender discrimination but also discrimination based on race or socioeconomic status. Another, African-American alternative concept to feminism is Clenora Hudson-Weems's "Africana womanism" (1993, 1998). Like Walker's womanism, Africana womanism is created and designed for all black women. However, for this study mostly gleaned from Ogunyemi's (1985) concepts of African womanism. Although her conception has important parallels with Walker's and Hudson-Weems's versions of womanism, there are decisive differences too. The most substantial is that Ogunyemi wishes to conceptualize an ideology that clearly demarcates and emancipates African womanism from both white feminism and African-American womanism/feminism. "Since feminism and African-American womanism overlook African peculiarities," she explains, "there is a need to define African womanism" (Ogunyemi, 1996:114). Only African women may be African womanists in Ogunyemi's sense. To add on, the theory of womanism is critical to this research as it facilitates an awareness of the status and contribution of black women to society. More important, it recognizes the need to engage men in the (re)construction of society.

Another difference in content manifests itself in their incompatible attitudes toward lesbianism. While Walker emphasizes that womanists love other women, "sexually and/or nonsexually" (Walker, 1983: xi), Ogunyemi argues that her African womanism rejects lesbian love because of the "African [...] silence or intolerance of lesbianism" (Ogunyemi, 1996:133). The core of Ogunyemi's definition of African womanism is the conviction that the gender question can be dealt with only in the context of other issues that are relevant for African women. However, in this connection she clearly exceeds Walker's and Hudson-Weems's race-class-gender approach. She stresses that an African womanist "will recognize that, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy" (Ogunyemi 1985, 64). Ogunyemi's (1985:63-64) womanist perspective considers black women's writing as an alternative space where womanhood is "produced [as] an exciting, fluid corpus that defies rigid categorization". Although she was referring to African novels, I appropriate her views on the personal as political to theorise African women's autobiographical representations. Moreover, an African womanist must deal with, among other things, "interethnic skirmishes and cleansing, [...] religious fundamentalism, [...] the language issue, gerontocracy and in-lawism" (Ogunyemi (Ogunyemi,

1997:4). My reading explores how these writers reflect their identities in view of the existing debates about gender in Feminism and Womanism.

1.8. Methodology

This study adopts literary research methods which involve a close reading of six selected texts and their illumination with selected theories. The study is interpretive and relies on textual analysis. Narratives were grouped according to thematic concerns and other distinctive stylistic features. Secondary material was used in the analysis of the primary sources. The research methodology is of a qualitative nature. The preference for the qualitative approach is justifiable given the nature of auto/biographical writing, which explores life and experiences from the subject's point of view. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) define qualitative research as involving "the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study, personal experience, introspection, life-story, interviews, artifacts, cultural texts and visual texts –that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives." Flick (2002:2) posits that qualitative research "is of specific relevance to the study of social relations owing to the pluralization of life worlds." Plurality implies movement away from the unitary and dominant narratives of history and reality. Thus, the study of life patterns, perceptions, experiences, relationships and identity constructions requires a new sensitivity that acknowledges diversity. Qualitative research has obvious advantages since, as Flick (2002:7) argues, it is not based on "a unified theoretical and methodological concept." It has its niche in postmodernist thinking where the call is to move toward "locally, temporally and situationally limited narratives".

The qualitative approach was used specifically for its privileging of reflexive interaction during the research process. The researcher's response to, and communication with the subject(s) under investigation is considered "an explicit part of knowledge production" and "not excluded as a possible intervening variable" (Flick, 6). In the study of auto/biography, this allows me to make comments, observations and judgments that are informed by my own experiences, both physical and literary, and other historical sources. The method also allows me the entry into texts from a theoretical base, and then to proceed from the text to theoretical formulation. Therefore, all was not confined to a form of rigid schema of procedure. To use Denzin and Lincoln's (2000:3) argument, the researcher is enabled to "deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand".

1.9. Chapter delineation

This study is divided into eight chapters. Below is a description on the contents of each chapter and its contribution towards the research.

Chapter one provides a general overview to the background and context of the research problem. It highlights the rationale behind the assessment of the stated problem. It also highlights the research aims and objectives and methodology utilised in the analysis process of this study. The chapter also discusses the literature review that sets parameters to it and focuses on the conceptual theoretical framework, discussing key components of auto/biography, nation, the self and womanism.

Chapter two titled, *Disrupting hegemonic heteronormativity: Reinventing the female as speaking subject in Makoni's Never Again Not to Any Woman or Girl Again* a gynocentric in nature narrative explores how the self, through online and offline activism, social media, and print activism, negotiates the political spaces of lawlessness at a time when the violence against women is rife. An argument is put forward that the manner in which the self emerges from its gendered private space into the public domain, inadvertently transforms autobiography to protest writing. The argument of this chapter is that activism affords numerous positions for the production of agency, discontinuous and unstable selves and narratives whose pretence to coherence and determinacy.

Chapter three titled, *Negotiating Self in Intersecting Identities* discusses how the different identities Trent negotiate contribute to her sense of self. The coalescence of identities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality in Trent's text through intersectional theory Crenshaw autobiography, is closely examined, in order to unravel the multiple identities Trent projects in her text. The chapter also explores how Trent identities contribute towards her marginality and privilege and how she appropriates gender roles as mother and woman in her campaign for the emancipation of voice and space.

Chapter four titled, *Utopian and dystopian spaces: Deconstructing the "born free" illusion in post-apartheid South Africa* examines Wa Azania's use of the memoir to unmask the continuities of the apartheid in the Post-apartheid moment by creating a utopian discourses and aporia. This is seen through the Pan-African utopian ideal that despite opening spaces of solidarity across Africa, such an ideal remains fundamentally utopian since this solidarity, is based on an imagined identity. Another aporia points to the genre's claim that the author of a memoir can reconcile collective and individual memory to create a justifiable narrative. The

chapter made use of Nora's concepts of memory, memorialization and iconography in nation construction or narration can be used by juxtaposing Wa Azania's rejection of the utopian ideals of the "rainbow nation" and Ricoeur's meditations on memory, forgetting, amnesty, amnesia and forgiveness.

Chapter five titled, *The crisis of Representation: Betrayed and silenced, The story of how Fezekile reclaimed her voice and name* examines Tihabi's biography on how it provokes questions on the complicated relations between the self/subject and the gendered nation; the complex interplay that rises between genre (biography) and the representativity of the biographee suggested by Tihabi's feminist project. The chapter argues that the author's project to retrieve the biographee's name by the same ploy, her voice, is limited/ becomes impossible by the process of biographical writing. Hence, the need to interrogate the overlapping of the biographee's voice in the biographer's project. A project whose objectivity and neutrality are constantly under close scrutiny to satisfy biographical requirements.

Chapter six titled, *Unpacking the Makhadzi metaphor in No Longer Whispering to Power: The Story of Thuli Madonsela* explores the political biography by Gqubule who seeks to understand the formative events in Madonsela's life which culminated in her becoming a fearless and respected South African Public Protector during Jacob Zuma's tumultuous presidency. In this collaborative biography, the biographer seeks to construct a biographee whose moral and ethical stature is credible to the public or groups that the biographee represents. She draws from VhaVenda customs and culture. Gqubule attempts to compare Madonsela through the Makhadzi metaphor. By stating the character Makhadzi, a title appropriated by Madonsela herself, Gqubule, through tropological and metaphorical transference, positions the biographee as a credible, legitimate and morally approvable leader, since makhadzi is a custodian of approved values and norms in the VhaVenda culture.

Chapter seven titled, *Self-writing, femininity and Human Rights discourse* argues that Mukoko is giving a counter narrative to Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) totalising discourse. A discourse which often subordinates and homogenises individual experiences and perspectives. To understand Mukoko's case the chapter is guided by Huddart's post-colonial theory and autobiography which affords the subaltern with a cogent case as it is primed to engage in situated confrontations against this totalising discourse. The chapter is also guided by Foucault notion of discursive practices that provides ways of understanding Mukoko's experiences.

Chapter eight is the conclusion of the study and it presents the main arguments made in each chapter and, briefly states the findings of the study. The chapter makes suggestions as to the areas of potential research in future, in the area of women's auto/biographical narratives in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 2

Disrupting hegemonic heteronormativity: Reinventing the female as speaking subject in Makoni's *Never Again Not to Any Woman or Girl Again*

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reads Betty Makoni's autobiography, *Never Again Not To Any Woman Or Girl Again* (2012) as gynocentric in nature (Showalter, 1979) in that it is situated in feminist discourse whose aim is to reconstruct or reinvent dynamic female identities that evade the space of patriarchal and hegemonic heteronormativity (Warner, 1991) through activism: both online and offline. As a work of 'writivism' that not only packages and archives, it also continues her work and life of activism against the exploitation, oppression and violation of the girl child and women in Zimbabwe. Her retrospective account is an external analepsis. It stretches to the past to capture the time her mother was growing up and back to the present gives her autobiographical narrative a chilling effect in the manner in which it recollects the violence and violation experienced and endured by women and the girl child as a historical reality. While focus is on the pain and distress suffered by women and the girl child in contemporary Zimbabwe, the issues of physical, emotional and psychological torture of women are global. This is because violence against girls and women is one of the most pervasive, fundamental violations of human rights in the world. It affects girls and women's health, their ability to earn an income, and their dignity and opportunity. It undermines global goal of achieving gender equality. In addition, the violation of women is a global pandemic in that it affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime (Green, 2018).

The chapter explores how the self, through online and offline activism, social media, and print activism, negotiates the political spaces of lawlessness at a time when the violence against women is rife. An argument is put forward that the manner in which the self emerges from its gendered private space into the public domain, inadvertently transforms autobiography to protest writing (Butler, 2015), as well as a political project (Moore-Gilbert, 2009 and Huddart, 2014). The argument of this chapter is that activism affords numerous positions for the production of agency, discontinuous and unstable selves and narratives whose pretense to coherence and determinacy will soon be dismantled if and when subjected to an anti-foundationalist reading (Derrida, 2012). Such a claim will be proved from the way Makoni changes from being a victim to being a survivor, an agent who makes use of the political tools

of writing. She makes use of online activism to reconceptualize and reconstruct female subjectivities and identity positions that not only constitute a counter public (Habermas, 1990b) and "subaltern counter public" (Frazer, 1997:81) but also alternative modes of identity, different from those imposed by hegemonic heteronormativity. With such a position, Makoni's autobiography has ramifications for both generic (autobiography) and political positions that such activism opens up. Autobiography, according to Gusdorf (1980), and Anderson (2001) theoretical bias towards men [not that the two scholars are completely gender blind] has always been the field of the masculine subject. Both Gusdorf and Anderson invest their study into the masculine subject set by the West: those part of the founders of nations, pioneers and explorers. To the contrary, just like other auto/biographies in this study, autobiography as espoused by Makoni seeks to create visible and vocal female subjectivities that "split" the "classical structure"(Cixous, 1986: 83) (the binaries formulated by hegemonic heteronormativity that gestures to male /female) and thus enable the female subject to escape subordination within the male dominance (Lacan, 1998a). Females are contesting a space that has been dominated by men nevertheless, this escape is not meant to imitate (Miller, 1980) the masculine autobiography's appeal of linearity, chronology and individualism (Showalter, 1984; Jelinek, 1980). The gynocentric autobiography opposes this with relationality, interdependence, indeterminacy and empathy (Mason 2001a). This provides occasions to mount criticisms of the masculine attributes of aggressiveness, competitiveness and the privileging of cold reason over empathy. In investigating autobiography and the formations of female subjectivities like in Makoni's autobiography, one takes note of Caruthers' (1994) theorizations on trauma and narrative in which it is concluded that victims of trauma are inhibited by unspeakable memories of events in the attempt to tell their experiences and hence their lives. In recognizing this, one also feels compelled to suspect the authenticity of an identity from such a traumatized subject that tells a coherent and unified narrative.

Additionally, Makoni's autobiography is a site for the self, by its nature in terms of character and will, intervenes to inscribe how the public sphere or the domain of national politics makes one open up about their life to reveal deep-seated secrets at the same time revealing one's character and the character of the nation. Makoni endeavours to show how self-reflexivity and private orientations catalyse her activism in the public domain and how the law is exposed as fundamentally unstable and therefore, in most cases, arbitrary and poised to promote unitary/totalising entities/identities as opposed to democracy and judicial authority (Derrida, 2012) in its application and interpretation in national emergencies. Consequently, the law in its

unstable and fluid state and lawlessness are examined in this chapter as tools for negotiating the position of the activist, feminist strategies of autobiography, interrogating self-identity and the core project of being in the presence of shame and construction of narratives of the self in the public sphere.

With that said, this chapter seeks to address the following questions; how feminist activism mounts its counter public to disrupt hegemonic heteronormativity?. Why the law or how the constructions of law and rule of law always present complications in feminist activism?. What are the compatibility and divergence points between autobiography and media technologies are (internet and print), as well as the effects of the intervention of media technologies in the invention and reinvention of emancipated identities?.

2.2. Hegemonic heteronormativity

This section interacts with the first question on the introduction, on how feminist activism mounts its counter public¹ to disrupt hegemonic heteronormativity online and offline. According to Warner (1991), the term heteronormativity refers to pervasive and invisible norms of heterosexuality (sexual desire exclusively for the opposite sex) embedded as a normative principle in social institutions and theory; those who fall outside this standard are devalued. Russell, McGuire, & Russell, (2012: 188) also define heteronormativity as “a societal hierarchical system that privileges and sanctions individuals based on presumed binaries of gender and sexuality; as a system, it defines and enforces beliefs and practices about what is “normal” in everyday life”. These binaries of gender result in specific roles which consequently lead to inequalities, that is those differences between men and women that deliberately give favour to one group by disfavoring the other. Here, heteronormativity is seen as a system that sanctions as well as condemns people who do not fit in and fail to behave according to an “acceptable” and “given” societal value system. It also points at the strong interconnection between sexuality and gender. This approach clarifies how much heteronormativity *per se* both affects and is affected by one’s view on gender. In this study, heteronormativity is used as an analytical tool to look at how it has contributed to the violation of women and how the autobiographer disrupts its hegemony. Hegemonic heteronormativity puts it that it’s patriarchal

¹ According to Fraser (1997), subaltern counter publics “are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities interests, and needs” (81). Counter publics emerge within the public as a resistance to the domination or oppression of the wider public (Fraser, 1990: 67)

in nature and males are powerful. Makoni's autobiography exemplifies these binaries through telling her experiences and other women's experiences. Although identities are always relational, they are inflected by larger social and historical experiences. Female life-writing establishes identity as largely relational; conceiving of the self in relation to others (Smith and Watson, 2001).

Relationality thus facilitates a reading of this autobiography that examines how multiple voices and points of view collaborate in narrating 'herstories' (65) that evade the danger of the single story. These multiple fictions of 'I' facilitate the narration of the autobiographical subject's story while enabling others' voices to be heard concurrently (Smith and Watson 2001). While the maltreatment and subjugation of women is an inherent feature of patriarchal culture, Makoni uses her life story to expose what is generally obtainable in Zimbabwe and elsewhere where patriarchal hegemony rules. Domestic violence is a plague in her neighborhood. Her father is a hypocritical dictator who rules his household with an iron fist (20). This sickness manifests at family level but exemplifies the patriarchal way of life found in some families in Zimbabwe and Africa. Reference to Africa should not in any way be misconstrued as suggesting that continents outside of Africa do not have cases of gender based violence that militate against women. For example, the retrospective element of the autobiographical narrative stated by Lejeune (1982) allows her to revisit not only the events surrounding her childhood, but a detailed account of how her father abused and beat her mother to death. Mukoko paints a picture in the mind of readers through her telling of her mother's death. Her narrative of the events that happened paints vivid images of what transpired giving credence to her story. The picture she creates of her mother's death through violence proves that it is a fact since her death is real. Lejeune (1982:193) defines autobiography as, "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality". Through memory, she remembers that:

on that fatal day [...] my father had come home very late and started hitting her using his fists, banged her head against the wall [...] pushed her down and kicked her until she was unconscious (9). [...] kicking her in the stomach not long after a caesarian operation and had to go back to the hospital to have it fixed (16) [...] my poor mother had cried in pain whilst my father beat her mercilessly" (20).

Words like ‘banged’, ‘pushed’, ‘kicked’ and ‘unconscious’ depict the gruesome and inhuman nature of the violence meted against the mother in full view of the child. While the mother endures the brutal physical violence, young Makoni suffers the emotional and psychological trauma of seeing her being brutalized like the mule of the world. The medical imagery in ruptured caesarian operation invokes a wounded and bleeding female body. The body that through caesarian section brings forth life is the same body that is objectified into a punching and kicking bag, and mercilessly brutalized in full view of young Makoni. It is a female body that speaks of a wounded nation struggling to stitch itself together following decades of patriarchal violence. She notes that, the brutal violence terrified and traumatized her vulnerable and helpless self, and there was nothing she could do since she was only six years old. She writes, “I could not stop him. I was terrified, shaken and shocked to the very core of my being. I tried to grasp the reality of the terrifying situation but had more questions than answers” (20). The ordeal of witnessing such grave violence manifests in that this is the adult Betty recalling and recounting incidences she witnessed as a child.

The concept of heteronormativity does not only investigate how sexualities are expressed and performed but also how a more extensive societal system is organized, structured, and maintained. This system argues that men are powerful, women are submissive and subordinate to men. This is exemplified through, how her father would beat her mother for serving him two pieces of meat instead of five. Yet, he would have bought half a kilogram for a family of eight (6). She was barred from interacting with other women of the neighborhood to the extent that he would look for footprints of her leaving the yard (12). As the man of the house he expects to get more meat. Her father’s dominant behaviour typifies the age-old adage that women, like children, are seen and not heard. The very adage that Makoni’s poster like book title *Never Again Not To Any Woman Or Girl Again* challenges. The declarative tone in the book title shows a determined fighting spirit to face the demon of male perpetrated violence against women and children. It is a refusal to be the lame duck that sits and watches while poison of patriarchy spreads like a virus. Tracking her mother’s footprints to ascertain whether or not she has been to the neighbour’s house betrays the father’s sense of insecurity. It also evinces how the modern patriarchal culture is obsessed with controlling women’s bodies. As a work of writivism that celebrates Makoni’s life of activism, the autobiographical narrative challenges how real female bodies and the women who inhabit them are alienated from their own personal and political potential through domestic and national violence. This therefore implies that

women have the potential to empower themselves or transform their lives but this is hidden under domesticity.

Makoni's father is a symbol of patriarchy whose presence sparks fear in his family. Makoni grows up in this kind of environment; a society riven with abuse of women (14). The subjection of the mother to severe beatings by her father is a cowardly act of stamping his authority in the house, especially after failing to provide material things for the family. Violence is used as a scare tactic; a controlling tool used by patriarchy to disinherit, disempower, and push women into positions of marginality. On the surface, Makoni is constructing a nation with women who are cowered, cloistered, powerless and silent. This is the desired image, especially from the point of view of patriarchy, of a good woman. This is because nations are constructed products of 'Invented tradition'. This makes a nation a product of "a combined set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:1-2). In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 & Bhabha, 1990). This suitable historic past perpetuates the image of women as mere consumers and the consumed with no say in the manner in which society steals every part of women's political selfhood.

Makoni's narrative poses a vital question on the kind of identity, for the self and nation that is mediated through acts of violence. As a child, she witnessed these acts of violence. Her adulthood is characterized by the same acts of violence. The violence is not limited to her family but goes into the whole neighborhood; she even calls it a "war zone" (10). Her recollection takes her back in time when as children, they witnessed the monstrosity of violence through men who would squander their wages with "bitches" (10). They would come back home with nothing, the wife and children would be at the receiving end of their violent rage. For example, Ba Cecilia had ten children, "who ranged from one to eleven years [...] worked as dustbin man, his name was linked to the dirt in the bins. Always looked frustrated and drunk" (11). He is further described as a man who was forever beating his wife, and pulling her by the neck and dragged her to the road where the whole neighborhood would encircle and cheer him (12). Baba Enock also abused his wife but was later beaten to a wheelchair by his son when he became of age; and, other men controlled their wives by keeping them away from town and, never allowed their families to interact with neighbors (28). Baba Philip did not beat his wife but subjected her to emotional abuse. Mr Mahuni also did not beat his wife

but overworked her (12-14). In all these examples, violence is the everyday language of communication. Deeply embedded in the culture and way of life of Makoni's neighbourhood is violence, which becomes a mode of expressing those other inner nuances of personal and group identity that border on a sense of insecurity and a desperate quest for domination especially among the men. Makoni's narrative shows that women are subjected to violence as a way of making them submit to men's authority and enforce fear and vulnerability that would leave them totally dependent on men.

Makoni's autobiography lucidly and passionately articulates the marginalized location of women and the girl child as a historic and systemic phenomenon. References made to the narrowed space and devalued status of women even in the envisaged new political order despite the active and physical roles they might have played (8) show that female exploitation is ingrained in the DNA of patriarchy. The nationalist narrative constantly and consistently strives towards a calculated negation of women's participation in the processes of nation building while valorizing men's roles. Fay Chung expresses the same passionate displeasure in her memoir *Reliving The Second Chimurenga: Memories From Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (2006) when she depicts how male guerillas reduced women's role in the nationalist struggle for independence to "warm blankets" whose task was to warm the loins of male fighters. Nagel (2005) theorizes the intimate historical and modern nexus between manhood and nationhood. He identifies the domination of masculine interests and ideology in nationalist movements, sexualized militarism, the interplay of micro-masculine cultures and nationalist ideology and the designation of gendered spaces for men and women in national politics as the initial components that determine and influence the construction of nations in masculine terms. The import of these observations is that "the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes" (ibid:119). Zimbabwean nationalism is thus not only a gendered discourse but also one that spells a perilous path for women both during and after independence.

In effect, all forms of nationalisms tend to assume a *Never Again Not To Any Woman Or Girls Again* complex character with regards to how they accommodate the issue of gender. This is necessary given Mcleod's (2000:114) submission that "nationalism is very frequently a gendered discourse." The implication is that in terms of gender disparities, nationalism is not ideologically innocent and allocates different spaces to men and women in the national project. Mcleod further argues that nationalism "traffics in representations of men and women which serve to reinforce patriarchal inequalities between them" (ibid). Therefore, the discourse of the

nation, even as the nation is often represented as the female ‘She’, can be read as “perpetuating disempowering representations of the woman” Mcleod (2000:114). Mayer (2000:1) supports this view when he contends that “despite its rhetoric of equality for all who partake in the “national project”, the nation remains like other feminized entities – emphatically, historically and globally – the property of men”. This toxic thinking gives men a sense of entitlement to the nation and all that is contained in it – women included. Hence, the continued objectification and exploitation of women by men.

Makoni’s autobiographical narrative depicts Zimbabwe as a nation that fails to protect vulnerable women and the girl child. Much as the legal system together with its state apparatus like the police and prison services claim to protect everyone, it is only male power that finds expression. The continued violation of women and children and their fear of approaching the police is as sad as it is ironic. Supposedly, the police should be a place of sanctuary that protects women and children. When young Makoni urges her mother to report her abuse, “she shut my mouth with her index finger, shiiii, we don’t say this in public. I would feel ashamed to have uttered such words. Deep within me I felt anger and I became a silent rebel against patriarchy” (8). Mother’s gesture to Makoni to keep quiet symbolizes the act of silencing that she has grown to acquiescently take as normal. She inadvertently passes on the same teaching to young Betty who, even when she is raped by VaNdera, a man who runs a small tuck-shop in her neighborhood, her mother could not let anyone know what had happened as it would bring shame to her door (19). This is reminiscent of the same acts of silencing stated by Pumla Gqola in her book, *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (2015). By recollecting and recreating these moments of physical and sexual abuse, Makoni is showing how the police have failed her, her mother and other women, and the girl child, as they cannot report abusive cases to the police, who are prejudiced against women. Additionally, these moments of abuse are calculated and executed in a way that makes the female victim feel responsible for the abuse meted against them. Hence, the reluctance to report, for fear of being judged by the community, as it was seen as disgraceful and something that brought shame to her door (19). The legal system (police) did not do much to protect women (13 and 21). This is further explained in page 35 and 42 of this study.

Nationhood would suggest harmony and oneness of purpose and shared national vision. However, the violence that manifests in Zimbabwe at national political level betrays a nation that is intolerant of divergent views. The violence cascades to the domestic space, which portrays Zimbabwe as a patriarchal society whose hegemonic structures oppress and exploit

women. The police and courts, it is said, always turned women away from the police station because such cases were regarded as “Domestics” (13). While Makoni’s life narrative was published in 2012, five years after the promulgation of the “Domestic Violence Act” in Zimbabwe, which came into effect on 26 October 2007, the behaviour of police that she refers to here was during her childhood days, before the law mentioned above came into effect. That a man could beat his wife in front of a crowd and walk scot-free because there was no justice, is reminiscent of the man in Dambudzo Marechera’s *House of Hunger* (1978), who beats and rapes his wife at a bus stop while the public is cheering him on. Similarly, in Makoni’s life narrative, we are presented with a society that socializes women to withdraw from self-expression, to accept victimhood and to drown in self-pity. Women are made to carry the shameful burden of being a rape victim. Once raped, they become social pariahs whom society view with shame and disgrace. Thus, social stigma makes it difficult for Makoni’s mother to seek medical treatment and legal recourse. These socially created limitations point to a diseased and unwell society, whose sickness tragically translates to Makoni’s fertility problems (19).

In the face of society’s negative attitude and stigmatization, the victimized, instead of coming out to seek help, paradoxically withdraw into self-destructive cocoons because of fear. However, by harboring its victims, society allows its infected components to contaminate the whole, and no healing takes place. The consequent effect of this is evident in Makoni’s life, which can be delineated in one sentence – that the scars may heal but the emotional wounds will never disappear. Her vivid recollections are testament to this. There appears to complicity collusion between her father and police. When police came to question him, the lack of remorse and concern is shocking to the young narrator who says, “my father showed no regret or respect when that police came to our house to question him, they did not find him at home [...] we saw them leaving, making no effort to inquire after our father’s whereabouts” (21). It is this casual and unsupportive attitude of society that militates against the healing for those who are victimized. When the police and courts cease to be places where one would go to get remedy, but is reminded of their moral depravity, then we are faced with a sick society that needs serious healing. Makoni, through her life narrative and activism, chooses to be part of the healing process. Narrating the self, it has been argued, is a form of therapy.

2.2.1. Hegemonic heteronormativity and the ailing nation

The violence abounds in the domestic family setting that Betty Makoni recreates in her autobiography is somewhat symbolic of the sickness of the society they live in. She tells her

family story in ways that makes it every woman and girl child's story. It is a review of the kind of society she lived and lives in, a heteronormative society that privileges males over females (Warner, 1991). A society whose demons she chose to face through activism and confront through narratorial recollections and flash-bulb memories of the past in her work of writivism. Her father exemplifies the gravity of the sickness of society. His callousness and emotional barrenness make him deny his wife the title of mother (22). He denies her as a wife at death (20), and does not allow children to attend their mother's burial (21-22). Meanwhile, the community sees all this abuse and turns a blind eye. These deliberate acts of silence and silencing by the community testify to a sick society. Makoni uses a personal life story to expose that there is something fundamentally wrong with her community. She takes her activism from the family space to the national platform in order to challenge the nation's laws and its police force, especially when women are beaten to death with no protection from the police. Under interrogation here is the state of wellness of a society and nation that prescribe cosmetic solutions to a deep-seated illness. The autobiographical narrative actively protests against a society that is clinging to hopelessly moribund notions of order and dominancy within its structures. As such, the conflation of the metaphor sickness enables it to inhabit victims, perpetrators and nation. The violation of women echoes the malfunctioning of the nation's body politic (Sontag 1991, Vambe 2003, Harris 2008). In the face of social and societal neglect, the adult Makoni, the activist, turns to the book and deploys it as a weapon in order to give voice to the silenced women and girls by exposing the toxic masculinities of her community and nation.

In addition, Makoni's place of birth and community invoked superstitious beliefs to oppress women. Without taking anything away from the fact of cultural relativism, we still have to concede that some of the beliefs are revealingly unhealthy, oppressive and expose the shortcomings of a society that does not want to embrace change. Makoni depicts a society rooted in the era where giving birth to twins was unacceptable. This is reminiscent of Nobert Mafumhe Mutasa's Shona novel *Mapatya* (1978) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). While the two novels capture the pre-colonial African past, Makoni's autobiography is a contemporary work of art that goes back to the 70s of her birth. In the case of Makoni's life narrative, her father despises his wife for giving birth through caesarian section, "My father told her she was a big shame to deliver a baby through the stomach and he wanted a real woman who had a child through natural birth" (7, 8,&24). The fact that the definition of woman is limited to her biology and method of giving birth shows a deeply conservative society that

believes in seeing women and not hearing them. Children born of “unnatural” ways were deemed naughty and their father would beat them for any slightest mistake (16). Makoni remembers that, “My mother seemed to be pregnant all the time, it must have been to prove that she was woman enough to bear children like any other woman, (24) she had been pregnant eight times” (7). Such is the tag that society attaches to women. The tag of the mule of the world good for sexual exploitation and reproduction. Women are valued and devalued on account of the number of times they give birth or get married. Much like Janie in Zora Neal Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) who remains “infertile” in several relationships and communities that showcase diverse kinds of “fertility,” or Celie in *The Colour Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker whose children are taken away from her and keeps having more. Even though the two novels capture the plight of black women in the American society, the striking similarity in the way women in Makoni’s life narrative are treated shows that the exploitation and violation of women is a feature of black communities. This explains the acclaim that Makoni’s life story received locally and globally, and the many accolades she won for her activism. Her story has universal appeal. Stories may, at one level refer to events within one person’s life while reflecting “cultural messages about society” at large (Muller 1999:224).

Makoni invokes images of sickness to show total dysfunction of society. Her society has sickly girls with rash all over the body who have gone through mental, physical and virginal torture. One of the girls reportedly had her, “whole vagina torn apart, vagina and anus became one flesh falling off, doctors had a hard time stitching it together” (228). The gruesome image of a tortured and abused girl shows a society whose men are deranged beyond redemption. It is no wonder the title of the book is a loud cry, a protest poster. The complete breakdown of moral fiber is shown through the reference made to HIV positive fathers and uncles who raped their daughters, who in turn were harassed by relatives for reporting (161). Traditional healers also prescribe sleeping with a virgin girl as a cure for HIV and Aids, and fortune (232-235). Additionally, religious leaders from Johane Marange Apostolic church force young girls into marriage by locking them in rooms “till they come out limping and smelling sweat and semen” (247). Savage is the word that best describes a society as diseased as the one Makoni captures in her life narrative. The doctor’s efforts and difficulties encountered trying to stitch together the brutalized young girl symbolizes the arduous task Makoni has to go through in her activism. She is fighting against a system that has failed to protect women and the girl child. A system that is dominated and controlled by the very men who are perpetrating violence against women and girls.

The character of the nation is often carried in the attitudes of its citizens. This is exemplified through the manner in which Makoni's father took care of his children. He comes across as an uncaring and irresponsible father. For example, Makoni notes that after her mother's death, her father sold their family house, "I wept inside for my mother's only possession (28) [...] we were farmed out to friends and strangers alike and very badly neglected, both emotionally and physically. We missed an entire term at school and had no routine or peace of mind in our lives" (24). Reading this part of Makoni's life narrative invokes Baby Halder's memoir *A Life Less Ordinary* (2002). Much like Makoni's memoir, Halder's narrative captures the life of a girl who battles poverty, hardship, violence and after a life of struggle makes a name for herself as a writer. Makoni negotiates through the vicissitudes of life to become a global figure in the fight for the rights of women and children. For her growing up, home and community were not the safest spaces to provide support and strength needed to achieve her goal. Her step mother, aunty and uncle also demonstrated to be as "demonic ugly within and outside" (27). This is because "they would sometimes direct that I give bones left over from their delicious meals to their two dogs [...] while my saliva dried [...] I saw dogs being preferred over me [...] I cried my heart out when I had to do dishes for food I never ate" (28). Reference to dogs, which gives animal imagery, serves to show the inhuman ill-treatment Makoni got at the hands of her aunty and uncle. It speaks to the English proverb that "a woman, a dog and a chestnut tree are the same. The more you beat them, the better they become". In the case of Makoni, dogs are given 'better' left overs, so she thinks, that the food she gets – if at all she receives any morsel of food. Her situation is worse than the *Oliver Twist* scenario in that although he was given little food he had something to eat. Home, which is supposed to be a safe place turns out to be constraining and some kind of prison. This is the same home and nation that Marechera calls "a house of hunger", and Mungoshi sees as the aftermath of an invisible war and a geographical mistake. The neglect and abuse she suffers at the hands of her father and relatives at family level is a metaphorical representation and construction of the nation. A nation that is unfeeling and inattentive to its citizens' needs, gripped in pretense regarding the social magnitude of violence, is itself diseased right at the core. Value systems, be they cultural, ideological or moral are what constitute the identity of a nation. It is below the veneer of well-being that nations always project there is decay that feeds off women, then the entire body politic we call nation is affected (Javangwe; 2011). The image of the nation is blighted by the negative and inhumane attitude towards women and children. The insensitivity and callous treatment of women and children by Makoni's father and relatives betray a nation that has lost its soul. Makoni reflects

the critical strain that is eating at the heart of the nation through abdicating the supportive responsibility to the vulnerable citizens.

Makoni's life narrative can be best understood within the context of her mother's suffering at the hands of society. Her own misfortunes are intricately woven into the mother's life. The "pain, the loss, the guilt, the anger" (27,33-4,37&44) results in her having a wrinkled face as child. What lacked then was the vocabulary of trauma, which is a recent theory. Evidently, Makoni goes through trauma as a child, which lives in her into adulthood as shown by the vivid recollections of her childhood experiences as if they happened yesterday. The vicious attitude extended to her by relatives, father, stepmother, workmates and society at large make her feel like she had lived long yet she was just a child (7). Makoni and her mother are victims who succumb to the weight of an imposed identity that dictates that they accept their new definition as outcasts and not women enough. The gravity of abuse reaches fever pitch when Makoni is accused of being a spy resulting in her forced exiled (which is further explained in subsequent sections). Makoni is the embodiment of her mother who vowed to die for her children (20). Similarly, Makoni did everything and anything to save the girl child.

Makoni's life narrative gives a glimpse of her family showing how their physic was affected by the violence they experienced. Many young people who are mistreated by an adult, victimized by bullies, criminally assaulted, or who witness domestic violence react to this violent exposure by developing behavioral, emotional, or learning problems (Moffitt & Klaus-Grawe, 2012). Her late young brother Moses who was sent to live with their paternal grandmother is a loner in the family and never connected to other family members (23). Her sister Ella kept on going back to an abusive husband but later found love with a white man, and Tendai whom she says remains challenged and so far has married three times and struggling to stop the vicious cycle of violence (493). Evidently, at play here is the case and curse of historical recurrence in the children's lives. The very emotional, physical and psychological abuse suffered by their mother at the hands of her husband and relatives is the same violence the children experience in later life. This is how damaging the violence was; nothing good came out of what happened to some of them during childhood, which manifested in adult life. If a family is not healthy; the likelihood of the damaging effects translating psychologically into the minds of the whole family is high. Hence, the autobiographer says, "his violent outbursts frightened us terribly and we lived in a state of fear and confusion" (23). Violence is a culture that can be inherited. Her father grew up in an abusive family since his parents separated.

About her father, Makoni says, “My father was just spiteful of everyone and everything [...] he experienced the worst when his parents divorced [...]. It looks like he was socialized in domestic violence” (28). She adds, “he learned violence as a child because he grew up in violence, it was deeply imbedded in his nature and he didn’t know better” (5). His failure to break free from the culture of violence results in a chain of generational violence whose toxic effects resonate with the toxicity of violence and intolerance at national level. Makoni’s father symbolizes the disruption of society at its nodal points where, ideally, he is supposed to be supportive to his family but relishes disruptive and violent attitudes to it.

2.2.3. Counter publics to disrupt hegemonic heteronormativity

This section seeks to respond to what Makoni uses to counter the hegemonic heteronormativity. Her autobiography seeks to challenge the patriarchal set up in its hegemony through feminist activism online and offline. A woman in the patriarchal set is supposed to be muted, but Makoni is speaking, showing that the subaltern can speak, (Spivak, 1985 and 2010). The very adage that Makoni’s poster-like book title *Never Again Not To Any Woman Or Girl Again* challenges the system. The declarative tone in the book title shows a determined fighting spirit to face the demon of male perpetrated violence against women and the child. It is refusal to be the lame duck that sits and watches while poison of patriarchy spreads like a virus. Hence, I read her autobiography as gynocentric in nature. A gynocentric reading of this narrative therefore, is to revalue sexual difference and femininity positively (Showalter 1979) .

In my gynocritical² reading of Makoni’s autobiography, the story can be seen as built on the binary opposition of dominant and muted groups. The dominant is that of the males with emphasis on culture. In the dominant discourse, there is no space for the other, which is the female. A gynocritical reading deconstructs the dominant with other perspectives. This approach makes the narrative to be seen as to be focused on female experience. Showalter coins the term “gynocritics” to describe literary criticism based on a feminine perspective. Showalter (1979:133) explains,

The program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adopt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit

²Gynocentrism A branch of feminist literary theory and studies which focuses on women as writers, and distinct from feminist criticism and evaluation of male writers. The term was coined by Elaine Showalter (1986).

women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture.

This means that the goal of gynocritics is not to erase the differences between male and female writing; rather gynocritics aims to understand the specificity of women's writing as a fundamental aspect of female reality.

As a means to counter hegemonic heteronormativity, Makoni constructs herself as a hero and emerges as a hero to the girl child and women. My discussion of Makoni's heroic figure in her autobiography reveals how she sketches the self as a girl child activist and political hero in the moral sense of the concept. She carves herself into a representative of the people, who selflessly risks her happiness in search of the happiness of those that she represents. The literal act of heroism is constituted through the metaphorical signification of women's agency. It also challenges the androcentric promotion of masculine standards as normative, and the presentation of those standards as neutral rather than gendered. Consequently, from a gynocentric perspective, the assumption of masculine-neutral norms has meant that femininity has traditionally been presented as deficient, secondary, and lacking. Gynocentric feminism is concerned, therefore, to revalue sexual difference and femininity positively (Showalter, 1979 and Hawthorne, 2005). Thus, in her narrative Makoni is re-evaluating these differences.

However, the concept of the hero is not without its limitations. It is frequently associated with male protagonists often existing in isolation. The hero may not seem an appropriate term to associate with women in a patriarchal space. As a strategy for her activism Makoni appropriates various offline activist activities she navigates. She exposes this patriarchal conservatism when she is denied the opportunity to become a police officer because she had Caesarean section although it had long dried (142). This systemic gender segregation in the police force shows a society that sees a woman who gives birth to the future of the nation as unsuitable of joining the police force. The same police force that is supposed to protect women and children. This could be the reason why the police more often than not ignore women and children abuses by men. She is also accused of not adopting her husband's surname. Hence, the school requested for her husband to come to school in order to accept Makoni's resignation (141). We are told of a headmistress whose power was clipped by patriarchy and could not exercise the professional and assertive stance necessary on a male teacher with a reputation of abusing and fondling girls' breasts until Makoni intervened (148-151). For Makoni, it was hard to break these boundaries. The rebel in her combined with her daring nature distinguishes her from her

mother and places her on a hero's pedestal.

Robbins (2005-2006) recommends a broader interpretation of the word hero, noting that the western world tends to be “fed on a steady diet of ‘warrior’ champions who are traditionally males and quite often Caucasian” (777). She encourages us instead to view “hero [...] as a gender-neutral and racially blind word to designate a person who is in the process of individuation [...] as creators, scholars, pioneers, lovers, caregivers or wise prophets” (777). Polster (2001) perceives female heroism as essentially different to male heroism, arguing that for women, heroism is “rooted in the particular circumstances and values of women’s lives” (13). For Polster, this positionality means that the characteristics of the woman hero are stated in less “adversarial terms” (13) and may be linked to family and community connection. Drawing on Polster’s argument, we could submit that this pull of the family may actually mean that women have greater struggles to contend with initially in their journey. However, at the culmination of this journey, as is the case with Makoni, she emerges as “an independent person who chooses the way she will be involved and what her contribution will be” (Polster 2001:187). This acknowledgement of family also recognizes that unlike the typical mythic male hero, solitude is not a necessity. Instead, this definition of heroism recognizes the importance of social and familial networks. Both the need for social networks and the pull of the family are themes that emerge in Makoni’s stories. Her desire to save the girl child comes as response to some type of awakening which initiated her journey. For her it was a long dream that seemed out of reach before but then became a possibility (154). Furthermore, heroism that has its roots in family has lasting and broader impact because family is the microcosm of nation.

From the onset, the narrative thrust of *Never Again Not To Any Woman Or Girl Again*, seeks to achieve a position of moral authority for its subject by constructing circumstances that are couched in taking a stand for the vulnerable. Being Christian and morally upright are fundamental to Makoni’s identity, and seeking justice is the quintessential performance of that identity. It is what gives Makoni a sense of purpose as she acts in partial fulfilment of her destiny, cause and calling. The moral cause became her commitment in her decision to fight those in power despite the fatal dangers of reprisals. Seeing girls dropping out of school for various reasons that included forced marriages, early pregnancies and girls being overworked in the homes and enslaved sexually and kept out of school (160-1) spurred her to work for the betterment of the life of the girl child. Such sights are a painful reminder of her own life of abuse, and the only way to erase such memories is to fight the demon in the present. In many

instances she discovered that parents preferred that a boy goes to school and a girl starts making plans to get married (341). The depiction of girls as marriage-bound subjects shows a society whose values are deeply rooted in patriarchal culture, which only sees the girl child while denying her a voice and freedom of choice. For Makoni, discrimination of the girl child starts in the home, and the school, which was supposed to be a safety net for girls is not eager to track those who drop out and even those who come to school to have the register marked as a formality. In all this, Makoni sees the future woman leader at risk of dropping out of school, because without education girls cannot not have social and financial independence. Thus, her fight for equality began at the school she was teaching through introducing a girls' club that was adopted by other neighboring schools. This resulted in a 17 day, 200km protest march against child sexual abuse and the subsequent birth of the Girl Child Network (154). The march is an act of endurance, a show of determination and resilience, and of the girl power embodied in the female body. She takes the lead in defying tradition and speaking out against the sexual violation of women. Challenging the norm is a precarious undertaking. Such a stand reveals that autobiography is a political project (Huddart, 2014) in that Makoni moves from her private space (Butler 2015) to effect change, mobilize others to public causes to get justice. Thus, Makoni emerges as a woman who has a fighting spirit. She fights patriarchy and refuses to be covered. Even the march defied expectation. It brought with it local and international recognition.

The narrative delineates the identity indices of a self firmly woven into the social and cultural fabric of her community. This is in keeping with Mead (1934) who avers that selves emerge from social interaction. He also states that individual consciousness with all its interactions and desires is formed within the contexts of social relations. Hence, Makoni's desire to help the girl child. To confirm this identity, society also awards recognition and acknowledgement of the unique personal qualities of the individual. This subtle and delicate process is critical in the negotiation for prominent roles in society, political or otherwise, without exposing unbridled ambition or aggression where advantages are perceived on the part of the subject individual. For example, during a girl's launch in Rusape, she notes that one of the ladies pleased with the work that Makoni had done wishes she had come "hundred years ago [...] don't you ever think we are very old, it is the hard way of life we were subjected to as girls that made us like this" (152). To add on, she likens the march to a "self-made army" (156) with her as the leader and their commander, one they look up to. An old woman who also wishes Makoni should have come during their time further buttresses this when she says, "I wish you had come some sixty

years ago. Look at all these scars from my father's beatings who wanted me to get married to my sister's husband. You who see what we don't see [...] thank you for sending Muzvare, the warrior to liberate girls" (160). Coming from old women, the testimonies are rich material archived by Makoni to authenticate and validate her work. The richness is also historical. The old women chronicle their lives of abuse dating back to their childhood. The old physical scars their bodies possess constitute bodily art and writing that speak of abusive patriarchal culture whose values and belief impinge against the freedoms and full potential of women. The beauty of their testimonies lies in that they have lived and survived long enough to see another woman launch the girl child network. Even in their old age, the girl child network is like the Underground Railroad and passage to their freedom, the freedom of women and the girl child. Throughout the narrative, community leadership is not sought after. Society awards it, often to a reluctant recipient who only obliges as a matter of duty. Effectively this works to parry criticism in the event of shortcomings in the individual's execution of public roles and duties. The military imagery used to describe Makoni confers hero's status to her. She is the one who comes to empower and save the girl child in that community.

Part of what moralizes Makoni's motivation to stand for the vulnerable is her faith-based conviction that her actions were just. She does this by quitting her job as a teacher and trying to venture into other professions like being a police officer and a magistrate. Professions that she thought would empower her to deal with gender based violence. She writes, "standing in front of girl students who were so poor and miserable was infuriating. I wanted to help the girls in this town who were being abused and nothing was being done about it, but felt I had no influence as a teacher" (121). This raises questions about the nature of education children are getting in schools. It is an education that is silent about gender-based violence and the rights of children, especially girls. Noting this is a mark of despair on the part of Makoni. She further states that, "I wanted to tell them of my desire to become a police officer and that I had the big heart to help girls get justice" (122). At this point Makoni fails to realize that the violence against girls is culturally systemic. She thinks that being a police officer would empower her to fight and help the girls. However, the problem is deeper than she imagines. It is systemic and requires a community strategy – activism. Bruner (2001:35) notes that autobiography is also a form of "taking a stand" that has an "evaluative component". In empowering the girls at the camp, she writes that, "I explained to them that unless we stand up to it (patriarchy) nothing will change" (119). Betty comes out as a courageous woman who left her paying job to venture into unchartered waters with no certainty about making money. Activism is a journey, a

declaration of war whose only returns are the moral goal of emancipating the girl child. Makoni is aware of this, hence, the courage to fight for her rights. Even her rape ordeal as a child is not a deterrent. Her autobiography is a site of self-identification and self-determination. Her refusal to work within the confines of traditional and patriarchal dictates of society and to remain within established sexual spaces of gender assigned roles are acts of bravery. By opting out of conformity and braving to fight for the girl child, Makoni chooses *The road not taken*, to borrow from Robert Frost's 1916 poem. It is narrow and thorny – and daring to use that road is a heroic undertaking. Makoni is aware of this, hence the strategy to mobilize community members, especially the women and girls to be part of the struggle for their emancipation. Such is the marker and identity of a hero.

Through self-positioning Makoni advances the auto/biographical mode as a powerful and emotive mode for the expression of the experiences of those who occupy the peripheral spaces of society. The mode permits the self to demand recognition for her individual existence in society. The construction of the self is done over social and political battles in which personal identities are negotiated and sketched in the context of broader societal expectations. Conscious recognition of the existence of conflict between individual interests and society's demands is a requisite condition for the exploration of the self and its final resolution within the structures of that society. When Makoni awakens to this need she declares to fight for the girl child.

A critical dimension of Makoni's memory of the abused girls and orphans concerns their symbolic nature as vulnerable people. Their suffering and susceptibility to exploitation do not only evoke a sense of injustice and undeserved misery but also binds their condition to that of the nation. This nation sits and lives in the children who embody the future and are pinning hope for deliverance from Makoni's heroic representation. This harmonization of orphans and nation is a metaphor of the nation undergoing wretchedness akin to orphan-hood. Orphanhood becomes the symbolic metaphor with which one make sense of, not only the wretched state of the nation but also the sort of intervention and intervener required to save it as personified by Makoni. The shelter and Girls Empowerment Village (169) is a miniature mirror image of the nation and its inhabitants rediscovering and rejuvenating themselves. The shelters, the orphans and their vulnerability are bound up with Makoni's sense of destiny. Her experiences with the vulnerable influence her sense of self-awareness, sparking a new sense which compels her to conceive of representation as transcending standing up for them. Beyond saving and standing up for them, representation as evoked by the orphan metaphor of the nation, entails committing

to being their hero in every aspect of their lives.

In defending the abused, orphans, victims, Makoni claims for herself a moral and just position that questions the nation's leaders whose concern for the vulnerable and helpless is also questionable. In retrospect she writes, years after independence, there was no single vocational training center, yet the leaders lived in posh suburbs (267). Makoni's reflections on how much the leaders have done for the orphans, bring to question and under scrutiny what the leaders have done as the national father figures for the Zimbabweans in the context of this crisis. While the plight of orphans is the national leaders' responsibility, there is no doubting that Makoni is also challenging leadership at government, family and community levels. In fact the late former president Mugabe is evoked as the source of the orphans (and indeed nation's) problems. For, he presided over a government with leaders who have built fortunes from corrupt deals. This becomes clear when read in the context of the politics of political fatherhood in Zimbabwe (Muchemwa and Muponde 2007).

Like many nations across the world whose nationalism involved combative revolution (Nyambi, 2016), the Zimbabwean nation is imagined by its nationalist liberators as a product of masculine violence. Many studies have explored multiple manifestations of gendered power in political privileges enjoyed by figures such as those in positions of power (Muchemwa, 2007, Nyambi, 2016 & Nyambi and Matsika, 2016). Makoni writes that, "during our march we had collision clash with some war veterans who had held women and girls hostage. The march was an eye opener. Zimbabwe had won independence for men only. Patriarchy had replaced colonialism" (161). The ubiquity of the politics of liberation is at play here. There is mockery, censure and ridicule of war veterans who as liberators, ironically abduct and hold women and girls hosted. Their actions play into Fay Chung's³ male-female relationships of freedom fighters during the war of liberation. Makoni questions the late Mugabe's fatherhood by using moral values of justice to test his moral foundations and ethics of its apparatus and methods of hegemonic control. Her reflections of herself as a social volunteer with the Girl Child Network and other charity organizations not only illuminate, in a moving way, the self-interestedness of leaders, but more importantly portray the unfatherliness in ways that morally heighten her interventions as the Girl Child Network founder. The self-interestedness of the government is

³ Fay Chung, who was there during the struggle, highlights how thousands of young women guerrillas were used as sex slaves by commanders. Sometimes, women did not enter into these casual unions willingly, but were forced into them. Such women were euphemistically called 'warm blankets' (126).

seen through “clean up exercise” (220), the demolition of all business structures they thought were illegal. This included tuck-shops, a livelihood of a human being, boys’ quarters, and markets for women. Children lost their parents and shanty houses. Women and children and men, just everybody in the high density of Chitungwiza was carted all over the GCN offices. Makoni states that, it really moved her to do something. With the help of Oxfam Novib GCN, distributed food parcels to the affected citizens (222). When the reporters from the UN covered and published the ordeal, the government of Zimbabwe was terrified and annoyed. The state newspaper published a feature entitled, “sellout in Murambatsvina found, the woman who crafted report for UN, Betty Makoni” (223). Makoni writes, “I wanted everybody to see that women are living outside, young girls were giving birth outside. Many cases of rape had actually come to our attention as a result of the cleanup exercise that left thousands of women and girls outside” (223). She emerges as their hero and a voice for the voiceless which makes her an enemy of the leaders (435). Recounting events around Operation Murambatsvina and its consequent effect on women and children, Makoni takes her activism from the community into national politics and international arena. The nation ceases to be marked by border boundaries. The nation becomes part of the global village. A space within other spaces. This gives gravitas to Makoni’s activism because the United Nations reacted to the report she produced. The idea of United Nations means that Zimbabwe, as nation, cannot ignore its women and children and expect the world to be silent about it. From the village to the international arena, Makoni becomes a force for change in the fight for the emancipation of women and the girl child. Even the demonization by the state media fails to steal away her identity as a liberation fighter, very much like the self-proclaimed liberators of the nationalist struggle.

2.2.4. Locating the self in history

Makoni’s autobiography locates her identity on a real continuum whose beginnings speak of lineage attained from royalty, and the middle of heroic resistance and the immediate strives to uphold the past and take it into the future through the subject’s acts of heroism. Situating self-identities on such a linear continuum, rather than simplifying, involves the self in complex engagements with matters of the nation. Thus, Betty’s narrative implicates her in the construction of the nation from the perspective of her family as well as its history and her experiences of activism.

It is worthwhile to note that the Shona people are patriarchal and very rarely do they emphasize the matriarchal side when identifying themselves. Discussing the conditions and limits of autobiography, Gusdorf (in Olney 1980:28-48) concludes, “each man thus appears as the possessor of a role, already performed by the ancestors and to be performed again by descendants”. Although Gusdorf was discussing Western autobiography, I find this applicable to Makoni’s narrative. Makoni’s self-identity is in the first instance indexed in the historically significant other. Makoni stresses her father’s ancestry in order to lay claim to its heroic legacy and to appropriate her paternal grandfather’s legendary fighting spirit (164 &166). She is a descendant of Makoni, whose links are traced to her grandfather Chingaira, who was the last to surrender in the first liberation war in Zimbabwe. In this way, the subject of the narrative is not simply presented as the significant other, but as the progeny of royalty who could not escape the imperatives of national responsibility. This background bestows on her a sense of predestination as “Muzvare” (her royal highness) (164) to play a pivotal role in the creation of a new nation. She also claims the title her royal highness and mother of all orphans since it was the title bestowed to any female born in the royal family and was also named after princess Hazviperi (164). She is further given land and all powers to look after deserted and orphaned children by her village chief Makoni. This is the land she used to construct the Girls Empowerment Village where girls from all over the world could come and heal from any abuse (167 &175). Makoni uses her position of privilege and agential power to influence social change. There is dialectical relationship between people’s subaltern condition and her agency in search of justice. The auto/biography, in retrospect, seems to be justifying and strategically positioning its subject at the core of the national project.

In this way, the auto/biography is identifying the local history, traditions and ritual sites of the Makoni people, even if only invented, as the basis for the imagination of a common community and/or nation. The premise for such imagination is that Chief Chingaira, as much as he carried the Makoni people to heroic recognition, pitched his struggle on the national level. It is in that role that he becomes the exemplar for Betty who says, “why would I surrender my mission to empower girls and make each and every girl a princess, untouchable and ruler” (166). She emulates the proud fighter of the first Chimurenga, Chief Chingaira Makoni. Self-identity is thus premised on precedence, on a historical continuum that keeps certain desired traditions and identity images alive. Elements of self-identity are retrieved from the past, recast to conform to present circumstances, and then projected into the future as a matter of tradition. Intrinsically, therefore, every self-identity, with all the inherent instabilities, has a degree of

essentialism to it. It is this sense of community that provides the fertile seedbed for nationalistic sentiment. The life narrative, once it has appropriated a critical footage on the historical continuum, determines the formation of future identities by making them largely consistent with precedence. The essence of identity is rendered hereditary and the Chingaira gene runs through his descendants. Agency is acknowledged but predicated on biology and history. Thus, Makoni's self-identity is in her ancestry. However, its earthly formation is fulfilment of a destiny carved for her before birth. This Jesus like kind of identity makes Makoni a larger than life character whose mission on earth is unstoppable.

Makoni's autobiography further highlights the impact of economic and political conditions on individual's choices or lack of them. This is evident in the way she relates her quest to pursue education as a young girl. Her role in educating herself, while heroic, is also a lonely, long and individualistic way of solving problems. As a young girl, she tells us that, she worked hard waking up at 4 am to help her mother with housework who was often frail and ill. She would then leave with a vegetable bucket for vending in the morning and after school to help her family (15-16). She also had to go back to vending during school holidays to pay off her A level school fees. "my father did most of the talking whilst I did most of the working for the school fees" (70), and "I had the brains but no money" (56). This self-drive and determination are manifestations of the older Makoni. They are qualities she was born with and nurtured as she grew up. Her intelligence can be traced from childhood. She recalls that "the only time when people noticed me was when I was called to collect prizes for top grades (4) got the highest obtainable grades in the country at grade 7 and O level (56-57), also passed A level (68), which landed her name on the list of the few chosen ones for University of Zimbabwe (74). In retrospect she states that at high school rich girls only talked to me when they wanted to copy my homework (61). She went through school despite her limitations, something which not many would do especially coming from a family such as Makoni's. The accolades she received in primary and secondary school are a precursor to the international recognition she got for her gender activism. In other words, even when her own society rejects her as a spy, the work of her heart and hands speaks for itself. The world will notice when the nation turns a blind eye.

Makoni's narrative shows that the self is consistently cast as the pioneering agent in the African cause. She declares this perception of herself as a way of propping up a specific and desired self-identity. By so doing, she constructs herself as a fighter who is not allowing anyone to hinder her from pursuing her work. She does not give up the fight for her organization to be

registered. Although authorities barred her from registering her charity, she stood firm and fought in court until it was registered (159 & 285). Government might have tried to stop her but she took state power to task until she won the case. Taking on state power is an act of courage, and only a determined warrior can do that. Makoni fought and won. Courage and determination are identity constituencies of Makoni. At Chishawasha high, she struggled as a poverty-stricken student and weathered all the difficulties. The pursuit of this noble cause calls for sacrifices in order to better humanity in the context of a new nation.

It therefore, does not come as a surprise that the stance and thrust of Makoni's narrative is an acclamation of her famous qualities and reputation and the endeavor to pit her as a hero by birth. She travels to look for donors during her pregnancy (202). Pregnancy did not hinder her pursuit to help the girl child. She states that pregnancy tends to stigmatize women just as radical feminists consider motherhood as something that stifles one's growth. Brave Makoni notes that, "I thought I would imagine I was not pregnant [...] I took the offer and told myself I would try" (203). In a different context, pregnancy symbolises the burden of womanhood that Mai Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) talks about. However, even that fails to deter Makoni from pursuing her vision. Seemingly, knowledge that she is carrying the future of the nation gives her the impetus to work even harder towards her goal.

2.3 Compatibility and divergence points between autobiography and media technologies

This section is a response to the third question from the introduction, the compatibility and divergence points between autobiography and media technologies. This section seeks to answer what media technologies allow Makoni to forge her feminist activism and self-identity online through internet and print. Fotopoulou (2016) posits that feminist activism is guided by strong visions of social change in which digital and network communications feature prominently. For some, social media and other new media technologies are strategic, they provide opportunities for direct engagement with civic life. Poletti and Rak (2014: 3) also argue that, "nowhere is the power and diversity of the autobiographical more visible than online, where it is the *raison d'être* for many of the activities and practices associated with web and where acquiring and maintaining online identities make up the core activities of many users".

For Makoni media technologies allow her to source donors to fund her girl child projects. She notes that she received an email from Evelyn Zinhandu, a Zimbabwean woman from Holland, who picked her name from the website of the Global Fund for Women GFW, her organisation

was keen to fund programs to end sexual abuse of girls (171-2). Through email she managed to communicate with several organisations and write proposals requesting funds for organisations which in turn funded her projects. Online communication via emails simplified her work and communication with her donors who in turn were to be kept updated. Internet allows her to reach a larger audience which contributed towards the creation of the GCN. Through media technologies, Makoni manages to reach powerful organisations which kept her organisation better resourced. Part of her story is told through emails she sent and received. These emails qualify her narrative as an autobiography.

Setting up a GCN Facebook account allows her to reach a larger audience which contributed towards the sustenance of the GCN. Fotopoulou (2016) observes that leveraging of communication, information and the media in social change is the basis for a global industry that is supported by governments, development aid agencies, foundations, and international and local NGOs. It is also the basis for multiple interventions at grassroots levels, with participatory communication processes and community media making a difference through raising awareness, mobilising communities, strengthening empowerment and contributing to local change. For Makoni, Facebook and Twitter became platforms that she used to continue her work of activism since she was in exile (457). Social media is seen working in her favour when she was nominated for the top ten CNN Hero awards. Sam Weller, her strategist, quickly mobilized votes for her online which resulted in her winning the award (405). It also became a platform where GCN alumni would communicate and keep their patrons updated on their current activities (498) and it became a space where “young people daily testify on how my messages transform their lives” (521). To add on, Makoni does not limit herself to social media but elevates to shooting a documentary titled “Tapestries of Hope” (498), that reveals the story of GCN in Zimbabwe and Africa, exposing the myth that raping a virgin cures a man of HIV/AIDS. Because of social media Makoni is no longer muted, she is in a space of people who were subalterned but she is speaking. Media technology has offered a space where she can freely express herself to save the girl child.

However, media technologies do not only bear the positives in one’s life’s journey, they come with its own shortcomings. She quotes the wrath of other women who took to social media to launch an “anti-Betty-Makoni-campaign” on Facebook in that they wanted her voting for the CNN Hero’s award to be stopped (405). She writes, “she posted nasty statements [...] and all those allegations were just trumped up” (405-6). Makoni’s experience with online media

highlights the implications of these technologies. The unstable nature of these technologies speaks to the elements of a conventional autobiography that usually emphasize the linearity and stabilized representations of a well-made story with beginning (birth), middle (growth of consciousness) and an ending that is unified but disturbed during the course of one's life.

Misch (1951) argues that the concept of a unitary, linear, fully comprehensible, one dimensional self is an illusion. The idea of self has always captivated a prime position in literary creations. Self figures in literature in myriad forms, ranging from partial to comprehensive glimpses into the self of the writer. Jelinek (1980, 16-19) argues that the irregularity, however, characterizes the lives of women and their texts, which have a:

disconnected, fragmentary [...] pattern of diffusion and diversity in discontinuous forms because the multidimensionality of women's socially conditioned roles seems to have established a pattern of diffusion and diversity when they write. This means that a pattern of discontinuity consistently characterizes women's autobiography just as it marks their lives.

Mason (1980:210) argues that women recognize another consciousness in their search to establish their own identity; "the grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other, seems, if we may judge by our four representative cases, to enable women to write openly about themselves". Also, human self and human life are multifaceted and cannot be reduced to strict linear equations. Autobiography, as a genre that tries to capture such complex, complicated and elusive phenomena called life and self, likewise cannot be expected to be circumscribed within the self. Thus, autobiographical narrative is envisioned as tracing the journey of the author's life "bios" from confusion and chaos to order and totality. The moment Makoni is born, different forces come into play and shape her life, for example the economy and environment affect her life experiences. The vicissitudes of life's challenges are that determine her life. Also, writing autobiography is dependent on memory, the moment one refers to flashbulb memories life cannot be remembered in linearity. Similarly, Makoni's narrative shows some discontinuity.

The narrative consolidates the image of a selfless woman who sacrificed herself for the benefit of the girl child. By donating her prize and awards money to GCN "to further the work I started, there was nothing for me personally" (287), Makoni selfless sacrifice places her in the same category of "mothers of the revolution", to borrow from the title of Irene Staunton's book, *Mothers of the Revolution* (1990). Except her revolution is different – it sits at the heart of

nation building by saving, serving and building the future of the girl child. Such acts of kindness can only come from someone who truly has a passion for what they are doing. More so, her transfer of power shows her selflessness. Makoni still sees the need to continue the work she began as she says, “One thing I spent a lot of time doing was just to figure out how I would possibly leave in place a credible team of leaders to carry forwards the legacy” (345). Pre-occupation with succession is as humorous as it is ironic, especially in the context of the nation of Zimbabwe at the time of writing the memoir. Mugabe’s Zanu PF was battling with succession issues after decades of being led by one man. Antithetically, Makoni is not allowing her absence to kill her organization like some leaders who die together with their organizations. Her case is different because she is not using her organisation for self-enrichment (348). The genuine objective is to help save the girl child, thus, she sees the need to transfer power. Even as she was in self-imposed exile in Botswana, she wanted to leave the organization in safe hands; hence, she looked for funds for the leadership capacity workshop (348). Notwithstanding the malignment by her own people, she grows the organisation (346) and keeps focus on the core business of saving the girl child. She notes that, “they had warned me many times that they would destroy me. I would fight to the end and meander with the organization. I would zig zag from time to time. I would come out strong” (346). The strategies of survival she employs speak to her upbringing. Her lifetime of struggle required strategies and art of war in order to escape the snares of patriarchy. Although the transition was marred with scandal, “women at the helm of the organization wrestled each other for power and as our leadership transition took place, just building a team of women to work together was tough” (351). This tragic development in the fight for positions and power is telling. It shows that in most cases, noble visions and ideas are lost because of triviality. Expending energies on power and positions retards the struggle for the emancipation of women and the girl child. The moral of this story is that at times, women can be their own enemies, and the tensions between them are created by patriarchy in order to sow divisions that make it easy to control women.

Her continued work in the United States (446-460) shows that violation of women is a universal issue. It also shows a woman of passion about her work. Environment is not a limiting factor for her. She describes her work of activism thus:

Being an activist is living and working through passion, self-belief and conviction that whatever I do is with good will and good intent. There are no rewards for doing this work and no one wants to pay for it being done [...] despite the trials and tribulations I have gone through, I do not regret being an activist as I have actually

managed to move mountains. I am optimistic and I believe that what I have done so far and what I am doing and what I will do to free girls from rapists [...] is something that has been passed on to our generation of female leaders from the Makoni tribe, Muzvare (Princess) (465).

The metaphor of moving mountains and the diction of trials and tribulations gives Makoni the god-like stature synonymous with Jesus and the power He possesses. The power to move mountains and bring about change, the trials and tribulations regardless. Weaving in stories of other women in her narrative reflects her recognition of the importance of sisterhood and the power that women have when united. She shows admiration and respect for women who are helping young girls through the globe. This is seen through letters, emails and images attached in her autobiography. Her inclusion of that information is a means to authenticate her work by placing herself on the global space. Her work transcends borders.

With all the character glitz and glamour, Makoni is honest about her naivety. She admits to being weak around staff recruitment issues, “I also had a weird idea that women who once experienced abuse were more willing and able to do that work passionately. This is where I lost it all” (327-8). Firstly, she recruited Ropafadzo Mapimhidze who wrote nasty articles for the Herald newspaper about GCN and secondly Nyasha Mazongo whom she did not interview since she knew her, unfortunately she did not execute her duties well (352). She thought she was assisting people she knew. It is ironic that women who are expected to fight for the same cause were fighting amongst each other instead of patriarchy.

2.3.1 Irony and hypocrisy of the NGO sector

Makoni’s narrative concurs with the common saying that “women are their worst enemies”. She shows how women also play a significant role in their demise as they struggle for leadership positions. Makoni notes that fellow leaders in the NGO sector started sidelining her in activities when she started receiving international recognition, “I noticed strange actions of petty jealousies from my workmates and relatives” (286-7). One of the most important aspects of the social conditioning is that women do not like and cannot trust one another. Her continuous winning of awards angered leaders of other organizations to an extent of banning her from attending victim friendly meetings:

I was banned from all meetings for victim friendly courts where Red Barna (Children donor agency) funded some members and they cited that government did not want to

hear anything to do with GCN. That led to my being banned from operating in Zimbabwe, as well as having my shelters where I kept sexually abused girls closed. Police commissioner issued a statement to say police had been banned from taking rescue missions for sexually abused girls together with GCN (288).

On the surface, this shows women failing to support each other, and enabling patriarchy. However, shunning Makoni was a political safety valve for women who wanted to keep their organisations running and operational in Zimbabwe. More so in the face of the promulgation of the NGO Act in Zimbabwe. NGOs were under serious scrutiny by the state security agencies. The blacklisting of Makoni as a spy – real or imagined – by the government meant that all eyes were on her. Therefore, no one wanted to be found guilty of spying by association. The gravity of state sponsored violence and intimidation on Makoni is shown when she recalls the time they came in the middle of the night and manhandled sexually abused girls from their shelter as if they were criminals and bundled them in a police truck and took them to Northcours – a well-known child jail (288). Ironically, while shelters to protect girls were being closed and banned, Girls Empowerment Village had been identified as the best practice by Women World Summit and GCN continued to win awards one after the other (288). As it turns out, women are often the first to criticize and sabotage one another. They did not see the importance of her organisation to save the girl child. As it turns out, the patriarchal system uses women to criticize and sabotage one another. This is the same way former first lady Grace Mugabe used to criticize and demonize the first female former Vice President Joyce Mujuru.

Makoni's narrative exposes the hypocrisy of the NGO sector. She observes that, "some women are not in it because that is the right thing to do but are in it for money and glory. Powerful leaders of the NGO sector were only concerned with self-enrichment instead of doing practical interventions" (288). She also writes:

As I attended workshops in 5 star hotels, I lost interest [...] I saw hypocrisy, lack of accountability to children [...] I felt there was too much extravagancy and self-centeredness the more those workshops were conducted the more children became homeless and dropped out of school. It is the streets and brothels that measured the real impact of what was going on (289).

The revelation by Makoni about the role and functions of NGOs in Zimbabwe is telling. It confirms the allegations that have been raised by the Zanu PF government that NGOs in Zimbabwe are a social club for self-enrichment with money from foreign donors. They, more

often than not, ignore their mandate in pursuit of money. Makoni further observes that protecting children had been done as a payroll job as well as business rather than something one would do out of passion. Many who worked in NGOs were part of the aristocracy living in posh suburbs and drove latest cars (289). What one finds interesting in Makoni's condemnation of fellow women is that she is falling into the same trap of demonizing women that she is trying to lampoon. The bitterness abound in her tone here is too thick to miss.

The time she attacks other women, NGO leaders, she brings out her own weakness as a person and as an activist considering that earlier she had claimed that accolades did not matter to her. Ironically, she writes that they did not congratulate her, bad things were said behind her back. The very things she is condemning are the very things she is doing. She attacks fellow women yet she is in the process of showing that women bring each other down. When she embarks on self narration she fails to realize that she is an embodiment of the very character flaw that she sees in other humans. She inadvertently condemns herself by behaving the same way, although she is doing it in writing, packaging it in a permanent archive.

Makoni also emerges as a fearless and courageous woman as she was brave enough to take high profile cases. No matter how much she was threatened, she was not prepared to sweep rape cases brought to her attention under the carpet. Another person would have left after receiving threats but she continues doing her work in Botswana unafraid. The story of Obediah Msindo who allegedly took Loveness from a house-girl hiring agency, beat and raped her countless times (274) was made public by Makoni. Even when the cases were dismissed at court, that propelled her to work even harder. Loveness revealed that Obediah Msindo was a fugitive who got away with crimes as he was allegedly close to the late former president Mugabe. After months of going in and out of court, Makoni writes, "It was heard in the chambers, so we heard; and Obediah was given leave; and he was exonerated; and that there was no case, Loveness was never called" (279). She notes that many cases were swept under the carpet and lives of girls perished in silent genocide. Her inclusion of cases of women and girls who were raped by a popular prophet in Chitungwiza, Madzibaba Nzira continued the exposure of man of cloth. The case of a role model child television presenter Makanaka pointed to statutory rape by a prominent business man- Sambazi of a clothing company Alcatraz -who escaped it through marrying her and later dumped her after two years . Dr. Munyaradzi Kereke allegedly raped an 11-year old at gun point and walked scot free. These cases continue to evoke rape cases that Gqola discusses in her book *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (2015). Confronting these high profile cases and bring them to the public space shows the

fearless character of Betty Makoni. Even in the face of lethargy from the justice system, she fought the good fight. She observes that:

stories of high profile people who raped and evaded justice show how the justice system has failed its own children. The most worrying thing is that as long as those we consider to be role models rape children and get away with it, we will come to a point of where rape becomes a minor crime and a ritual [...] By letting such dangerous pedophiles walk scot free we are perpetuating a vicious cycle of violence (280).

2.3.2 Arrests and Exile

The nation as a construction is inconceivable without sacrifice from those who belong to it (Smith, 1998). This sacrifice assumes physical, emotional and spiritual forms, and this means that evaluation of nature and degree of sacrifice is relative and often indeterminate. Yet, its deployment in connection to nation may authorize huge claims of infallibility where duty calls, and hence beyond criticism. From this, the political life story appropriates its license to explain away every perceived weakness of its subject, faulting others where necessary, and thus scaffolds the super hero identity (Javangwe, 2011). On one occasion in 2007, Betty notes that she got arrested together with Film director Michealene Risley and her assistant Lauren Carara who had come to film the story on virgins cure of HIV and AIDS myth that had ravaged the lives of girls in Zimbabwe. Many babies and toddlers had been raped and the world kept silent about it (324). After the shoot in Rusape, back in Harare two trucks of ununiformed police raided Betty's house looking for the "American spies" and confiscated their valuable gadgets (324). They were manhandled and thrown at the back of the trucks and driven to Harare Central Police station (325) where they were placed in solitary confinement. They were later interrogated by over fifteen men, their concern being that "I, one day wanted to run for Presidency of Zimbabwe" (326). Here Makoni is revealing that power hungry leaders can resort to extremes measures such as using state security agents and state machinery to silence any person, institution or organization perceived to be hostile to the state.

There is something both compulsively heroic and humbling about the act of writing the self. Viewed in this light, the irony of Makoni's story is that although the narrator is the hero of the occasion as she saves the women and men who need help from the Murambatsvina clean-up, she ends up being perceived as the criminal and is arrested by the police. She writes, "secret

agents dragged me out the office to the police station for interrogation which lasted for three days” (223). In defense, she states that, “I wanted everybody to see that women are living outside, young girls were giving birth outside. Many cases of rape had actually come to our attention as a result of the clean-up exercise that left thousands of women and girls outside. They needed a voice” (223). To add on, she writes, “it was apparent that my very own existence was seriously threatened in Zimbabwe. I was vulnerable to verbal and emotional abuse after the arrest and daily I received threats on my mobile” (337). After being summoned by a group of so called secret agents who wanted to exploit her vulnerable situation, who wanted \$8500 as a protection fee, Betty notes that “scared [...] my nights were terrible. I suffered an anxiety. I suffered depression. I could not sleep, eat or do anything. I was going to disappear if I did not pay protection fee. I was horrified. To just think that someone was going to cause me to disappear was so much pain” (337-340). Meanwhile youths were causing confusion at her offices. She left for Botswana on a self-imposed exile and continued to work from there. The self is often portrayed as a victim of betrayal, misunderstanding, ingratitude and vindictiveness from those for whom it made sacrifices. This position becomes the protective bunker behind which Betty not only tries to consolidate her self-identity, but a position from which she finds strength to continue her work activism. Such implied sacrifices constitute the first line of defense when preferred representations of self and nation are under siege. When all of this is happening, Betty emerges the lone voice of reason that humanity has kept at the margins. Institutions of society arbitrarily demand conformity from the individual, and as such the individual strives for its existence from a position of marginality.

In addition, both self-identity and nation are constructed entities that need continuous scaffolding if they are to stand the test of time and space (Berryman, 1999). Their transient nature means that the desired form and content of these constructions imply that they demand something more than singular, essentialized presentations. They need narrative propping up as well as barricading from those perceptions that seek to challenge their implied moral and political currency. In life narratives of the self and nation are subject to constant subversion that at all times threaten to unravel their pretension to stability and contrived naturalness. Subversion intrinsically has the capacity to yield versions, often undesired, of the preferred constructions. In the case of Makoni’s life story the implication is that the self-identity that she ascribes to herself, and the nation that she envisages, together with the mediums for its creation, convey different meanings in different spaces and time. She notes that the government of Zimbabwe saw her as a spy but hopes that:

this book will enlighten our government and everyone who thought by going to western countries there was a hidden agenda to spy or something sinister. I want the government of Zimbabwe to know I was in western countries not as a spy as they always alleged, but a dignified beggar, a woman role model who was so determined to speak and bring funding to her girls who were invisible to many people in Zimbabwe (284).

Interestingly here, Makoni makes her book a project. A weapon directed at government. By describing herself as a dignified beggar, she assumes the same role that African government leaders take when they visit western countries with begging bowls for financial aid after looting resources from their own countries to build mansions for themselves. More shameful and shameless than dignified in the sense that they beg while wearing expensive suits and driving expensive German made cars.

The self is vulnerable and cannot enjoy absolute independence from the parallel gaze of the other persons. The apprehension of a self-identity, therefore, constantly competes with perceptions about itself generated by those around it. The desired image of the self as a girl child activist subverted with a public perception of wanting to usurp the President's seat. In the wake of these oppositional representations of the self, the life narrative stands in defense of the edifice, justifying the activities of the self. It is in this vein that Betty parries the criticism by insisting that all she wants is to save and empower the girl child. When her efforts go unrecognized, she sees herself as a prophet who is not accepted by her own people. She is constructing Zimbabwe as a nation that is not appreciative of its citizens. This is partly because, after she received an award from the prince of Norway and notes that:

no one from the Women's coalition she chaired sent congratulatory messages, the government ignored them. I found myself like back during those days when my stepmother blocked everything I tried to do. I had become a vicious cycle that never ends. I told myself I would keep going as the world had opened doors for me and the girls (292).

2.4 Effects of the intervention of media technologies in the invention and reinvention of emancipated identities

Makoni's autobiography reveals that media technologies play a significant role in the invention of emancipated identities. This is seen through the creation of independent and professional

women. Makoni attests that she has been invited to award ceremonies of girls who left their forced marriages “walking tall as accountants, lawyers and doctors” (466). Through her radio show former GCN girls would come and testify on how they had excelled. Makoni reports with pride many girls who made a breakthrough in their lives and professional areas (466).

Furthermore, she writes that her greatest achievement is that Girl Child Empowerment Model has been implemented so far in Africa, Europe, and America, “I am proud to announce that we have GCN Uganda, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, South Africa and about six US colleges (466 and 471-478). For Makoni, saving the girl child is a calling and through her diligent work she has emancipated a large number of women who now have agencies, have the power to present themselves. She manages to accomplish this through media technologies, and manages to reach out to the international community which values her work. Makoni has also managed to break the heteronormative boundaries, seen through men who have taken up her initiative to save the child.

2.4.1 Men as part of the solution

Makoni’s narrative takes a womanist approach in that she shows that people do not have to exclude men to achieve their dreams. Walker (1983) defines a womanist as someone who “appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility, and women’s strength and is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, men and women. Hudson-Weem’s (1993) also argues that, womanist theory tries to explain the experiences of women in Africa from their socio-cultural context. As a theory, womanism was introduced by Alice Walker in (1983) as a reaction to the shortcomings of feminism (Ebunoluwa 2009:229). Womanism, therefore, seeks collaborations between men and women to address communal struggles, and challenges the distance created between men and women by Western feminism. Furthermore, Ellis-Williams (2003:115) argues that womanists not only concern themselves about the liberation of women, but they also struggle along with black men and children for the liberation, survival and positive quality of life for the entire community. As such, womanism presents an alternative for black women by framing their survival in the context of the survival of their community where the fate of women and that of men are inextricably linked. In this case, Chitando (2011:10) sees a womanist as a woman with a holistic approach to the struggles of the community as a whole. The strength of womanism is on its insistence on women working with men to eradicate the oppression of women. It creates spaces for dialogue between men and women on how to deal with this oppression.

Makoni is showing that men can be part of the solution of women's problems. They are not part of the problems all the times. This is seen through her supportive husband who allows her to execute her activism without complaining. In her case, she asks for half of his salary for her to start her charity work and pay rentals. She recounts, "I told my husband that I wanted him to share some of his money with me and he just nodded in agreement" (144), he would accompany her to her rescue missions (169), welcomed the idea of adopting a two year old child who was dumped at the police station (181-6), took care of children in trouble in their home (189). Through her story, Makoni is showing that women and men can work together. A reflection that men can be part of the solution of women's problem. They are not part of the problems all the times. Her husband supported her to a point where people even questioned her marital status sanity (464). She is making it clear that she is not a radical feminist but a woman fighting for the girl child to have opportunities in life. A radical feminist would have avoided marriage, man and being a mother. Her actions are revealing that she believes that men and women can work together to empower each other. She is not stopped by the fact that it's the eve of her wedding but goes on a rescue mission to rescue a five-year-old raped by her drunk father (207) and makes her one of her flower girls, "I broke the silence on rape to the family on my wedding day in a symbolic way" (211). Some would not have given an ear to it. This shows that men are supportive. A few men can tolerate such kind of women. To add on, there are more men who helped Makoni through her activism, she adds that a few men took part in the march (155-6), when she went to launch a girls' club at a school in Rusape (148). The chief of that village contributed towards the event and even donated a goat and chickens (151). Sam Weller, an American who gathered votes for her to win the CNN Hero Award (406), worked with Edmund Osei Kwakye in Ghana to celebrate girls empowerment program he was leading (New life Foundation⁴, 484). Her trip to Ghana changed her as an activist and the way she represents girls forever (488). The African feminist critic Steady (1987) notes that "[f]or [African] women, the male is not 'the other' but part of the human same" (8). She is further showing that it is not women alone who can save the girl child but men as well could be part of the solution.

⁴ Ghanaian community based girls empowerment club located in Bonamba (483)

2.5 Cultural Capital

The fact that Makoni's organization gets sponsorship from organizations that are western orientated creates the impression that Western nations are enlightened in the way in which they treat women. However, this is far from truth. Any suggestion that Zimbabwe and African nations in general are still backward in the way they treat women and require the help of western donor governments to help them through the transition is a Eurocentric stereotype anchored on a falsehood. Jestina Mukoko also highlights the same issue in her autobiography. The fact that they both highlight sponsorship issues in their narratives, becomes a plea for continued sponsorship from the western donor organisations that enable them their work. While sponsorship is an enabling gesture of kindness, it has its conditionalities that set the agenda. One in five women are raped in Europe and America. This flies in the face of claim to enlightenment of Europe on account of the donations they make to Africa.

2.6 Conclusion

Makoni's autobiography presents unique ways of seeing and theorizing pre and post 2000 Zimbabwe. The chapter revealed that the feminist activist has the power to disrupt hegemonic heteronormativity and reinvent women's identities and writing as primary rather than marginal. To achieve this media platforms, both online and offline, played a major role in enabling it thus creating emancipated identities.

The autobiography has exposed the flux of identity perspectives both at the level of the individual and society/nation in the autobiography where the nation can be conceived as ailing. Makoni used violence as metaphor to reveal the sickness of the nation. The effect is that it allows her to offer a critique of state and how it has failed to fulfil various aspirations in whose name the leaders rule. The nation is also criticized through exposure of its pretentious identity, which it has to surpass in order to acknowledge the social cost to humanity of downplaying the impact of violence against women.

By Making herself the narrator and the narrated, the subject and object of her life narrative, Makoni falls into the same trap as any other self-writer: that of narratorial subjectivities. She glorifies the self in ways that make her a larger than life character. The rapist is male. The violator is male. The woman is the victim and survivor. Cases of collusion and complicity of men and women in the victimization of women and the girl child are glossed over. There is also deliberate silence about the status of the financial records of her organization when she left it. This brings to question the issue of truth telling in autobiography. The flash bulb

memories remember what the narrator wants to remember and their recollections should not be taken as gospel truth.

What one finds interesting though is the way Makoni deploys the book as a weapon. From the title, which looks and reads more like a protest poster to the emotive approach of her narrative, she says her book is directed at the Zimbabwe government. It appears her main concern, notwithstanding the hundreds of pages the narrative covers, is to clear her name. After being branded a spy, she writes as if she were on trial – in defense of her work and calling. Spy is too big a word to ignore. Makoni is aware of the gravity of the allegation and seeks to clear her name. The book therefore becomes a personal account of one's life in defense of self. The thrust of Makoni's self narrative can be summarized in the words of Horace Smith and Percy Bysshe Shelly in their (1818) poem *Ozymandias* "And on the pedestal these words appear: 'My/name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my/works ye Mighty and despair'". Indeed, the government of Zimbabwe must look at Makoni's works and despair. The following chapter explores how the various identities Trent occupies contribute to her sense of self and how these identities contribute towards her marginality and privilege and how she appropriate gender roles as mother and woman in her campaign for the emancipation of voice and space.

CHAPTER 3

Negotiating Self in Intersecting Identities

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the discussion centred on how Makoni, through online and offline activism, social media, and print activism, negotiates the political spaces of lawlessness at a time when the violence against women is rife. The chapter revealed that the feminist activist has the power to disrupt hegemonic heteronormativity and reinvent women's identities and writing as primary rather than marginal. However, the current chapter examines the ways in which identities combine and contribute to one's marginality and privilege

In her autobiography, *The Awakened Woman: Remembering and Reigniting our Sacred Dreams* (2017), Trent shows how the different identities she must negotiate contribute to her sense of self. I situate my argument on how each identity Trent assumes intersects with others. The identities she assumes include being a Korekore, a woman, a wife, a mother, a sister, an American and a student. She acknowledges that as a human being she is defined by many identities. The coalescence of identities in Trent's text through intersectional theory Crenshaw (1989), autobiography in order to unravel the multiple identities Trent projects in her text, is closely examined specifically, how the intersections of race, class and gender can have great impact either positive or negative.

The chapter endeavours to answer the following questions using the intersectional, autobiography theories: (i) how does Trent appropriate available identities to construct deliberations on marginality and privilege? (ii) how does Trent appropriate gender roles as mother and woman in her campaign for the emancipation of voice and space? And (iii) how does Trent appropriate autobiography as political narrative via her life experiences, vicissitudes to interpose in either presence or absence in the drawing of present and future projects and consequential decision making in her private and public sphere.

3.1.1. Theoretical framing

Black feminist and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) propounded the term "Intersectionality" when she discussed issues of black women's employment in the US. The term emphasizes the multidimensional experience of oppression among Black women because of their gender, race and ethnicity. Collins (2016: 2) defines "Intersectionality as a way of

understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood and shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways”. Our experiences of the social world are shaped by our ethnicity, race, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and numerous other facets of social stratification. Some social locations afford privilege while others are oppressive. These various aspects of social inequality do not operate independently of each other; they interact to create interrelated systems of oppression and domination. The concept of intersectionality refers to how these various aspects of social location “intersect” to mutually constitute individuals’ lived experiences (Dhillon and Katherine, 2014). Also (Zinn & Dill, 1996 and Lynn et al, 2016) concur that these intersecting and overlapping social identities may be both empowering and oppressing. Intersectionality has been discussed by scholars in relation to different topics such as employment, patriarchy, colonialism, identity and citizenship (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 2001; Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, in the context of this dissertation, intersectionality is not limited to representations of gender-based violence; rather identity negotiation. It brings into focus how multiple notions of gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity and nationality impact Trent’s marginalisation and privilege. In exploring intersectionality, Trent’s autobiography is crucial in demonstrating the complexity of women’s multiple identities and how these identities allow for oppression, discrimination and privilege.

This chapter examines how autobiographical strategies like representative act of memory, narrative and the scaffolding of the self as used by Trent in the promotion of her different selves Smith and Watson (2001). They write that ‘autobiographical storytelling [. . .] is drawn from multiple, disparate, and discontinuous experiences and the multiple identities constructed from and constituting those experiences’ (2001, 35). In other words, autobiography is fundamentally a telling of multiple experiences of identity, and marginality and privilege can bring that autobiographical impulse to fruition by putting strain on the continuity of the autobiographer’s identity.

Every experience an individual goes through shapes their identity in some way. Society itself shapes people’s identities as well, with each institution having a unique identity (Beer, Watson, & McDade-Montez, 2013). A person’s sense of “self” is comprised of many different roles within a social structure. For Bamberg (2010:4), identity is a label attributed to the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions. Consequently, identities can be differentiated and claimed according to varying socio-cultural

categories including gender, age, race, occupation, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class and nationality. Individuals are therefore a compilation of discrete identities, often tied to their social roles, which become salient as situations call for them (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000).

3.2. Summary of the text

Trent narrates the story of her journey from being a child bride, in a small Zimbabwean village, to becoming one of the world's most recognizable voices in women's empowerment through education and collaboration with other women. As a young girl in Zvipani, a cattle-herding village in Hurungwe District, she dreamed of receiving an education but instead married young and, by eighteen, was already a mother of four (16,17). At that time, Trent had nothing to look forward to other than a life of sexual, physical, and verbal abuse, gruelling work, and more children. When an American woman came to her village and dared to ask Trent about her dreams, this set into motion a series of steps that led to her escape from oppression and poverty. She was able to work toward her goals and eventually went to the United States, where she earned a master's degree, and a doctorate. With help from Oprah Winfrey, Trent fulfilled the final step of her dream, building a school (Matau Primary School) in Zvipani so that young girls could receive an education.

Trent's story is likely to appeal to women who never thought, heard or experienced moments in their lives where they were put down, berated, emotionally belittled, physically abused, or held back from opportunity, education, or advancement. Her story has earned her a statue of honour for equality for inspirational women in New York, the United States of America, meant to balance gender representation in public art. Her statue exists alongside those of media mogul Oprah Winfrey, Hollywood stars Nicole Kidman and Cate Blanchett, conservationist Jane Goodall, activist Janet Mock, chemist Tracy Dyson, author Cheryl Strayed, and Olympic gymnast Gabby Douglas (Kaledzi, 2019). The sections which follow discuss the intersectional theory, the various identities Trent assumes, and issues related to how she constructs herself, the society and the Zimbabwean nation in *The Awakened Woman: Remembering and Reigniting our Sacred Dreams*.

3.3. Trent's intersectional oppression

3.3.1. Girl child and wifehood identity

Trent's girlchild and wifehood experience relegate her to a position of deprivilege. The intersection of her identities show how constrained her life was pushing her to the margins. Trent shows how the system of patriarchy marginalises her through denying her access to education. Patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development (Sultana, 2011). Only boys were given that opportunity to go to school because "they were expected to become family wage earners" (45). Trent's family is reflective of a male dominated household over women and children. This is reminiscent of Tambudzai in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) who had to stay at home while her brother, Nhamo, was given an opportunity to attend school. Tambudzai's father openly tells her she has to learn to do house chores like other girls in preparation for her married life. Despite the drudgery of her life as a girl child, Trent is not daunted by this denial as seen in her picture book *The girl who buried her dreams in a can* (2015) where she states that she negotiated with her brother to do certain chores for him in order for him to teach her what he would have learnt at school. Trent is resolute in her pursuit of the education that she is being denied by society. She states:

I daydreamed a lot about getting formal education, as there was so much I wanted to know [...]. Tinashe taught me words that I practised by sewing letters of the alphabet on to leaves. I created songs that helped me to remember the five vowels [...]. We used charcoal, thorns from trees. Thorns were used to string sheets of tree leave together to create pages [...] (46).

Lack of proper materials to read and write shows Trent's deprivileged position. Despite the lack of proper reading material Trent states that she had an "insatiable hunger for education and for change to come to [her] village" (25). Her willpower and resolve to realise her dream are captured in her conversation with Jo Luck, "I want to go to America to get an education. I want to get an undergraduate degree, a master's degree, and a PhD. This was the first time I uttered aloud the dreams I harboured" (49). Trent's words show that self-definition/actualisation is one tool that is essential to women's empowerment. Women should define who they are first, before allowing society to define for them. Trent is showing that of patriarchy constrains women to embitter themselves and how the system made her childhood difficult.

Trent, thus, depicts herself as having had the wisdom and foresight as a child to realise that education is the only way out of poverty for women. She states that, “while I understood how important it was for boys to get good jobs, I wondered why girls could not also be educated to become future providers and community role models” (45). Many women of her age did not see the importance of education, but she had the wisdom and realisation that the only way she could get out of poverty was through education. At her age she realises that lack of education made women vulnerable to all sorts of injustices from men in private and public spaces (45) hence she is determined to rise above her vulnerability. Her wisdom is also seen when she tells fellow church women that they were being manipulated, “I tried to tell the women of the church that their prophets were not seeing the future, but instead were secretly gathering information and using it to spin false stories” (116). Trent uses her story and that of women in her community to demonstrate how education affords agency. Had the women in her community had foresight and education, they would be empowered enough to stand up for themselves. Also, though, her autobiography, Trent speaks for the emancipation of the girlchild that they have the right to education and gives agency to female voices oppressed within the marriage institution.

Trent’s marginalisation as a girlchild is seen through the rearview of her past by her father who marries her off when she was hardly 14 years. Her early marriage is an indictment of her society because, according to Trent, it was done to protect her from sexual abuse from the guerrillas. History and historical events of the war foreground her story. The connection between history and autobiography is reinforced by Gusdorf (1956) and Opoku- Agyemang (1989). Opoku- Agyemang (1989) cited by Ako Odoi (2010:8) notes that:

...autobiography is not only history but can contain as well a value off the frontiers of history that can properly be described as literary and aesthetic. Referentiality may help in identifying the historical basis of autobiography but by itself cannot determine historical value (Asemka, 1989).

Trent’s autobiography reveals that, “many fathers and clan leaders forced very young women into marriage as a kind of protection” (xvii) from sexual abuse. The fact that she had her first child when she was fourteen, a child, herself, and that by 18 she had “birthed four” children (16-17) is a serious indictment of patriarchal society. With four children at the age of 18 Trent is saddled with a lot of responsibilities. Trent’s narrative is showing that her society does not respect women. Anderson (2007) notes that “autobiography becomes both a way of testifying

to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition” (104). This is to say that despite her obligation as an autobiographer to give a most truthful account of herself, through her narrative Trent creates awareness on the plight of women.

Trent’s narrative depicts a society that is deeply patriarchal, a society that has little respect for women. This is a society where male-rule and privilege thrive on female subordination, and this domination, according to Guarneri and Poston (2019) manifests in the values, attitudes, customs, expectations, and institutions of the society, and [is] maintained through the process of socialization (Ifechelobi, 2014). For example, in the Rhodesia of her childhood, guerrillas who come to the village believe they are entitled to having any woman they want, resulting in many women being raped. While official documents glorify the struggle, the writers’ attitude towards nation and nationalism are couched in celebratory terms and what Ranger (2005:220) calls “patriotic history”. Nationalism was one of the ideological strategies for stirring active political consciousness (Muwati et al, 2010). According to Alexander et al. (2000:6) “nationalism embodied the ideas of freedom, democracy, equality” which was not afforded to everyone. Trent’s story unmasks and demystifies this liberation struggle. She recalls, “women and girls [becoming] casualties of war that started before some of their mothers were born” (xvii). All women and girls, especially unmarried young women and girls, were in danger of sexual violence from soldiers who passed through their homesteads (xvii). Trent’s autobiography, thus exposes the hypocrisy of the liberators who claimed that theirs was a just war aimed to free every man and woman from colonialism and yet went on to enslave their most vulnerable members of society, women and girls, by sexually abusing and objectifying them. And because rape committed against women during the war went unchallenged, it normalised negative attitudes about women and rape Chogugudza (2006). Many other instances have been identified in other parts of Africa, in countries such as the Democrat Republic of Congo (DRC) where women and girls are abducted for the purposes of supplying combatants with sexual services. Women’s bodies have become the battlefield as gangs of combatants (The World Bank, 2013). Also, the Sierra Leone civil war was known internationally for its horrific atrocities. Violence against women was not just incidental to the conflict, but was routinely used as a tool of war (Ben-Ari & Harsch, 2005). In addition, this is reminiscent of the sexual atrocities committed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Ward & Marsh, 2006). This shows that the nature of warfare is increasingly changing, in ways that increasingly endanger women and girls. Moreover, violence on women is further shown through Fezekile in this thesis, chapter five.

While acknowledging that young girls were married to protect them from guerrillas who raped them whenever they came to the village, Trent is revealing the commodification of the women. Her narrative points out that women were married off “in exchange for cows as a form of bride price” (47, 17, 86). Her father marries her off early not just to protect her but to ensure that he did not lose a cow or get bride price befitting a “damaged” woman (19). It is because of this bride price that Zuda her second husband seems to believe that Trent has “no right to stop him from sleeping with other women” as he had given her parents a cow (20). The bride price gives Zuda control over her body. Commodification of women’s sexuality in this reveals the ways in which women are subjugated for economic interest by patriarchy. The continuous patriarchal control of women’s bodies and sexuality is maintained because “women are seen as commodities of control” (Omuteche and Kereso 2016:26). Without an education and early marriage Trent is suffers discrimination and is relegated to the margins where patriarchy will continue to subordinate her.

A woman in Trent’s Rhodesia is not ‘safe’ unless she is under the control of a man; this is a society that makes women dependent on man. Her autobiography reveals that this is not peculiar to Zimbabwe. A woman she met at a summit in Lusaka was also married off at the age of 13 as a way of ensuring that she did not fall pregnant outside of marriage and when her husband died, the elders married her off again without her consent (86-87). According to radical feminist women are coerced into the institution of marriage as a result of their gender inequality and male domination that is women do not have a choice (Garcia-Rodrigo:2009).

As a young wife, Trent acknowledges that expectations that come with being marriage do not make it easy for women to realise their dreams. This is due to the gender roles prescribed by patriarchy relegating women to domestic roles, (Ademiluka, 2018). Roles assigned to women make Trent resent her married life, she writes, “I felt invisible in my marriage the clinking of dirty dishes, the sound of rags scrubbing the floors and water sloshing as I washed baby diapers were the sounds that swallowed my existence” (17); taking care of children as her husband did not help with such chores was the order of the day. Deprived of education and her relegation to private spaces further marginalises Trent. However, as an ambitious woman Trent wanted more in life than being a housewife. Despite the setbacks and abuse she experiences in her marriages Trent remains steadfast in her quest for purpose.

Even though Trent suffers abuse in her first and second marriages, she still believes in marriage. In her autobiography, she argues that “Women are supposed to preserve the sanctity of their

marriage at all costs and remain proud to be married” (21). This could explain why she married for the third time because, for her, marriage is not the problem. However, while Trent believes in the sanctity of marriage, she does not valorise it. Her ambivalence towards marriage is shown when she shows the tension between her attempts to be a good wife and her attempts to realise her dreams. She expresses that part of her wanted “to belong, to be a good wife despite the silencing of my soul that my marriage demanded. Every time I yielded to the voice of my belongingness, I felt myself slipping further into invisibility” (17). She acknowledges that being married does not make it easy for women to realise their dreams, yet she still believes in the sanctity of marriage. Societal expectations combine with her desire to pursue her dreams leaving Trent torn between two desires, to be a wife and to assert her identity outside the constricting boundaries of marriage.

Trent rubbishes the views that were prevalent in her society, that “good” girls remain in marriages no matter what” and shows this by walking out of those abusive marriages. She bravely walks out of her abusive marriages even though she is vilified by society for doing so:

It is a curse to have fatherless children or children with different mutupos (totem), and so I felt stuck. Leaving my marriage cast me a pariah. Relatives and friends whispered. Eh, she is now an empty can valueless” single women were considered unstable, with belief that only marriage gives a woman stability and worthiness [...]
I am now called unchastely, a slut (19).

Even though she goes through an abusive marriage with Zuda she still goes on to marry for the third time. Bad marriages did not break her spirit; instead they made her work harder to better her life. Trent’s attitude towards marriage resonates with the beliefs of Womanists who argue that self-actualisation is possible for both men and women if they work together (Ogunyemi, 1985).

3.3.2. Wifhood and motherhood

Wifhood and motherhood are social categories, which have fallen prey to the patriarchal system. For Trent, the interdependence of the two result in a hybrid form of discrimination and privilege in that the social categories intersect and overlap. As a wife Trent demonstrates how she fell victim of patriarchal abuse and how she tried to fight back. For example, when “rumours” reached her that her husband “was having many affairs”, she “refuse(d) to share a bed with him” (17). Trent emerges as a fighting woman who is not prepared to be silenced or

cowed into submission by patriarchy. Unlike her grandmother, Ambuya Muzonda “who suffered in silence, [and] did not speak against her husband”, Trent took up a firm stand against her philandering husband because she “did not want to live a passive life” (27). In her fight against an unfaithful husband, her self-esteem and self-respect is apparent as she refuses to show her emotions. She declares her dignity when she states that she “refused to let her husband see my tears [...] during fights I wouldn’t speak or fight back, I showed no emotion at all. I wouldn’t give him the satisfaction. Instead, I’d bite my lower lip to hold back my tears” (27). Thus, Trent’s narrative of her actions in an abusive marriage depicts her as a woman of courage who was prepared to defy convention to stand up for herself; she rejects patriarchy’s attempts to control her sexuality and silence her voice. Sultana (2011) notes that patriarchy, presupposes the natural superiority of male over female. Trent is expected to submit to her husband but refuses to stay under the control of an abusive men.

Trent depicts a society that perpetuates “men’s dominance through sex” (MacKinnon (1987; Malone, 2017). She narrates that “for many of the women who came before us our great grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers sex had always been for procreation, a marital duty for women, and never for its pleasures [...] and for many it has been a source of shame and fear” (90). Consequently, patriarchal ideology is constructed in such a way that it controls women’s bodies and sexuality. Gusdorf (2001:29) argues that the “autobiography is not to be found outside our cultural area”. Trent’s autobiography is a useful entry point in understanding not only her identities, but the culture of the communities from which it emanates. Its existence in a particular culture is an important signifier of the dynamic processes of both individual and group conception in that society. Trent’s narrative reveals that her society is highly patriarchal, and men do not respect women.

Trent’s oppression is further seen when her husband infects her with an STI. Attempts to fight for her rights in this abusive marriage are seen when she notes that’s she confronted her second husband, Zuda, after she found him in bed with a young girl. She “confronted” and “accused him of bringing HIV, a terrible disease that was running rampant in the community” (20). She dared to confront him, something that other woman would not do and because of that he got mad and sneered saying, “you have no right to challenge me” (20). The words “confronted and accused” show that she is a courageous woman who is not prepared to be silenced; even when he beats her, she still stands up for herself, “he beat me until I could hardly stand, he stood over me hurling insult after insult down at me” (20). Trent is expected to be a dutiful, submissive and silent woman who does not express any of her views to her husband. To Zuda, a proper

woman in the African tradition is one who does not talk back at men. Silence is construed here to mean respect. Osei-Nyame (2001), McClintock (1995) and Ogunyemi (1985) have observed that the idealized representation of women is that they are supposed to be seen but not to be heard. The idea that an African woman should not speak up was institutionalized within the masculinist state by virtue of their patriarchal inheritance from African traditions. The silencing of oppositional views is equivalent to the othering that patriarchal societies have done to women. Trent does not accept the unjust practice of loading responsibilities of good behaviour on women only, while men are the ones who benefit from it all at the end.

Trent views religion as something that suffocates women. Religion intersected with patriarchy serves as a means to oppress women. This is seen at her husband's church, when Trent notes that she was continually identified as possessed (117). Instead of buckling under the trauma of being labelled a "witch, a prostitute, a male demon within a woman's body, and a being with avenging spirits" (117), she fights back to realise her dreams in silence. Trent fights the patriarchal tendency of her husband's religion as it does exactly what patriarchy does. Her fight against the patriarchy extends beyond her marriage when she dismisses the male members of her husband's church as "a bunch of losers who needed education and good jobs" (117). She also confronted the women and "told them that they were victims of the church" (117). Trent is a woman on a war path who has had enough and is not afraid to stand up for herself in this repressive society. She describes her life with Zuda as "a cold war" implying that she literally was at war with her husband even though not physically. Ideologically they did not see eye to eye that is why she did not agree with what he wanted hence she attended church "but stubbornly remained silent [...] to escape further trauma, [she] let [her] mind wonder during services" (118). Trent's escapism offers her comfort and in a way avoids arguments with her husband. This is a marginal phenomenon as women are trapped within cultural spaces through the convergence of religion and the sexual control of their bodies and sexuality. Patriarchy manipulates religion in its favour in order to exert power and authority over women. Trent does not give in to patriarchal manipulations. She does not like her husband's religion in that it is patriarchal and suppresses her dreams, her agency and her rights. Her husband's burning of her study materials after she had confronted his church members (117) shows the extent to which patriarchy would go to control her voice and her body. Trent is knowledgeable enough to realize that patriarchy is restrictive and, in most cases, it is the negative social attitudes that influence how women are perceived and constructed with the intention of keeping women subordinated.

Trent's narrative reveals that patriarchy seeks to decrease access to resources for women. On realising that, Trent hides her money with different relatives and friends and quietly applies for a passport (118). This shows her determination to better her life. She recounts:

I hid my money in different palaces, changing locations often because I was afraid that my husband will find it [...]. I became paranoid, started having dreams that he will find the cash [...] known for walking and talking in my sleep [...]. I became afraid to sleep at all and developed terrible insomnia [...] I continued to give money to my sister, mother and sister in-law, prayed they would not be tempted to spend it [...]. How ironic! I was helping other women securely save, but I struggled so hard to do for myself (114-115).

This shows that she is not only a fighter but a clever and strong-willed woman who refuses to be undermined by patriarchy. When her passport arrives, she hides it in a bag of cornmeal because “no man would think of opening a bag of cornmeal because cooking is a woman's job” (118). This also shows that she is determined to rise above her current status. She is a woman with a vision and knows what she wants for her life.

Trent's contentment and happiness can to be explained from an intersectional frame. The narrative reveals that woman carry a double burden as mothers and wives, this makes their oppression unique. Intersectionality accounts for the points around “embracing” motherhood, loving her children, “begging” her husband for relief and being “comfortable” with abuse. Throughout the autobiography, Trent makes it clear that she loves her children and loves being a mother. She has fully embraced motherhood in her own terms as shown by her love for her five children (145). Even though she is “overwhelmed with poverty and an abusive relationship” (145) and worried about the resources to pursue her education, she keeps the needs of her children uppermost in her mind. She constantly worries about her children's future, “How will I sustain my children? What will happen to my baby girls when they grow up? Will they follow the same pathway I did?” (45). Even when Zuda her abusive second husband was beating her for challenging him for his promiscuous behaviour, her first thought was the safety of her children rather herself (20). During the heavy beating by Zuda, she looks for her children and sees them cowering against the wall (20). Despite the pain she is going through her first thought is that of her children. That is why she wondered whether it was good to spend money on herself instead of investing on her children (146). Her children's welfare is uppermost in her mind when she does everything possible to get them to America to be with

her and her love for them is apparent when she lovingly prepares for their arrival in the US. Her husband did not make it easy for her but that did not daunt her effort to get her children to the US. Trent is prepared to beg an abusive husband to take her children to the US where they would have a better life. She writes:

I began by begging, repeatedly, at his work place until he instructed the security guards to block my entry into the complex. Feeling desperate, I prayed as I never had before and begged God to help me, I made all kinds of promises to God: I will be a good person; I will help my community. If God melts this man's heart enough to sign the forms, I will educate my children and in turn, bring education back to my community. (147-8)

Trent even went to his cousin Mai Machacha's church where she "rallied church members to pray and join her in a ten day fast" which left her "physically weak" (148), showing her determination to lift her children out of poverty; she could not enjoy the USA without her children. Trent's multiple forms of disadvantage are intersectional in that they compound themselves to highlight the violence against women.

Moreover, Trent is comfortable with being a mother which is why she constantly worries about fending for her children. She finds relief upon marrying Zuda, as she states that "I was comforted with the knowledge that I had a place to rest my head as did my children" (19). Here, Trent acknowledges women's dependency on men. Even though she has left an abusive marriage, she is prepared to take another chance on marriage in order to give her children a home. As a mother, Trent makes sacrifices for her children because of the love she has for them. She attends Zuda's church for the sake of her children fearing that "they would be brainwashed or hurt" (116). She is protective of the teachings and beliefs instilled on her children hence she resorts to attending her husband church.

Preparations for her children's arrival and expenses she incurred for them to feel comfortable in a foreign land reinforces that she is a loving and selfless mother. It is seen by her finding an apartment, collects beds and furniture by the dumper, accepting donations from friends and buying other utensils from second hand shops just to make her children comfortable. She notes, "I scrubbed the apartment until it sparkled [...] everything looked crammed in [...], but I was so happy that the children would soon be there" (152). It did not matter that she had to use second hand utensils rather what was important to her was her children's happiness. She even

felt like crying after she found the teddy bear she could not afford to buy gone, “my eyes filled with tears” (153). Teddy bear was meant to make her children’s life beautiful in the USA.

Trent does not complain about being a mother. Her autobiography shows that she is willing to strip her own dignity for the sake of her children. By devoting a large part of her narrative describing how close she is to her children and that their presence in her life did not deter her from realising her dream, she is clearly rejecting radical feminism’s beliefs that motherhood is a “patriarchal institution” (Rich 1995, 33) oppressive environments that lead to the subordination of women (Ferguson, 1998) which disempowers women and takes away their ability to find self.

Motherhood has been excoriated especially by feminist scholarships for the many disadvantages it is believed to expose women to (Makudze, 2017; Neyer and Bernardi 2011; De Beauvoir, 2010 Oyěwùmi 1997; Stanworth 1987). As a mother, a woman is expected (as taught by society) to serve her husband, bear children and care for them as well as the home. Roles also come with role identities, which are “the internalized meanings of a role that individuals apply to themselves” (Burke 2009: 114). To feminists, expectations that a woman should support her husband and raise her children stifles women’s ability to self-actualise (Card, 1996 & Were, 2017). Unlike radical feminists who view motherhood as dragging a person down (Firestone, 1970; Polatnick, 1996; Westervelt, 2018), Trent fully embraces this role and proves that a woman can still rise to her full potential even as a mother. However, in her case motherhood keeps her in the throngs of patriarchy, which is not to say she does not want to be a mother or does not love her children.

While radical feminists like Neyer and Bernardi (2011, 164) posit that “the issue of motherhood has been one of the anchor points for denying women rights and equality and for discriminating against them” Trent believes that it makes women stronger. Her grandmother taught her that “a woman can be both vulnerable and strong” (79) as illustrated by a Syrian mother carrying “her two-year drugged son on her back, drugged so that he would not cry and alert the heavily armed border patrol, across hundreds of miles in the damp and rain to a refugee camp” (79). This story of the Syrian woman, highlights the relationality and intersectionality, of women’s experiences of how they make sense of their own subjectivities by deferring to others’ experiences within specific historical and social realities that shape their understanding of their selfhoods. The story of mothers, according to Trent, is universally one of courage and strength amidst suffering. She shows that women become vulnerable when there is need to protect and

that they are strongest when they are taking care of their children. This is exemplified when she left her first husband with three young children to fend for herself, she did not drown herself in self-pity rather told herself, “I believed I could find work” (19) which she did and got her first job as a bus cleaner. Trent’s level of selflessness, and courage underscores her unconditional love for her children.

However, while Trent seemingly performs expectations of patriarchal motherhood by sacrificing herself to the struggle thus fulfilling requirements of good motherhood, she also challenges social norms which stipulate that a good mother should dedicate herself to her children’s welfare forfeiting her own needs, by working towards getting an education for herself by abandoning her second husband and taking the children along with her to escape an abusive marriage. She does not subscribe to McNaughtan (2012,9) views of motherhood being associated with docility; which he describes as describes as “stay-at-home”. Hence, motherhood is considered both a restricted and restricting position and condition. Trent breaks these boundaries by refusing to be a docile mother she works hard to get an education to fend for her family.

As a mother Trent fights oppression in through going to school. In this way motherhood results in privilege for Trent in that, it is at that stage that she decides to go back to school. APA Style 2019 states that the intersections of multiple identities transform the oppressed and privileged aspects of each person's layered, interlocking identities. Trent challenges patriarchy through going to school creating space for herself. In this space of education Trent challenges the patriarchal system through reversing the deprivilege she had as a girlchild. In all her fight to escape poverty, Trent emerges as not only determined but patient as well. In an interview with Karlsson’s (2018), Trent states that it had taken 20 years from the day that she buried her dreams to the day she walked to the podium to receive her PhD paper. In addition, it took her eight years just to achieve her high school diploma which she calls “my eight years of failing. But also eight years of never giving up because I didn’t have to go to a normal school because I was an adult, and I needed to do correspondence” (133). Even when she got a fail and ungraded mark, she did not lose hope. In all these, she had to contend with a husband who not only abused her but burnt her study materials to thwart her dreams. She did not allow her poverty to pull her down even though her family denied her the opportunity of going to school. In another YouTube interview with Forleo (2019) Trent states that, “When I started my studies, I found pure joy. I was always the oldest student in any class that I have taken and sometimes older than the professors, but I never cared because I knew I had the power to change my life”.

Being the oldest in all her classes did not affect her. Rather, it gave her will power to complete her studies. Her determination and perseverance took her out of poverty. Despite the difficulties faced by women in returning to study, other research has also indicated that going to university or college provides a significant impetus for change in women's lives (O'Shea and Stone, 2014). The choice to return to school can initiate a sense of empowerment, an increase in confidence and an improvement in employment opportunities. For Trent, going back to school ushered her with opportunities. Trent's decision to go back to school shows that it is never late to go to school irrespective that one has children. Trent's gender role as a mother is results in privilege thus emancipating her. She views going back to school as a means to re-imagine and legitimate the self in relation to other members of the community.

In its treatment of patriarchy, Trent's autobiography fits the description of "protest writing" seen by Moore-Gilbert (2009) as an appropriate descriptor of postcolonial life-writing (128). Trent uses her own story to critique societal norms. Trent's fight is also depicted from the perspective of writing. Autobiography, as a literary genre, has been used by women writers to make possible the development and the expression of the self. Jacobus (1979) the woman writer develops a culture of defiance, resistance and subversion which challenges patriarchy. That way, Trent's fighting is seen as an act of writing against patriarch (some kind of writing back) Autobiography is a political project, Trent uses it to empowering herself through telling her life's story. Future projects are for the emancipation and embitterment of the oppressed patriarchy girl child and women at the national level.

3.3.3. Race and class

Trent's autobiography reveals that race and class are inextricably intertwined, combining into one hybrid force that is founded in the devaluing of women further her disadvantaged position. Throughout history black people have faced many racial injustices especially women. They have been deprived of equal treatment in accordance to treatment received by men Esposito (2014). In this context, class should be understood as social relations premised on access to resources (Bradley, 1998). Similarly, Trent is a Black African woman, a student in a foreign land, America, with no one to depend on but fend for herself and family. She states that in America, she juggled 3 jobs just to take care of her children (144). In an interview with Karlsson's (2018) she says, "I would end up working three jobs to maintain the kids as well as pay for my tuition and my accommodation. It was tough because I was taking 16 to 17 hours of coursework and taking care of the children". This illustrates the strength and ability in her

to take care of her family. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of support from her husband. In another interview with Forleo (2019), Trent recalls that there were times that her children ate fruits and vegetables from the trash can as the manager of the store could not give her directly, least she fell sick and sued them. Trent's level of selflessness, and courage underscores her unconditional love for her children. Having to juggle three jobs is a reflection that Trent is economically marginalised. She occupies multiple roles which result in many responsibilities expected of her with limited resources hence she was always late to collect the vegetable box Forleo (2019). Trent's experiences are reflective of an intersection of hardships from multiple points simultaneously contributing to her marginalisation. Ait Belkhir and Barnett (2001) state that race and class are interlocking categories of experience that affect aspects of human life, they simultaneously structure the experience of people in a society. They are overlapping and cumulative in their effect on people's experience" Cuádriz and Uttal's (1999:157).

3.4. Trent's intersectional privilege

3.4.1 Nationality and ethnicity

Intersectional identities also include experiences of privileged contexts that intersect with those of oppression. The intersection of Trent's identity as a Korekore, student, nationality womanhood and as an American affords her privilege in that she learns things from her culture that equip her to face life's vicissitudes boldly. Early in the autobiography, Trent firmly affirms her identity as a Korekore of 'the Moyo – the Heart – Mutupo (xv) which has traditions steeped in such ancient art as fabric, painting, sculpture and music practices' (xvi). The word 'ancient' used to describe the artefacts of her clan suggests a timeless identity which she is proudly laying claim to. Her pride in this Korekore identity is shown clearly by her nostalgic description of the way of life of the Korekore:

The Korekore people are indigenous farmers with a rich spiritual culture. We believe that our world and all that exists begins with the Supreme Being and Creator [...]. Like most native Zimbabweans, the Korekore way of life is organized around our belief in collective duty for survival of all (xvi)

Her use of the words 'We' and 'our' to describe the way of life of the Korekore serves not only to affirm her identity as a Korekore, but also her pride in that identity. It also shows the relation of the self to its surroundings as a social self. Hence, concepts can be juxtaposed: relationality and intersectionality, as interrelated in terms of how she makes sense of her own subjectivity by deferring to others' experiences within specific historical and social realities that shape their

understanding of their selfhoods. Although her life was difficult as highlighted above, the manner in which she describes her ethnicity shows that she likes where she comes from. Her claim to being an insider in the Korekore culture raises interesting questions because at the time she wrote this autobiography, she was and is an American citizen. While she has embraced her American identity, she also prides herself as a Korekore. Thus, she finds the identity empowering.

Trent presents her life as a Korekore in glorious terms. Her Korekore culture provided means for women to heal from their burdens through storytelling and gathering around the fire (1). It is during these storytelling sessions that a hunger is stirred in her for education. In one of these sessions, her grandmother, for example, told the story of the “Little Hunger and Great Hunger” “that was to become a part of [her] psyche even then as a girl” (2). She defines the Great Hunger as “the greatest of all pangs”, “a hunger for a life with meaning” a “liberating and energising” hunger that would enable one “to move beyond immediate gratification towards fulfilment” (4). She is proud of her Korekore traditions as it equips her with life lessons that stirred a hunger that made her who she is today. It is through the intersection of cultural activities that her hunger for going back to schools and becoming a student which enables her drive for empowerment.

Trent is deeply rooted in her Korekore identity in that, in as much as she is writing her autobiography from America, she chooses to accentuate her Korekore identity. This is seen through the way she constantly talks about nurturing and burying things showing that she is a pro-life person. As per her Korekore tradition, burying a baby’s umbilical cord at the place of one’s birth symbolises belonging and rootedness to the place. To the Korekore, such a child will never forget his or her family and place of origin (54). By selecting this aspect to include in her story, Trent is firmly embracing her Korekore identity. Even though Trent relocates to America, the disentanglement from the collective can never be total as the individual remains intrinsically part of the group (Gusdorf: 2001). This signals Meads (1934) notion of the self that it is always part of a collective. Meaning that the self as a category does not exist of its own, it is not an essence. Self-identity is born out of and nourished through sustained narrative which gives it form and content at different times and contexts. The auto/biographical genre thus is a critical mode for establishing an integrated sense of the “self.” The genre becomes particularly important given the historical background of ancient cultures which did not prize the individual (Giddens 1991).

Furthermore, Trent's balance of two traditions/cultures being Korekore and being in America contribute to her privilege. She benefits from both in that as a Korekore she buries her dreams in the ground at the behest of her mother, mirroring the burying of the umbilical code, symbolising that her dreams are tied to the place where they are buried. Her mother had told her that "Mother Earth would nourish them beneath the soil and help them to grow" (51). Her use of nature to explain her quest for education and escape from poverty is an acceptance that a person is part of the natural cycle of the world. No matter how far she travels in the world, her dreams are organically linked to her place of birth. She acknowledges the importance of growth and the importance of going through a difficult time but eventually rising. Just like a seed has to die when it is buried before it germinates into life, Trent acknowledges that realisation of one's dreams takes some sacrifice, faith and patience that they will sprout from the ground. Through these lessons from nature, Trent is teaching the values of sacrifice, patience and faith if one is to achieve one's dreams. Even though she welcomes being American, she never forgets her roots as a Korekore. For example, she pursued a master's degree in plant pathology because it gave her a connection to her roots (144). Her choice of Agriculture as a profession connected her spiritually to her roots and enabled her to contribute to their well-being (144). For Trent, the intersection of Korekore and American identity enable her growth.

3.4.2. Intersectional privilege of Trent's gendered and Americanness identity

Besides affirming her Korekore identity, Trent also embraces her American identity and womanhood as seen through the way she talks about her experiences in that country. The intersection of these identities edifies her status in that, her adoptive country, America, is constructed as a land of opportunity. It is in America that she had the privilege to pursue her studies and career. For instance, she receives funds from Philanthropic women who called themselves Women's Giving Circle of Stillwater, Oklahoma to pay her outstanding debt for her bachelor's degree (144). It is because of her gender that she gets assistance from the women's circle. She likes this place as it is a land where women have stood behind her; she appreciates them for that. She also gets a Master's scholarship through the help from Dr Beer at the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (145) as well as a job at Heifer International to be a Deputy director of planning evaluation (156) after she completed her masters. For Trent, America becomes a land of opportunity for women, a place of growth and expanding her horizons.

It is with approval that she describes Americans as welcoming and helpful towards her. For example, religion in the USA did not constrain her like her husbands, in America she is warmly welcomed at the “First Christian (Disciples of Christ)” church. That is where she met Rob Beer and his wife Cara Beer who became her “surrogate parents” (151). She describes Cara as:

Loving in fact, her demeanour and wisdom remind me very much of my own mother. My first impression of the Beers was indelible and in the years I have known them, they’ve continued to prove themselves to be as nurturing, encouraging and compassionate as they were on the day we met (151).

She describes them as kind and unforgettable people through the way they took her in. She also describes Dr Beer as a man, who stood with her through many challenges. She describes them as her “heroines and hero’s, who helped me cross the dark and treacherous invisible road in my life” (145). She is grateful towards this couple and for being in America. She is welcoming her Americanness and shows no condemnation towards it. This is the family that assisted her get Zuda arrested for domestic violence (198). Such acts of kindness speak to a people that are caring. Trent is constructing America a more enlightened in the manner in which they treat women and Zimbabwe as still behind in the way in which they treat women.

As a woman who has experienced the worst of marriages, she finds love in America. She likes being American as it is a place where she experiences her first orgasm in that she says, “Later I realised I was having the first big O of my life!” (90). It is in her marriage with Mark that she proclaims to have found herself sensually, “I experienced my own sexuality with my current husband, Mark, without shame”. She further confesses that “I began to experience inner joy and an inner peace. I was a fulfilled woman” (90). The intersection of her womanhood and Americanness brought joy in her life as she got a new identity as a subject who could enjoy conjugal rights as an enjoyable activity rather than an act of procreation. She further states that, “connection to my sensuality meant I was in a relationship with myself. I valued and practiced self love and care. Embarrassment and fear had no more power over me. Instead, I was using my energy in pursuit of my sacred dreams, able to give back to others from a place of wholeness” (101). With Mark she achieves an equal relationship which gave her great joy resulting in her expanding her horizons as a woman. Also, their union highlights that, unions between men and women do not necessarily have to be black to black because in her case she finds happiness in marriage with a white man. The fulfilment she gets in marriage shows that she believes in women empowerment, but she does not believe in women going it alone without

men. Her embrace of marriage, women and men working together and finding fulfilment together resonates with Womanism which is committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female' and its insistence on women working with men to eradicate the oppression of women (Walker, 1983 and Ogunyemi, 1985). Throughout her narrative men have been described as the main creators of gender discord in both public and domestic spaces. However, through Mark it is just as clear that there are some men who are sympathetic to the concerns of women. The treatment she receives from Mark is a reflection of the positive side of patriarchy and that men are not homogenous.

3.4.3. Intersectionality and sisterhood as a means of empowerment

As a woman and sister to fellow women in her community, sisterhood and women's solidarity serves as a means of empowerment and privilege for Trent. Throughout the autobiography, Trent shows the power of sisterhood to empower women even in the context of male dominance. Trent's autobiography shows how bonds forged between ordinary women (and men), helped them to prevail even under the harshest of conditions. Hooks (2015) argues that the vision of sisterhood is based on the idea of common oppression. Hooks (2000) further states that sisterhood is rooted in shared commitment to struggle against patriarchal injustice, no matter the form that injustice takes. It is a female neighbour who helped Trent hide her belongings when she was running away from her abusive husband, "My neighbour helped me by holding my on to a few of my belongings [...] as soon as Zuda left the house for work, without even a chance to bathe, I ran to my neighbours, retrieved my children and my few possessions, and we ran all the way to the terminal" (22). It is through the support she received from her neighbour to orchestrate her escape that she managed to break from Zuda without him suspecting anything. Even though the women in her society were poor, Trent received a lot of support from them her grandmother, mother and other village women might have been poor but they recognised the importance of working together as women. It is that unity of purpose which saved her in the end. They welcomed her back home without judgment when she ran away from her abusive husband "this is home for all of you [...] Stay as long as you want" (23). For Trent, leaving her abusive husband and going back to her family is liberating.

Trent believes that self-actualisation within a highly repressive patriarchal environment is possible if women pull together. In her autobiography she recounts how women in her village forged bonds in collective communal initiatives to survive patriarchal domination in their shared experiences. She states that they would sit around the fire at night and eat food that each

of them brought (1) “and so we women and girls sit, muscles and tongues loose in the comfort of our togetherness, and, as my people have done for generations, we sing songs and tell stories [...] momentarily forget our pain, our struggles [...] enshrined in a circle of healing” (2). The best way for women to raise above oppression in their society is to come together as women and help each other. Also, implied here is that, in the presence of men, the women’s voices are silent. Patriarchy denies them the right to express themselves. However, it is only in the presence of other women that women can articulate their concerns freely. Patriarchy has made them very vulnerable to an extent that they have no voice.

Even though she is a courageous and determined woman, she acknowledges the role played by other women in creating the woman she is today, “at each moment in my life, I can point out to a person or persons who encouraged my ability to act” (144). For example, her mother, talks her into breaking the cycle of poverty from her family, “you are following a path that has existed for generations [...] it comes from blindness shaped by ignorance, ignorance that grows out of poverty, war and lack of education” (24). This stirred a hunger to achieve her dreams, which Joe Luck the Director of International, non-profit organisation that works to end hunger and poverty in the world (50), who further assures Trent that she can achieve her dreams (50). Sisterhood helps Trent to break out of poverty that her family had been trapped in for generations and help her realise her dream when her husband was making it difficult for her. Her mother was her motivator constantly persuading her to achieve her dreams (25, 51&53) dream to go to America, to get an undergraduate, master’s and PhD degree (52). Again, her mother continued to support her dream by paying for fees to get a GED.

For Trent, sisterhood transcends race and class as seen by the positive relationships she had with white women. Sisterhood is seen as crossing racial boundaries, she shows collaboration between black and white people. Jo Luck is the first white woman who helps her realise that she has a dream and she has to fight to achieve them (49-50). In America, she gets a job at Heifer International run by Jo Luck who helps fulfil her fifth dream of breaking the yoke of poverty in Africa. Regina Henry assisted her with visa changes that allowed her to work in the United States and also gave her son a bicycle that he had longed for, “she warmed my children’s hearts in many way” Trent’s son fondly remembers Oklahoma “as a place where I first rode a bicycle” (188). Trent also mentions an elderly salesperson who gave her Winnie the Pooh for free after noticing her return to the shop and counting her money before setting it back on the shelf several times, she writes “This good soul would not let me pay for the teddy bear. I did not know what to say. Do I hug her? Doing both, I began to cry as I left the shop” (153). Trent

further states that “how can I say these acts were not essential to helping me walk the path towards my dreams” (154) She also gets help from Oprah Winfrey who supports her to fulfil her of building schools for both girls and boys in her village and gets an opportunity to feature in her show as a guest and as Oprah’s favourite guest of all time (201-211). These are sisters working together to break the cycle of poverty in impoverished countries (156). Through these initiatives she brings development to both men and women recognition of the womanist principle. These women became her foundation she is showing the importance of these women put together. They made her who she is. Without a bond they would not succeed they need each other. Sisterhood is not only for black women. That is why she works with Jo Luck to try and curb such problems She refuses to confine herself to blackness as these problems are not peculiar to blackness but rather affect all women. Trent acknowledges that it is through the help of these women that got her to where she is.

However, while Trent acknowledges the importance of women working together to rise above repression and poverty, she sees her society in a holistic and womanist manner echoed by (Hudson-Weems, 1993). Her commitment is not to women and the girl child alone, but it is to family and community. Her views include tenets such as “family-centeredness, wholeness, authenticity, flexible role-playing, adaptability, political alignment with black men, and ‘genuine sisterhood’ with black women” (Alexander-Floyd and Simien, 2006: 70). She argues that more can be achieved when man and women work together.

Weaving in stories of other women in her narrative reflects her recognition of the importance of sisterhood and the power that women have in their societies she shows admiration and respect for these women who are helping other women just as she herself was helped by other women. Throughout her autobiography, she shows the resilience and courage of women who beat many odds to achieve their dreams. Diane Ramsey who left a well-paying corporate job and volunteered as conference chair organisation that subsequently became Iowa Women Lead Change. (IWLC) a non-profit whose sole focus is to advance women’s leadership because she felt unappreciated by her boss (159). Hope Sadza founder of the Women’s University in Africa experienced numerous difficulties to source funds to build the university until her dream was fulfilled (161). Shirin Ebadi an Iranian lawyer was silenced by her government which stripped her off her position of being the country’s first female judge, but did not allow this misfortune to pull her down. Instead, it fuelled her to work even harder and is now a human rights activist who founded the Defenders of Human Rights in Iran and the first Muslim woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 (165-166).

Unlike radical feminist who see sisterhood as a tool to be used to exclude men, Trent sees it as a way of helping not only other women who are repressed, but of helping their poor communities to rise above their poverty. Even when she was deep in poverty in the village, she sought ways to advance her fellow women's financial independence in the village. Joining these clubs was a way of coping with myriad social pressures as a young wife and mother living in the village. Through that Trent's narrative shows that sisterhood transcends issues of class, in that, women in her village get to save and be financially independent. Sisterhood captures a sense of collective agency and community that goes beyond the level of the lone individual. For women's empowerment is not only seen as a personal issue, but as emerging in and from a connectedness and solidarity between them (Longman, 2018).

Nnaemeka (1998:4) explores sisterhood as a form of "power" that symbolises a collective bond of networking among people with a shared history of oppression. Okpala and Ogbanna-Ohuche's views the idea of sisterhood as a tie that invites "men and women – irrespective of race, class, ethnicity, religious persuasion, and national origin" to collaborate in deciphering "issues related to women of African descent" (422). As a result, sisterhood here is seen as a de-gendered and de-racialised way to read how, through communal initiatives, Trent's community forged power relations that collectively acted as forms of resistance against racial and gender oppression. It took a man to initiate the process that enabled Trent to leave her first marriage. When Tinashe her brother visited and found her in an appalling state, he was concerned him to the extent that he told his mother who had her sekuru bring her back home (18). She acknowledges the importance of men in her life when she states that, "after all it was Zuda's uncle who gave me the key to getting Zuda's permission to go to America, and a headman who rallied my community to help fund my plane ticket. And men mobilized the community in building the school of my dreams so that young girls could be educated" (211, 149). Trent calls them Sacred brothers for sacred sisters (211). She is also telling women that they can still operate within patriarchy, there is no need to shun men, they just need to find their own space within the patriarchal society where they can define themselves and their roles. She realises that women have to go out to look for their dreams and create space for themselves in their lives. She also gives credit to her entire birth village for they had all contributed whatever they could to enable her to go to America: "My community had ensured that I would move forward with my plans" (149); these are poor villagers but still help each other. Even though the selected narratives clearly reflect men as largely the perpetrators of violence against women, Trent's narrative also highlights the positive side of patriarchy. This is seen through the actions of

Tinashe, Trent's brother; Zuda's uncle and the man who mobilized the community to assist in the building of the school.

3.5. Nation and the intersectional discrimination of women

Since autobiography is a political project Moore-Gilbert (2009), Trent uses it to pursue her agenda. Through her life's story, Trent is, revealing a nation with a systems that oppresses women leaving them vulnerable. She makes it clear that her story is the story of all girls and women in her village. She states that they are all vulnerable and for many women in her community, "the situation was hopeless". This could explain why her mother named her first child "Tsungai" (17) a reminder to her that to survive in this hostile environment, she must endure hardships. However, despite this gloomy picture, poverty and suffering that women in her society had to endure, Trent describes these women as determined and brilliant. They have moved through life with "stoicism [and] planted a seed that stirred a deep hunger in me for a different life" (xvii). Friedman (1988) observes that, "selfhood is inseparable from her sense of community" (qtd in Benstock, 41). Autobiography echoes the traces of a collective struggle that are limited by the "autobiographical claims to truth and witness" (Golley, 2007:136). She does not stop seeking for opportunities to change her life and when the American woman comes to her village, she grabs the opportunity to lift herself out of poverty.

Trent despises what she was subjected to as she writes "You see, I come from a long line of women who were forced into a life they never defined for themselves." She was not given the chance to choose the kind of husband and life she wanted to have. She blames patriarchy for how women turned out, "had seen how poverty and lack of education deeply entrenched women in a life of servitude and took away their self-esteem" (xvii). Here she depicts the perpetuation of a system that has discriminated for women for generations denying women the right to self-determination.

Trent further depicts a society who though women are vulnerable to patriarchy, still find strength among themselves. For example, when Trent and her mother find their father living with a girlfriend, her mother did not hate her father's girlfriend in that "she understood that this woman was a victim of a world in which women have more value, more food, and more protection when associated with a man" (132). She also gives an example of her grandmother, Ambuya Muzonda who suffered in silence at the hands of her husband VaKabayashe who married six times and inherited wives and children of his brothers and nephews, "it is said that he fathered approximately forty children"(26). According to Trent, her grandmother believed

that, “young wives will only get into trouble by speaking out...It is best to keep quiet and avoid saying things that trigger insults and beatings from a husband” (26). This is a society of battered and oppressed women who have resorted to silence as a means of maintaining peace within the family. It is because of their vulnerability to patriarchy that they are cowed into silence.

Trent highlights women’s vulnerability is not only limited to Zimbabwe but throughout the world. In her autobiography, Trent tells the story of Lindiwe Mazibuko, a powerful South African woman, who suffered sexism from patriarchy for “bad fashion taste and hair” and “If it’s not Julia Gillard the former Australian first female prime minister or Hillary Clinton, its somebody else” (30). Even in America where which is supposed to be a model of a country which treats its women well, inequalities are still prevalent in society as evident from her daughter’s question: “Mom, what will it take for American women to be treated as equals in politics” (31) after the censuring of USA Senator Elizabeth Warren by the majority of male Senate from reading on the floor of the Senate. Trent is showing that even powerful women are vulnerable. She is showing that silencing of women is a global challenge; it is not confined to poor societies such as that in which she grew up. Through her autobiography, Trent speaks to women of the world showing that women’s problems are universal. White woman, for example, Michelle Stronz, suffer in their marriages; she left her 25-year old marriage because she was suffering and unhappy. Michelle Stronz’s experiences are similar to Trent’s because she also buried her dreams under a magnolia tree. Her grandmother’s story and that of many women shows that silencing of women is widespread and that it is historical. This echoes D’Almeida’s (1994) observation that “Silencing of women represents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status”. It is a weapon of control used to dominate women.

3.6. Summary

In this chapter Trent’s life narrative has been analysed and used it to discuss the idea that identities she negotiates contribute to how she sees herself and build her to become who she is. Using the intersectionality theory, It has also been further argued that the identities she holds in the social stratification do not operate independently but interact and interlock creating systems of oppression or privilege. The theory is a concept animated by the imperative of social change. Trent’s narrative demonstrates this through interrogating the inter-locking ways in

which social structures produce and entrench power and marginalization, and by drawing attention to the ways that existing paradigms that produce knowledge and politics often function to normalize these dynamics. Trent's life narrative is an exemplary testimony of the impact of the patriarchal system on women. Her life story speaks out and calls for social action to eradicate women abuse. She makes use of her own oppression and liberation from patriarchal repression as a springboard from which to address the common concerns affecting the lives of many women. Trent's resistance to patriarchal control offers new insights in the varied possibilities for change. Although men are largely perpetrators of violence against women, Trent's narrative reflects that patriarchy has a positive side. This is seen through the actions of men who were kind enough to respect and assist her and the community at large. This is reflective of the heterogenous nature of humans. The following chapter discusses a South African memoir to unmask the continuities of the apartheid in the post-Apartheid moment by creating a utopian discourses and aporia.

CHAPTER 4

Utopian and dystopian spaces: Deconstructing the “born free” illusion in post-apartheid South Africa

4.1. Introduction

Chapter three of this study focused on how Trent negotiates the various identities she occupies revealing that there are systems that produce and entrench power and marginalization, and also draws attention to the ways that existing paradigms that produce knowledge and politics often function to normalize these dynamics. While complimenting chapter three, the current chapter makes a shift from life experience of a Zimbabwean female to analyzing experiences of South African females to further explore the notion of nation.

In *Memoirs of a born free: Reflections of the new South Africa by a member of the Post-apartheid generation* (2014), Malaika wa Azania opposes the utopian discourse of being born free to the dystopian continuities that she locates in both pre and post-apartheid South Africa. Creating this utopian discourse or illusion, Wa Azania suggests, is the amnesty extended to perpetrators of apartheid and beneficiaries of white privilege without compensation/ restitution (in a material sense) to the victims of apartheid. Wa Azania criticizes Desmond Tutu's advocacy of a rainbow nation and the elevation of reconciliation above punitive juridical procedure by Nelson Mandela. She suggests that, both the “rainbow nation” and reconciliation without compensation to the victims constitute a toxic iconography, especially in a country that is yet to disentangle itself from the postcolonial remains of social and material inequalities. This chapter argues that Wa Azania's use of the genre of the memoir unmasks the continuities of the apartheid in the Post-apartheid moment by creating utopian discourses and aporia. This is seen through the Pan-African utopian ideal that despite opening spaces of solidarity across Africa, such an ideal remains fundamentally utopian since this solidarity, is based on an imagined identity. Furthermore, this ideal cannot surmount the complications inherent in the heterogeneous nature of identities across Africa, let alone those in particular countries or, imagined communities (Anderson: 1983). The second aporia, pertains to the memoir as a genre that promises to record the truth of the other (community, individual, identity etc.) this provokes issues of accounting for how the self, though a member of the community, can volunteer to represent the disparity of other members of the community, for example, the post-Apartheid generation, if each member has an inaccessible subjectivity and, as evident in the human condition, different life trajectories. Relatedly, another aporia, points to the genre's

claim that the author of a memoir can reconcile collective and individual memory to create a justifiable narrative. While the second aporia focuses on the claims to legitimatise representation on the aspirational plane, the third aporia is concerned with the impossibility of reproducing the other's memory on an event or the past, or replicating the other's interpretation of a contemporary event.

The fourth aporia constitutes a contradiction as Wa Azania valorizes solidarity across Africa but surprisingly does not acknowledge the irreversible and irrevocable citizenship rights of whites in South Africa, thus exposing bias on the part of the author. While it is justifiable for the author to condemn apartheid, merely erecting a counterpoise to the apartheid and post-apartheid governments without suggesting a solution to the impasse, is reduced to only the erection of binaries: a re-inscribing of apartheid's obnoxious habits of segregation. The fifth is a generic aporia on how the adult Wa Azania (re)constructs the child Wa Azania (in fact the child not yet renamed Wa Azania) and at the same time avoid fictionalizing the child and childhood (Cline & Angier, 2010).

This chapter adopts Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory" or *Lieux de memoire* as it appears in his essay *Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Memoire* (1989). Nora's concepts of memory, memorialization and iconography in nation construction or narration can be used by juxtaposing Wa Azania's rejection of the utopian ideals of the "rainbow nation" and the conversion of Mandela from a condemned prisoner to an amnesty icon. Nora's equivocations on the efficacy of the institutionalization of sites of memory to the contrary, largely privileges this institutionalization of memory over individual memory (Szpocinski 2016; Juneja 2009). Also, the, simultaneous readings of Nora and Wa Azania is on how both paradoxically renounce utopian ideals at the same time they re-inscribe them. Nora's *Lieux de memoire*, is not confined to physical or geographic spaces alone. They can be deployed in the interrogation of whiteness ideological spaces and the deconstruction of white privilege and injustices left unresolved by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the pillar of the amnesty. Nora's "sites of memory" is also pertinent in another way in that Nora concedes that each generation invents its own sites of memory, both physically and spatially for example, Wa Azania's physical copy of her memoir, or the black consciousness to which she subscribes. In conjunction with the readings of Nora and Wa Azania, this chapter incorporates Paul Ricoeur's (2004) meditations on memory, forgetting, amnesty, amnesia and forgiveness. Like Derrida (2012), Ricoeur promotes the view of narrative as paradoxical in that writing,

according to this view, is a deconstruction of the author through the multiple or heterogeneous voices implied in the written and disseminated text, thus disrupting Wa Azania's utopian images of solidarity among Africans. This deconstruction is used in the interrogation of Wa Azania's personality, legitimacy and authenticity in her memoir. Both Ricoeur and Derrida converge in their respective conclusions that acts of forgetting, especially commanded by governments, negate the meaning of forgiveness and restitution in that perpetrators of injustices, for instance, those documented by Anjie Krog, remain unforgivable. Ricoeur postulates that the provision of amnesty in such cases constitutes a replication of the injury done to the victims of injustices like apartheid, hence the dystopian situation Wa Azania's generation finds itself.

4.1. Utopian and Dystopian spaces in Post-apartheid South Africa

Democracy is impossible without political freedom but political freedom is not the ultimate objective of the revolutionary struggle. The ultimate objective is economic freedom, the liberation of the masses of our people from the clutches of economic bondage. But our people remain in chains. So, what about this generation, which has the mission of freeing the people from these chains, is 'free'? What about us is reflective of a 'born-free' generation when our generation is born during a time of the struggle for economic freedom? (Wa Azania, 2014: 7).

Throughout the memoir Wa Azania bemoans that with the rule of the ANC there has not been systematic emancipation of the black majority. Yet the utopian scenario as suggested by the ANC and the release of Mandela was that there was going to be a holistic change from the personal to the institutions. The release of Mandela and attainment of democracy becomes an important site of memory as he was condemned, later given amnesty and now is seen as an icon. The idea of the sites of memory is used as a conceptual tool to discuss the nation's history. Nora (1984, 1995) defines a 'site of memory' as a shared symbol supporting social cohesion in groups and societies. The construction and the effects of collective memories can be described using the concept of collective symbolism. Depending on the communication form, places of remembrance can be composed of iconic, literary and pragmatic symbols. Also, Nora (1974) speaks of the "site" in its literal meaning, a place where a community such as a nation, an ethnic group or a party deposits its memories or considers the site to be an integral part of its identity. Winter (2010) further defines sites of memory as places where groups of people engage in public activity through which they express a collective shared knowledge of the past,

on which a group's sense of unity and individuality is based. In this case, Nora's concept of the sites of memory shows that they are beacons of memory where one can go back and excavate benefits. The release of Mandela was expected to be a beacon of the advantage to the betterment of black lives but it is in reality and as construed by Wa Azania, a delusive contentment. Seemingly, *Memoirs of a born free* suggests that Mandela's release from prison is no longer an important site of memory.

Wa Azania questions the notion of being "born free" given the struggle of the "born free" generation for economic and other forms of freedom. Her memoir reinforces the many pitfalls of national consciousness glazed over by those in power. For example, her narrative shows that black people's lives are of perpetual servitude to the white man through the parallels she draws between her mother, Dipou Mahlatsi, and grandmother's lives before apartheid to her life in democratic South Africa. She notes that her grandmother was born in a poverty stricken family and as a result did not receive any form of education (10) which was an achievement for the systematic apartheid regime to economically marginalize black people, hence she worked for a white family as "girl" (11) at "the kitchens" (15) living in a one roomed shack (17). Similarly, her mother Dipuo, lived in and out of different shacks even though she was among the few black people who fell through the cracks of the apartheid regime to get some education. (17). Wa Azania's narrative shows that she had high expectations of a democratized country which put in place necessary, adequate, and competent systems and institutions to realize the inspirations of a new and economically free South Africa which were expected to supervene Mandela's release from prison and the 1994 elections. However, Wa Azania realizes that there is no difference between the way her grandmother and mother lived to the way that she lived, in fact the situation became worse. This is because the struggles that her mother faced before the end of the apartheid regime's administration are parallel to her own struggles in the post-apartheid. Wa-Azania's writing of the nation in the post-apartheid moment, therefore, suggests that the injustices and inequalities of the past remain visible even in the present. Her writing about these two supposedly 'different' periods iterates Boehmer (2018: 90) who argues that "many of the divisions and tribulations of the apartheid era not only remain entrenched, but in some cases grew more extreme". This shows that post 1994 South Africa has not evolved, that in so far as Wa Azania is concerned there is absolutely no difference between the apartheid and the post-apartheid period. Wa Azania shows that the independence of the nation did not help the black majority, it was only the independence of the flag.

The title *Memoirs of a born free* suggest that this is a story about certain events of the life of a so-called born free. Wa Azania's memoir narrates stories about her family revealing the dystopian situation of the nation. *Memoirs of a born free* that gives particular attention to matters of contemporary interest. McArthur (1992:650) argues that are relational or emotional in that they tell the stories of others within their story. Wa Azania's narration of her grandmother, mother and herself indeed shows this. Wa Azania's selection of certain life's events of her family members concurs with McArthur (1992) view that memoirs discuss certain or particular life events that shape the narrator's life (McArthur, 1992). Also, Gornick (2001: 91) defines a memoir as work of sustained narrative prose controlled by an idea of the self under obligation to lift from the raw material of life a tale that will shape experience, transform event, and deliver wisdom. In this way, Wa Azania uses her family and her experiences to makes sense of the life lived. Memoirs become a concerted effort as one selects certain issues.

Wa Azania's story is not a reflection of freedom; it is an epitome of the on-going struggle for economic freedom. Her narrative highlights that a home is a place of restoration and should not be separated from contemporary political struggles. This is because of the pain and humiliation that not only came with having one's home being propped up by corrugated iron and wood, but also having that very home reduced to rubble as elements by rain (50). In describing the damage caused by the rain she writes, "everything in the shack was sunk into the pool that was reaching my knees. Monang and I stood beside each other, our feet drowned, looking helplessly at the debris surrounding us. It was a heartbreaking experience" (51). This experience of terror and dehumanisation is tethered to older systems of power in which the sites of both intimacy and domesticity of black lives were destroyed and rendered dysfunctional. Through her memoir, Wa Azania is able to speak to some of the socio-political problems that afflict the nation through a searing reflection of her own life. In this way, she is problematizing the conception of a born-free generation as she shows that democracy did not bring structural emancipation, her family could have been living in a secured home free from damages but they are systemically dispossessed. She is condemning the political dispensations of the pre 1994 and the government of the post 1994 as her family still lacks economic freedom justified by their constant movement from one shack to another (86, 90& 91). This justifies Wa Azania's view that there is no memory to draw or recollect from the release of Mandela as it did not yield anything for her. Her thoughts in this instance reflects many South Africans' feeling about the illusive conditions of the post-apartheid.

Economic freedom remains an utopian feeling in Wa Azania's narrative. She takes no pride in being called a born free, rather she rubbishes the whole concept of a post 1994 democratic society. She blames the government for her uncle, Godfrey's, crimes in that the government did not cater for people like her uncle who was marginalized and resorted to crime. Godfrey is described as school drop, with no job and nothing else to do best than rob (45 &47). She writes, "whenever he came back he'd bring us clothes, jewellery, and food that we'd only seen on television" (43). Her description of Godfrey suggests that the state failed to provide and raise the black man above the economic depravity of the pre-1994 period. If anything the ruling elite should have created an environment for young black people to thrive. She further writes:

Later, I would understand that there are many Godfreys in this country: young men who have given up on the Rainbow Nation and resorted to a life of crime. We are often made to believe that crime is committed by bad people who have no regard for human life or for peace. This is not true. I don't mean to defend my uncle's action but crime in new South Africa is often committed by young men and women who often see it as the only ticket out of a life of cruel suffering. When a black child does his best to make an honest living but doors of learning are shut in his face or he is subjected to the cruelest exploitation in the workplace, very little options are left for him (48).

Godfrey is drawn into crime not because he has no sense morale and regard for peace of others but because the post-apartheid South African state has failed many black South Africans. Marginalization has continued post 1994 when people are expected to be included in economic activities of the country. With the rule of the ANC marginalization was supposed to be history but, the state continues to marginalize them even further and coerces people to commit crime. As a result, Godfrey is a creation of the state, hence she writes, "later I would understand that there are many Godfreys in this country day" (48). Wa Azania's representation of Godfrey echoes Comaroff and Comaroff's (2006) discussion about the failure of post-colonial governments in putting into place relevant measure to support upward economic mobilities of the previously marginalized groups. Comaroff and Comaroff succinctly captures this when they note that:

Rapidly changing social and economic conditions, effects of mass joblessness and the unfulfilled promise of a new age of prosperity [are perceived as] polarizing crime into petty felonies committed by drab misérables driven by necessity. (276)

Wa Azania weaves in the stories of her family and family values, and comments on events as having shaped her personal becoming thus a memoir is evidence of various aspects of autobiographical writing. In contemporary parlance autobiography and memoir are used interchangeably (Smith and Watson, 2001).

Wa Azania's disappointment of the rainbow nation takes specific aim at education. Her memoir depicts a nation with an unequal education system. She blames the state for adhering to equality as per its constitution, in the Bill of Rights chapter of the South African Constitution, section 29(1)(a, b) "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible". This is what the new South Africa government in its new constitution promised but has failed to uphold. Her memoir depicts an education system that is so unequal which forced her mother to move her children from township schools. A system that continued to marginalize the formerly marginalized which can be seen in the inequality exhibited in the quality of education received by the previously marginalized groups. This is also seen when Wa Azania and Tshepiso make comparison between the township school and the multiracial school in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg when she recounts that:

We couldn't help but compare it with Tshimologo and Retlile, which had no field, no piano room and no computer laboratories. It made sense why the children in our neighborhood who attended this kind of school believed themselves superior to all of us. This privilege they were exposed to was extraordinary and exclusive (58-9).

Whereas the model C school, Melpark Primary School had, story buildings with the junior phase section separate from where older learners studied, quad and playground, sick rooms for boys and girls, grand hall for assemblies and formal events, tuck shop, piano room, computer laboratory, field with a netball court, soccer pitch, soft ball pitch and athletics tracks, "It was a beautiful school, unlike anything I'd ever seen, even on television" (58). The education system proved to be a highly unequal terrain whereby children who went to a school near a shack had no computers, with sports it was just netball and football (64), but a child elsewhere had everything. She is a child born in a country that uses this constitution but that the constitution is not being realized in her life. Under democratic conditions they assumed that previously disadvantaged populations would have increased upward mobility through education. Wa Azania's experience is to the contrary, as a combination of the legacy of apartheid and neoliberal economic policies have instead produced a public education system

that systematically continues to reproduce inequality (Alexander and Vally, 2012). Wa Azania uses this comparison to juxtapose the old and the new and to render ironic the so-called freedom of education as enshrined in the constitution of the post-apartheid South Africa.

In describing a schooling landscape Fataar (2009) mentions to the long distances that black students travel from informal settlements and townships to the suburbs and inner-cities where they can study at more desirable, private or former ‘white-only’ schools. Fataar reads these movements as a refusal to be “trapped by geography within what they understand to be the anti-aspirational material of township schools” (2009, 3). Even when Wa Azania and her siblings were moved to the model C schools they got there already at a disadvantage because they would be tired from travelling long distances. She states that they had to wake up earlier than usual, walk few kilometers to the bus stop, which was grueling for them on winter mornings. Putco buses they used had a strict schedule, if it happened that they were late they had to wait for the next and lateness earned a detention for the day. Again the buses were mainly used by working men and women, often full to capacity such that they had to give up their seat for the elders and stand for the entire trip to school (62-3). Wa Azania is blaming the ANC government, if they were serious about bringing equality to the people it would have equipped these schools where they come from. These inequalities made her resentful towards her school mates. She says:

Yes, I was resentful towards all those white and Indian children, not for anything they had done to me personally but for the vulgar opulence that defined their lives. They were dropped off and picked up by big luxurious cars in the mornings and after classes. They had fancy sandwiches for lunch, food I only saw on magazine pages. They wore expensive jewellery and had cellphones. And I, the only black student there walked from the taxi stop and had polony with cheese for lunch every weekend. I had no cellphone. And yet, back in the township, I was considered privileged! The injustice filled me with resentment and a great anger towards students and teachers, none of whom was black (70).

Wa Azania seems to be referring to the failure of the post-1994 reality to afford black people ‘real’ privilege. The privilege that Wa Azania alludes to is not even privilege, it is some sort of a shadow of the actual privilege. This is because her own privilege did not amount to the privilege of the already privileged, the white and Indians as she rightly says. It would then

appear that privilege has ‘colours’/multi-faced levels or it is measurable. Her own privilege was little. She was with them (whites and Indians) but was not one of them.

The experience of moving through these various geographies produces what Fataar (2009:3) describes as “an affective disconnection, born of a disjuncture between their places of living and their spaces of schooling”. According to Mupotsa (2018), Vuyani Pambo, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand recalls this very experience as “bipolar”. Vuyani travelled from the township of Soweto to a private boy’s high school in Sandton, an upper income suburb, every day. Wa Azania is condemning the state that has forced people to go to these schools not because the schools are ideal spaces for them to learn but because these schools have the equipment and resources which black schools still lack.

Wa Azania argues that if ever there are born frees it must be young white people at least not blacks even if they were born at the dawn or post democratic dispensation it cannot be true that young blacks are born frees. This is because constructs that define apartheid continue to define post-apartheid South Africa making “born frees” products of an unfree society. In an interview with Samantha (2014) Wa Azania states that the use of the term born free as a part of the title of her memoir is a play with irony hence the book debunks the whole notion. This speaks to what Malila (2013) states about born frees as they are ‘imagined’ to have been ‘given’ everything they need to be successful such as employment opportunities, a society not divided along racial lines, education and more. Wa Azania rejects the utopian discourse as it does not apply to her life. Years into a democratic dispensation, Wa Azania describes her life as having been a struggle to understand the “rainbow nation” and to salvage from it something that renders her free.

Wa Azania’s battle with navigating white spaces and culture is a recurring theme throughout the book. As she addresses her association with white supremacists’ culture at the Model-C school with predominantly white students and white teachers, she felt like part of her was left in the township of Meadowlands Zone 8. That part of her was not welcomed at this white establishment. For example, she confesses that her first month at the school was a “living nightmare” (59), especially the first day she stood before her classmates, “I was a heap of nerves [...] other girls looked very neat, with their hair tied into cute buns” (59). Not only was she heap of nerves she could not make friendship with anyone as they guarded their friendships with jealousy. Her presence at the school where she does not fit in made her resent other children as their values were different. This is also seen when she relates how she ran out after

class to meet Tshepiso for the lunch break, “when I found her she enveloped me with her fragile arms. She’d gone through the same experience, she understood what I was feeling” (59). Her experience at this school is a reflection of a nation that is not united. Wa Azania condemns the government for building schools in the township with conditions that do not meet those of the schools in the white areas. Her problem is the inequality that manifests itself through her experiences at the school. And this extend not only to the government but also to the self, the white community being aware of the fact that they are not equal to the other races. Thereby reinforcing a sense of superiority over her and her and her sister. Wa Azania’s memoir has aspects of testimonial and social history documentation which can be studied as an artefact and literary work. This is because she is not merely telling the story of the self, but the memoir can also be read as a cultural narrative. An autobiography, just like a memoir, is not merely a private account, but a reflection on a group of people and their experiences (Omuteche, 2016).

The difference in values between Wa Azania and other learners at the multiracial schools is seen when she was insensitive to her English teacher, Mrs M, who came to class in tears over her dog that had recently died and she “freely without thinking, laughed, who cries over a dog. A dog is not a human being so why would anyone cry when it dies? It’s stupid!” (65). Wa Azania could not understand why someone would cry over the death of a dog, so different were the worlds that Wa Azania and her teachers and fellow students lived in. The relationships white people have with their pets was humorous to a township child who grew up with stray dogs. She argues that in the township even yard dogs never reduced their owners to tears when they died. By this Wa Azania is showing the irony that lays in the care for an animal as compared to a human life. The white people cry because a dog has died, but do not lift a finger to intervene in the conditions of fellow human beings in the black townships. None of the white teachers cared enough for a black child in the school so much that it hurt them as they cried like the teacher did with the dog. Through this Wa Azania is demonstrating the social structural order that firstly it is white man people, their pets lastly the black person. Revealing that the life and livelihood of black people do not even amount to that of a dog.

Her mother wanted her there because the state had poured resources there. She condemns the state that let them down. Had the state made sure that the environment they grew up in had the right resources, she would not have had to attend at multiracial schools. Scott (2014) argues that, what Wa Azania experiences growing up as a “born free” is indicative of the experiences that black students in different schools and campuses around the country. She writes that they had dreamt of attending at multiracial schools, it was a dream that many children at township

had. Ironically, “it did not bring me the happiness I had anticipated. I felt lost in that world, unable to find my way back to myself. I could not identify with the superficial monotony of my new life. It was suffocating me and I wanted out of it” (60). Wa Azania’s memoir is indicative of former whites only institutions which have not transformed culturally to embrace the supposedly new culture in the post-apartheid period. The alienation depicted in this book is worsened by the humiliation of poverty Wa Azania experienced (Scott, 2014). Although Wa Azania writes about “drawing strength from poverty” (84), it is painful to be reminded about one’s poverty on a daily basis at predominantly white schools by whites and sometimes black kids from middle class homes. She reveals how she was terrified to tell her mother the truth of this new South Africa she so desperately wanted them to embrace “rich black and white students were treating the rest of us like inferior beings, flashing their wealth before our desperate eyes. So I kept quiet” (61). Despite the improvements of having made friends, “I was still battling to feel a sense of belonging (61).

In narrating her story, Wa Azania demystifies the notion of Mandela as the savior of South Africa. She interrogates the notions of being born free in a state where the truth is masked through the use of Mandela’s figure and his narratives of promises of a better life for all and a nation that that equal racially, politically, and economically. In an interview with Samantha, she states that her history teacher Mrs M, infuriated her because of the miseducation of the black child to an extent that she called the history lessons, Mandela lessons (35) also “at school we were taught four things religion, mathematics, reading and Mandela” (34). She notes that they were beaten if they forgot who the first president of ANC was (38). Wa Azania’s childhood memories give an insight into her psyche since memoirs are accounts of a person’s intimate reflections of one’s personal experiences, fears, insights and observations (Mugambi, 2016). As an adult she writes that she finds herself thinking that somewhere in the corridors of power, someone sat contemplating the possibility of dedicating the national anthem to Mandela, or even altered it to include his name (38). Her interview with Samantha (2014) further reveals that teachers and the community spoke about Mandela as a Messiah, Because of that, Wa Azania condemns the nation for using Mandela as an escape from bringing real change that would have really impacted on the lives of people.

Wa Azania argues that the deification of Mandela is an utopia because he left the nation in a dystopian situation. In describing a messiah Thompson (2001) states that a messiah is someone who saves people for example from their inequity, poverty upgrade people to better living conditions. Mandela’s attributes did not qualify the expectations of a messiah. The narrative

reveals that there are no privileges that came with the release of Mandela. Had one tried to stand up against the injustice, it would have seemed as if they were anti- Mandela because he was so reconciliatory. Hence narratives like these show that Mandela did not do the nation a favour. According to Sunday Independent (2015), Wa Azania is quoted saying that:

The Mandelafication of our country was not an event, but a deliberate process of socialisation spanning decades. All agencies of socialisation in our country have significantly contributed to the legitimisation of this narrative of Mandela, the greatest liberator. It is a narrative that I believe must be challenged. One of the biggest dangers with the deification of Mandela is it inherently distorts the genesis of our history.

Wa Azania is so bitter at ANC that they gave the whites a way out of answering for their crimes. The reason why they focused on Mandela is because if they wanted to pacify the blacks so that they do not dig deeper into their struggles.

The focus on Mandela seems to have been a ploy to make people forgive and forget the atrocities of the past and to achieve the “Mandela freedom and peace project”. However, Wa Azania critiques the notion of harmony and a rainbow nation while the nation remains divided. Ricoeur (2004) speaks of the abuses of forgetting, he argues that people should guard against the blocked or manipulated memory and forgetting that, is very often present in “official” histories. He writes, “Memory and forgetting that serve any political ideals, like the institution of amnesty are very often in service to a specific ideology; we should not be uncritical thereof” (Ricoeur, 2004 and van Tonder, 2010:23). Reagan (2005) states that commemoration issues were aimed at fostering and achieving the need to forgive and forget the injustices committed against black people to advance the rainbow nation ideology. Seemingly Wa Azania suggest that these atrocities continue to manifest in the post-apartheid moment only that they are masked by the already entrenched peace project and its ideologies. Wa Azania portrays the figure of Mandela and the peace project as a dominant system of thoughts imposed upon black people to be accepted as a “common-sense view of things by the dominated classes and thus [securing] the interests of the dominant class” (Selden et al., 2005: 98). However, what is normally highlighted is Mandela’s release which overshadows what should have followed with his release and thereby securing justice for the social injustices of the present by constantly using the release of Mandela from prison as an iconic memory of freedom. Yet it resulted in a dystopian situation. According to this view the narrative becomes paradoxical in that what she

is writing and what is happening, what was expected to happen and what the nation is are being persuaded to do through commemorations is different.

In recounting her family's own political history, Wa Azania shows how the ANC was just an external addendum to the lives of black people under Apartheid South Africa. The ANC had become a halfway house between a hope and promise for a world in which one could inhabit and belong, and the shadowy zone of non-being in which black South Africans were relegated (Mthonti, 2016). It had been a place in which Wa Azania's mother, could reclaim her agency and displace a system that had violently acted upon her and dehumanised her. She describes her mother was a staunch supporter of the ANC for much of her youth, and writes, "she had been bitten by the activism bug and was unstoppable in her political activities" (17) but later dissociated herself from the party after realizing that all the promises made by ANC have not been fulfilled if anything they were poorer than they had been. Dipuo expected to be protected by the state when she was fired for failing to report to work due to illness and despite the evidence that she had been hospitalized (100). She took the company to court but the company fought hard and in the end she was rendered broke and dropped the case. She writes, "my mother did not lose the case because she did not have a case, she lost it because in a country asphyxiated by structural inequalities and a judiciary that remains untransformed, blacks will never engage in this battle on an equal footing with their rich counterparts" (100). Wa Azania's mother felt abandoned by the state. The ANC had promised Wa Azania and her family as well as the rest of the previously marginalised. She sees these experiences as reminiscent of the apartheid regime. Significantly, in telling of her mother's disillusionment about how things are Wa Azania is justifying her own disillusionment (52, 76). She points out to her mother who sacrificed, believed, became an activist for the movement but after the release of Mandela nothing changed.

Wa Azania's mother emerges as someone who valued education and did whatever necessary to ensure that her children attained the best education, to the point where she worked herself into a psychiatric hospital (99). Similarly, Wa Azania ends up seeing a psychologist as the pressure kept mounting for her, she writes, "Sitting in my therapist office I cried for my naivety, for allowing myself to believe that there is rainbow nation, where young people would not have to suffer. Young people did not sleep at night because they had to write assignments to sell so that they could put a meal on the table" (104-106). According to Sokfa (2015) there is a clear ambivalent experience of the new South Africa by the young people which is happy and simultaneously sad; excited and enthusiastic and at the same time angry and frustrated. This

struggle emerges as a result of the failure to realize a just and equitable society that was promised in 1994. Wa Azania depicts this ambivalence as a site of contestation against the notion of born free, by demonstrating that this notion lacks equitable access to resources that can enable the majority of young black South Africans to realize their dreams, enjoy upward economic mobilities and bridge the gaps of poverty constructed by the apartheid government.

On the one hand, sites of memory are meant to benefit the whole nation (Nora 1995). They are supposed to be places where people abandoned poverty at the release of Mandela a site where they received better schools, economic freedom that would be a site of memory the narrative proves that the opposite is what many experienced. *Memoirs of a born free* suggests that the state has failed the previously marginalized black children which has driven most of them to the brink of depression. As a child she carried so much pain and buried traumatic experiences for a long time (106). After her mother lost her job things became difficult for her to an extent that she smoked dagga mixed with benzene (102), after an overdose “I woke up at Helen Joseph Hospital with a drip on my right arm” (102). She tells this story to highlight how poverty drove her to that sense of desperation to seek release from smoking. She is not someone who was born smoking dagga, as she was an intelligent and resourceful child as long as things were balanced at home. The moment her mother fell ill the foundation of the family crumbled and there was no other recourse for her. The stress of poverty led to her breakdown. As a child she subsequently finds ways of escaping her suffering through smoking. Wa Azania is condemning the government for allowing such to befall on children. In a way she is saying ANC betrayed the freedom and equality they promised. The rainbow nation becomes a utopian ideal.

4.2. Pan Africanism and the disillusioned self

Wa Azania gives her experience a Pan Africanist flair to her narrative which opens spaces of solidarity across Africa. Oloruntoba, (2015) defines Pan Africanism as an ideological movement committed to the promotion of political and cultural solidarity among African peoples at home and in the Diaspora. Adogamhe (2008:7) argues that, PanAfricanism has two main objectives which are to “promote the unity of peoples of African descent in the entire world by seeking to unite Africans in the African continent with the African Diasporas in the other continents”, while seeking to promote the unification of all African people within the continent of Africa. Wa Azania does not only see herself as a South African but African and because of that she is advocating for a Pan Africanist kind of engagement with other Africans.

The Pan Africanist stance meant that the nation was going to be at peace and there was going to be equality in the country.

Memoirs of a born free shows that the Pan African ideal remains a utopian ideal, in that it did not take into consideration the heterogeneous aspects of the different types of lives and life's vicissitudes. Wa Azania states that her mother took her to a multiracial school with better learning facilities (60-61) yet other children in her township could not but remained attending the less privileged schools (57). The pan Africanist stance meant that all children will get better education but their positions were heterogeneous. It is not all who were privileged enough to go to multiracial schools some remained to attend in the township schools. With tertiary education she managed to go get a place at Stellenbosch while some remained in Gauteng (111), these are some of the aporias that Wa Azania memoir that people experience hardships in different ways yet she falls prey to making experiences similar.

Complications inherent in the heterogeneous nature of identities across Africa are further seen through the failure of the anti-Afrophobia campaign called Singamakwerekwere Sonke!, meaning "We are all foreigners" (122) with Blackwash⁵. She writes, "we decided that we would not allow a situation where our African brothers and sisters would find themselves at the mercy of angry South African mobs without doing our best to avert the potential catastrophe" (122). While trying to mobilise South Africans at the Noord or MTN taxi rank in Johannesburg CBD to say they are one and should not be attacking one another, they were "intimidated, threatened and accused of turning the country into a haven for "foreigners" (124). Wa Azania vowed to dedicate her life to the Black Consciousness (B. C.) movement, a movement which stands for the unity of Africans (117) that is why she felt dejected by the failure of the of the campaign. Hirschmann (1990:5) the B.C. Movement stated that it was not interested in armed struggle, and appeared to rely on the unified and ethical strength of a revitalised black consciousness somehow peacefully confronting and influencing whites. This shows that they do not share the same vision and that she cannot speak for others. Despite Pan Africanism being an all-inclusive, people do not have the same voice. Wa Azania observes that it was going to be a very long walk to mental freedom for her people. The sheer magnitude of resentment expressed by her own people reflected more than the conditions of inequalities that were at the heart of Afrophobia that was steadily increasing in the country (125). Smith and Watson (2001) state that a memoir is a mode of life narrative that historically situates the

⁵ A movement for young, angry and militant young people who wanted to revive and give a radical face to the comatose modern Black Consciousness Movement (126).

subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant. In this memoir Wa Azania is both an observer and participant.

Wa Azania's movement from one political party to another further in search of what she calls a 'political home' (158) allows her to critique the Pan Africanism utopia. Her move from one political party to other another speaks to the many different ideological views and underpinnings of various political parties in South Africa today. Arguably, these ideologies dictate the positions of these parties' commitment to the plight of black people and the Pan Africanism mission. Within the same political arenas members had different agendas and views. She comes out as a disillusioned young black woman trying to find space in formal and informal politics. Her memoir reveals her anger and disillusionment with the myth of black liberation to the birth and development of her dedication to the black consciousness movement, which continues to be a guiding force in her life. She attempts to locate alternative sites of politics and critiques their liberatory and progressive objectives in the vacuum of the state and the ruling party (Mthonti, 2016). This can be seen when she joins and leaves Blackwash after she had a disagreement with one of the executives and none of them wanted to set aside their egos (126-7) which also resulted in the failure of September National Imbizo (SNI) (132). She immediately moves to Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) which the Black Wash leader Andile, called "Liberal Marxist" (129). Wa Azania also critiques the practices of institutions such as AIDC and others that claim to administer social justice in the absence of the state. She explains the ways in which poor black people continue to be exploited. For example, when AIDC invited community-based organizations to one of their forums to discuss the National Health Insurance that the government was proposing (134). Adults and young people were invited but did not engage in the discussion as they were not familiar with the document that the AIDC leadership had not shared with them in advance (134-5). In doing so, Wa Azania questions the ethical paradigm that informs the progressive white leftist in this country, if power disparities between black participants and white donors and coordinators are not accounted for. This is particularly the case when the actors suggest they are doing emancipatory and transformative work (Mthonti, 2016). Her disillusionment is seen when she admits that "there was urgent need for me to return to dedicating my energies to the Black Consciousness bloc" (135). She is disillusioned because there are so many issues as black South Africans that they should be fighting for, for example racism, poverty, marginalization, inequality and yet every organization she joins there is always a problem. Wa Azania is showing that she is disillusioned by the nation's politics.

Despite the messy politics she finds herself in, she also emerges as a woman who does not hesitate to stand up for injustice. For example, she confronts some members and leaders of Blackwash who failed to see the need for unity with foreign nationals (126), a disagreement with one of the leaders Zandi who she describes as having been bullying everyone, she left the organization. She writes, “a sense of purpose had found its way in her into my conscience and I was determined to define myself outside Blackwash. I had realized the need for a movement to grow beyond the cult of one man” (129). This is an indication of a woman who is courageous and has a sense of purpose. Also, at AIDC, Wa Azania had the courage to confront her colleagues and superior as to why they treated the poor with arrogance and reducing them to mere decorations at their forums (135). Her bravery is also seen when she stood up to Malema⁶ and Floyd⁷ after they dragged the movement to their battles with Zuma⁸ (161). Wa Azania felt that she was not going to be reduced to nothingness by Malema, as she spent her whole life defending her right to be human in the face of white supremacy (164). Instead of buckling up, Wa Azania stands up for what she believes is the right and in the best interest of her country.

Furthermore, Wa Azania’s disillusionment is seen when she joins Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). For her EFF had the right values and stood for what she believed in, she writes, “EFF was going to be my personal mission [...] For a long time in my life I’d been searching for a political home that I felt fully comfortable in. I wanted to believe that this was going to finally be that political home, that cause I was prepared to give my life to” (158). She then realizes that the leaders assumed a personality cult, wanted to be worshipped and placed on a pedestal, over and above everything else. This is seen after she had a disagreement with the leadership after her comrades edited her statement to include their personal attacks on SASCO and took unnecessary swipes on ANC leadership (160). She describes Malema as self-centered and does not seem to see reason when she told them in an email that they should be looking at issues affecting the country rather than fighting ANC (161-163). This is what makes her disillusioned in that she thought she would find a political home but the leadership was more worried about their images. This also proves that Pan Africanism is just a utopian feeling because Malema had his own way of doing things to fight the post-apartheid inequalities. Wa Azania, being a strong person that she cannot survive in an organization like that, thus she remarks, “I

⁶ Malema Julius is a South African politician and activist who is a Member of Parliament and the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Economic Freedom Fighters, a South African political party, which he founded in July 2013 (Nkosi, 2013 and Setumo, 2014).

⁷ Shivambu Floyd is South African politician serving as a member of parliament for the Economic Freedom Fighters (Peoples Assembly, 2021)

⁸ Zuma Jacob Gedleyihlekisa former president of South Africa.

couldn't have imagined that I'd be forced out of the organization over a disagreement based not on ideological posture or something that significant, but on tactics of mobilization" (165). Wa Azania is looking for a political home where she can fight the system but she fails to get it because all of them wherever she goes she finds problematic leaders which does not address real issues that affect people. She is saying that we should have politics that focuses on real issues. She wants them to focus on real issues which are affecting the nation yet the leaders spend time fighting over their egos. She also displays an element of naivety in that she does not seem to understand that political spaces in Africa are dominated by personalities, organizations are viewed through the prism of an individual that is why ANC subsumed itself under Mandela. The result is that real issues that were affecting South Africans were no addressed soon after 1994 because people were blinded by the concept of the rainbow nation.

Wa Azania's movement from university to university is also indicative of someone who is delusional. This is seen through her leaving Stellenbosch because of the lack of transformation within the institution (151) thinking that she will find something different at Rhodes University where racism did not seem apparent. She writes, "I expected that there would be some element of depoliticisation of students but what I found there shocked me beyond measure. Not only was Rhodes extremely liberal, it was also far more depoliticized than I imagined" (151). Even when she tried to start a book club that focused solely on African literature students were not sold on the idea which left her extremely dejected and defeated (153). In her regret she notes that, "I had been young and naive at eighteen years, at twenty-one, I was more wiser and courageous [...] prepared to take on the system of white domination that was crippling black students in our liberal universities" (151). This is also seen in her interview with Samantha (2014) when she says:

When I think about it I prefer Stellenbosch to Rhodes, in that at Stellenbosch they were openly racist in that students would not accommodate you, speak in Afrikaans, one could pin point the acts of racism hence one knew their place in that institution. Whereas at Rhodes it was a completely different reality, there is class struggle, blacks and whites would get along, the racism was subtle. Whites would make you feel that you need to feel privileged to be at that institution.

In essence she is just saying there is no space in this country without racism whether Stellenbosch or Rhodes, they are all racist and that at least at Stellenbosch she would have had a chance to fight for what is explicit. Also, her movement from one institution to the other is

an indication of aporias within an individual and questions arises that how can then the same individual with split identities be able to speak for the other in one form.

Her hope for a better South Africa is said from a point of view of disillusionment in that she began with so much fight, only to find that she cannot fight the system that pretends to be just. In her introduction she writes:

We were young, black, beautiful people who believed in the capacity of our leaders to do better than our oppressors did. We were the generation that was promised a better life. We were children of the ANC. But the revolution has a painful tendency to eat its young. We were bruised. But our stories must be told (xxii).

What she learns from her movement, from one organisation to the other is that the leadership is no longer fighting for what the people need but their personalities which is why she is disillusioned. Wa Azania ends her book as a disillusioned woman as she hopes for a better nation for her unborn children, “I hope that they will be part of a generation of black South African children who are, in every sense of term, born free” (170). The fact that she is hoping means that she has come to a realisation that where they are as a country things are not working. Even Simpiwe Dana who writes her foreword observes that:

Though Malaika ends her monologue with a sentiment of hope, I find no hope in her words – only a lonely young woman who knows what needs to be done but whose ideals she can find no space for in the world she occupies, “Africa eats her young”, these words scream at me as I carefully take a few steps into her mind, careful not to disturb anything. Yet I tumble into her thoughts, throwing everything into chaos. The chaos comes about because I suddenly remember that I am the Africa I speak of (xxvi).

Dana feels that this is a woman who has hope for a better future but the reality is that she feels hopeless, feels that Africa has not lived up to what it should be and their leaders have failed the young. The space where the young are is not a free a one, it is a space that has enslaved them and a space that has made it so difficult for them to move forward in future.

4.3. Representation and individuality

Wa Azania had her own agenda in writing her memoir but what comes out of the narrative deconstructs her because there are several voices revealing different emotions. The individual

memoir is trying to reconcile with the generality of all blacks but there are aporias that emerge. There arise the problems with memoirs when it comes to representing another individual. With memoirs one cannot access the individuality of the other. Wa Azania cannot properly represent her mother in that she cannot access her individuality irrespective of their biological connection, both being black and oppressed women. Her mother's life's vicissitudes can only be narrated by her because people experience life differently. Experiences are unique hence these are the challenges of a memoir. She writes about herself having had the privilege to attend at a Multiracial school while her neighbourhood friends remained at the township schools. Wa Azania tries to reconcile her story with others who were not privileged enough to make it seem as if it's one Pan Africanist story but it is not their suffering was not homogeneous and the impact was not the same

In describing her uncle, Godfrey's situation, Wa Azania's memoir speaks for all Africans in one vein. Africans that are disadvantaged and marginalised. However, she cannot speak for her uncle in that she cannot get into his individuality to truly understand his criminality even though she sees the failures of the government as one of the factors. The failure of the government to provide a better environment for people to embitter themselves. Pan Africanism does not encourage people to steal but these are life's vicissitudes which manifest in different forms. It is out of desperation and poverty which causes people to behave in that manner. This makes it so difficult to talk about the individuality of the other. However, that did not stop her in a memoir. She further talks about how whites were racist and segregational. In a way she is saying they are conflating their privileges of race with virtue. While pushing the Pan Africanist stance, it appears as if whites do not deserve to belong in South Africa it seems as if they are foreigner yet they are South African citizens. In narrating her life, Wa Azania speaks of other peoples lives, her uncle and other blacks in similar positions which is reminiscent of the autobiographical theory. Autobiography has a tendency of speaking of other peoples lives (Gusdorf, 2001).

In her narration she writes about other blacks and white students' segregation and compares students from Rhodes and Stellenbosch Universities yet these are incomparable because their (individual black and white students') life's vicissitudes are peculiar. Bunching everyone, the whole institution means that they were all liberal and racist, yet all about identity is individualistic. This further shows that identity is heterogeneous, it is not homogenous (Frederic & Falomir-Pichastor, 2018; Dvorakova, 2019). Although blacks at Rhodes were better despite their oppression they were still oppressed revealing the fallacy of being a born

free. This shows that oppression is multifaceted, there are levels of oppression. The institutionalised racism is at a different pedestal from one institution to the other but it is still racism and segregation. The release of Mandela, the purported abolishment of apartheid did not make them born frees because the old system continued and their conditions persisted. They did not attain the expected freedom.

At the time Wa Azania puts pen to paper she has an agenda hence she mentions her name change so that it falls within the parameters of what her agenda. The memoir as a genre that promises to record the truth of the individual provokes the problematics of accounting for the self (Cline and Angier, 2010; Gornick, 2001). In her memoir, Malaika Lesogo Samora Mahlatsi, refuses to be defined by her birth name, rather renamed herself, Malaika Wa Azania. Azania is a name adopted by Black Consciousness and given to South Africa as a reflection of its history and people. Having been given a name decade ago, she changes it at adulthood so as to meet her agenda and to justify her life's direction because of the life's vicissitudes. Her name change is a conscious decision she did not change for the sake of changing but gives reasons for the change. Azania means, Land of black people. In an interview with Samantha (2014) Wa Azania she states that, "I use the name as my identity, I reject South Africa as a name and as construct. South Africa is a geographical location. We need a name that speaks to and about our people. I call myself Malaika Wa Azania as a way of reclaiming this identity and as a way of reaffirming my own blackness". She states this because she identifies herself first as an African rather than South African, whereas others would begin by viewing themselves as South African or any other nationality. According to her Zazi Profile Wa Azania describes herself as "an Afrikan daughter of the Azanian soil. I subscribe to the philosophy of pan-Afrikanism and the ideology of Socialism. Afrika is my beginning and it is my ending." This shows that identity is important to Wa Azania as it defines who she is.

4.4. (Re)construction of child Wa Azania

At the time of writing Wa Azania is an adult with the benefit of hindsight but writes personifying the young Wa Azania. Yet the adult cannot speak for the young. By this she is reconstructing herself as she is writing for a reason. The reason she gave when she refused to play, those were reason of adult Wa Azania. She could not have had the consciousness she now has as an adult. These are the aporias that emerges, making it difficult to believe that which is speaking and writing years later is young Wa Azania as she is now giving reason to what happened years later.

Memoirs affords the space to justify ones actions correct myths misconceptions, thus in her memoir Wa Azanian emerges as not just any ordinary student but leadership material. Her demonstration of leadership skills is seen from childhood through being in the Leaners Representative Council, head monitor of the media center and library class captain and was in the first team of all the sports at Melpark Primary school (74). At Florida High school she was elected Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and Disciplinary Committee (101). A few weeks into joining Blackwash she was made an administrator of the movement (120), was appointed secretary general of the September National Imbizo making her signatory of the SNI bank accounts (121). Because of her leadership skills she was approached by NGO's to join their organisations, for example, Khaya College to assist with the Jozi Book Fair, an event for small publishers, writers and poets (128). After seeing her work with Khaya College, AIDC employed her as an intern (128). In 2013 Malema and Floyd contacted her and she joined the Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) political party and worked under the communications and public relations committee (156). At Rhodes, two months after joining South African Students Congress (SASCO) she was elected branch secretary into the Branch Executive Committee although she later resigned as she was going to campaign for ANC elections, an organisations under the leadership she did not believe in (154). She left for Zimbabwe as part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Election Observer Mission for the harmonized elections (166). She went to Gambia in west Africa for training of the African Union Youths Charter's ambassador programme, a position she still holds. There she was appointed as an ambassador for the SADC region by the African Youth Panel and had to leave to represent Africa as a special guest at the International Human Rights Festival in Mexico (166). Currently she is the founder of Afrikan Voices of the Left journal, a publication of Pen and Azanian Revolution (Pty) Ltd, of which she's the Director, a free-lance writer, social commentator, activist and essayist (Thought Leader, 2020). The movements she joins reflect that she is more than South African and values her Africaness. She adds this in her narrative to show that she has experience in how a leader ought to lead hence she writes this narrative angry at the government and is able to pin point their flaws. Wa Azania adds this information to show that she was born a leader and her progression from organization getting leadership positions is meant to prove that indeed she is leadership material.

Wa Azania depicts herself as a courageous and resilient woman who is not prepared to change her identity. For example, when she moved to the multiracial primary school, she decided to maintain her identity despite how consuming the multiracial environment was, "even as I was

leaving township, I would take my identity along with me, unlike other township children who had gone to these schools and were transformed into the so called, “coconuts” black on the outside and white on the inside” (56). I wanted to enter their world, be part of their reality but on my own terms, a product of the township hence she transformed her hair to dreadlocks (56-7). Wa Azania takes pride of her Africaness. Tate (2007) argues that locks, Afros and plaits are authentic black hairstyles. The opposite of what Marco (2012) observes, that wearing dreadlocks, similarly to wearing Afros, is no longer indicative of challenging oppression and colonial structures. However, this shows the resistance in Wa Azania. Byrd and Tharps (2001) argue that in African societies hair was worn to communicate messages. Wa Azania’s hairstyle then becomes a reflection of her pride in her blackness and a rejection of assimilation with a white culture like the so called coconuts. It is worth noting that this is the voice of adult Wa Azania. As a child she could have not known what she was actually doing. Wa Azania’s courage is also seen when she stood up to her mother, to tell her that she would not return for weekend drama lessons even if she were to beat her, “as the eliticism of the institution was ten times worse than that of Melpark Primary School (70-1). She told her mother:

I am sick and tired of acting in plays about white sleeping beauties and singing songs by Westlife. I do not want any part of this. Take me to a community theatre where I can at least act out real stories and sing Brenda Fassie songs. Not this thing of white people (73).

Wa Azania shows that the Educational systems prioritises white culture through an institutional culture that alienates specific groups of black students and makes them uncomfortable (Barroso 2015). White culture in this sense can be defined as the types of materials and discourses (Vincent 2015) which disadvantages black students, may lead to adjustment difficulties (Steyn et al. 2014).

Wa Azania constructs herself as an enterprising and resourceful child. A girl coming from a poor family who can make use of her talents and skills to make enough money to look after her family. She does this through selling assignments and essays to students, a lucrative business that addressed a basic need for students:

Because my mother hardly had any money to pay for my fees or my transport to school I had to learn to make money and whatever they made was used to buy clothes and food for Lumumba because we did not want him to feel the poverty that the family was going through [...] By grade ten I was selling for grade upper grades 11

and matric [...] To subsidize this income I opened another business of selling sweets at school and even hired three of my friends (92-93).

By this Wa Azania shows that poverty forced her to grow. A normal state should not accept children to fend for themselves, this is further shows that freedom is a utopia since she had to support herself and family as a child. She also states that, “there were days I just wanted to be an ordinary child, to have no worry in the world [...] just to blow 200R at the mall [...] I just needed, to escape from the burden of being a bread winner at sixteen years old” (93). She is also showing that the legacy of apartheid with its economic inequalities have left most black South Africans in marginal communities with high rates of poverty (Withnall, 2016) even in this new dispensation they are still suffering. Being a black person is always associated with shame and struggle. This is also meant to justify her negation of freedom which contributed to her depression.

Not only is she enterprising but constructs herself as intelligent, clever, inquisitive and is unapologetic about it (30). From childhood Wa Azania has displayed great academic excellence. She takes pride in being one of her teachers favorite students who was fluent in reading (34), read ahead of the history class (35), her homework was never checked as it was expected that hers will be done (36), great academic record and could write a two paged essay in 90 minutes (75), an A student always amongst the top 5 in her class (103), won three trophies and certificates from the matric awards (108) and had an excellent command of the English Language as a result of her extensive reading (92). Wa Azania would question anything that did not make sense both at home and at school. Her intelligence is displayed when she questions her debating couch Mrs E, on why she shied away from real debates and opted for tame ones that did not demand too much critical thinking (102). For that she is seen as a pompous child who did not want to polish her view on political questions. She shows concern as to why Mrs E allows them to debate non-issues that do not belong or relate to black people. She writes:

It was easier for her to have us debate whether euthanasia should be legalized or about the relationship between rap music and teen violence – things I have regarded as first world problems- than it was for her to have us debating about the race questions or property relations in South Africa [...] it was typical of liberals to debate non issues. If we are going to be debating about issues let us talk about real issues that affect us as black people, our blackness, our communities (102).

This showed her early signs of activism and she is showing her dissatisfaction towards the government which did not make enough provisions for schools in her neighborhood, which led them to attend at affluent schools where they did not fit in. Through this incident, Wa Azania is speaking for the minority, hence her memoir is an emancipatory narrative of activism. To add on, historically, education contributed to a conflict of cultures (Biko 1986; Steyn et al. 2014). Values, customs and practices of the black community were negated in educational institutions (Biko 1978) and continue to be negated in school as the ones Wa Azania attended through institutional cultures which favours a white culture. She is showing that the culture in such schools contributes to the social identity challenges of black students (Bazana and Mogotsi, 2017).

Born into a family of activists (52), the interest to become one grew in Wa Azania. Her acts of activism can be traced from childhood as her mother would take her to the ANC Youth League meetings and South African National Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition as a young girl (52). There she was made aware of elements of black struggle historiography as Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) combatants such as Solomon Mahlangu were resurrected and embalmed in struggle songs (53). Wa Azania's traits of activism are seen through this prism of (Costello, 1991) definition, of activism as the doctrine or practice of vigorous action or involvement as a means of achieving political or other goals, as by demonstrations or protests. Wa Azania's personal history reflects a group of women who had found belonging within the ANC organisation. They had found a place in which to belong and a place in which the memory of parts of that black struggle was archived. She had come to be known as the last born of the revolution (52). After reading Iqbal Masil's story a Pakistan boy who had been forced into bonded labour at four years awoken something in her she writes, "I wanted to know more, to understand the world of social justice and activism" (79). That is why she did not hesitate to snap at white supremacy. This was a result of the many years she was surrounded by people who discussed the brutality black people were subjected to under the apartheid regime (73). That socialization left an imprint on her young mind and taught her to rebel against white supremacy. Her memoir is also seen as a representation of the history pre and post-apartheid, as she makes use of oral narration through song and stories she learns from the meetings. Her memoir recollects these experiences.

4.5. The myth of post-racial South Africa

In South Africa the same system that had given oxygen to the apartheid government continues to be in existence, to define the face of the republic. That system is capitalism, a brutal system that can only survive through the exploitation of the majority by the elite minority who own the means of production, primarily, land. It is a system that necessitates that a labour reserve be created to sell to the elite, who, to maximise profit, must necessarily exploit the workers. It is a system that creates a welfare state so that the poor can remain indebted to the state that feeds them. It is a system that is both anti-poor and antimajoritarian. In South Africa, it is also a system that is anti-black, because while the political breakthrough of 1994 deracialised governance, privilege and poverty continue to have a race: the former is white while the latter is black (Wa Azania, 2014: 5).

Wa Azania's insistence on deracialization highlights it as an unfinished project. The above passage is crucial also inasmuch as it brings to the forefront a longstanding mode of critique that many in the neo-liberal South African academy would prefer not to hear. That is to say, Wa Azania keeps the critique of racist social structures firmly tied to that of capitalism itself (Hook, 2014). Wa Azania continues:

The South Africa that we see today is but a different version of yesterday's South Africa. It is a South Africa where racialism and racism are no longer imposed through violence [...] nor are they constitutionalized as was the case during the apartheid dispensation. Racism and racialization are now institutionalized; they are the threads that hold together the fiber of South African society (Wa Azania, 2014: 5).

Wa Azania offers a strident critique of forms of white supremacy and the various social and educational institutions that still shield and nurture white privilege. Ahmed (2004) opines that society experience this through the "everyday performativity of non-racialism" that so many of us are complicit in, and that the post-apartheid public sphere is, in a very significant sense, built upon. Mashele (2011, 58-60) note that "The truth is that racial integration in South Africa remains a myth". Suffice it to say that the performativity of non-racialism contrasts dramatically with the material and economic realities of racialized difference as they manifest in South African society today (Hook, 2014).

Wa Azania's memoir points to the many fissures in the multiracialism rhetoric that is so prominent in the Desmond Tutu sponsored 'Rainbow Nation' discourse. With her experiences

of racism, classism and sexism being so discordant with the supposedly harmonious post-democratic South Africa, her story echoes multiple inequalities in her country (Mthonti, 2016). Wa Azania's experience with institutionalized racism offers a view of South Africa that contradicts the implied racial liberation of the so-called Rainbow Nation. She experiences this at Johannesburg Youth Theatre where her mother had enrolled her and Tshepiso for drama and singing lessons. There she was given the role to cast as a slave for the play *Sleeping Beauty*, in describing her experience she states that “I was not given any of the leading roles [...] I had no desire to be part of the production...when I think of it in retrospect, I realise they were caught in a catch-22” (71). This is another aporia with memoirs in that, this is adult Wa Azania trying to amend past issues. She is given the role in a token kind of way to mask the real institutionalized racism. She observes that they could not take her out of the play because there would be no blacks left in the play and that would have made them seem racist. Wa Azania sees that her role was meant just to give an impression to the blacks that they are included in all activities. She is also showing that it's all a lie that racism is no more.

Not only is the institutionalized racism seen through her being given a tokenist role to play but the treatment given to white children is not extended to her. This is seen when one of the directors shouted at her for tripping on stage during rehearsals, “I was extremely upset because many others had committed mistakes [...] I could not understand why my mistake provoked such scolding” (72). Wa Azania is showing that as a child she was a victim of instinctive prejudice against her skin colour. Racism has a terrifying impact on individuals. Fanon (1986) points out how institutional racism scars the black “psyche”, causing inferiority complexes, low self-esteem, aggression, anxiety, depression and often “a defensive romanticization of indigenous culture”. Wa Azania is mistreated so as to make her feel that she is lower than the white children. In her defense she stands up for herself as she snaps back at the directors, “I am tired too and I am also having a bad a day so you have no right to take your stress on me because I do not take mine out on you” (72). Wa Azania presents herself as a resilient child, she refuses to be used by her white teachers and fights back.

Wa Azania's memoir also shows that racial segregation still exists although it has taken a different approach in institutions of higher learning. The South African Reconciliation Barometer Survey (2010) states that it is still there both nationally and in institutions of higher education (Barroso 2015; Pattman 2007; Moodley 2013). In recounting her experiences at university, she shows that for her Stellenbosch was the height of institutionalized racism. It represented everything she detested and this is exemplified by her interaction with Marjorie, a

young lady serving drinks at a students' braai, who did almost explode in anger asking her which drink she needed when Wa Azania feigned understanding of Afrikaans, the incident made her feel like it was an interrogation, "about not only what I wanted to drink but why I'd decided to dare interrupt their world with my blackness" (114-5). She describes the few black girls at the party as huddled in one corner, almost cowering from the marquee (113). Wa Azania's experience showed that blacks continue to be marginalized and live within structures still ravaged by institutional disparity, and subsequently the image of the "rainbow nation" is belied. Her experience reveals that racial segregation in universities is concerning as it hints at lack of real integration and possible social identity challenges for black students who are becoming a majority in these universities in terms of numbers (Bazana and Mogotsi, 2017). Wa Azania is showing that this is supposed to be a new South Africa, where everyone is born free, where apartheid is no more and yet institutional apartheid is still strong. She is blaming the government for not doing anything to address these issues. She is also showing that Stellenbosch is no different from what it was before 1994, the university has few black people as she states that:

I stood in the middle of what felt to me like a sea of blond haired, blue-eyed people speaking Afrikaans. Stellenbosch confirmed to me a truth that I had already knew about South Africa [...] not only is this country still trapped in the clutches of white racism but also that the struggle to free us from those clutches begged for the participation of all black people, particularly those of us who had had the privileged misfortune of being at multiracial institutions where we had to deal with the ugly face of white supremacy on a daily basis (116).

The culture in these universities is discussed as a contributing factor to the social identity challenges of black students. Historically white universities are reported to be alienating for black students (Hook, 2004) contributing to racial segregation even in the post-1994 South Africa.

Her battling to navigate white spaces and white cultures is also seen when she describes her first month at Multiracial school. She writes, "My command of the English language was terrible, I could barely speak a complete sentence. But more than that, I looked completely out of place in that class. I was a dark child with mane dreadlocks" (59). Education in historically white institutions is said to enforce an assimilationist perspective where black students are assimilated into the existing white culture; this involves the use of the English language,

Westernised concepts as well as resources for learning (Pilane, 2014). Language has been identified as a potential barrier to performance. According to a study conducted by Moodley (2013) African accents were associated with ‘stupidity’, leading to reluctance to participate in class discussions even if they added to one’s course mark (Moodley, 2013). Using the English language is said to increase one’s sense of belongingness (Gibson, 2012), which makes failure to speak or use English alienating for black students. A negative connotation associated with African accents as well as challenges experienced with writing and speaking in English can lead to black students feeling alienated in South Africa’s higher education but especially in historically white institutions.

4.6. Conclusion

The chapter argued that the utopian scenario as suggested by ANC and the release of Mandela is a fallacy as revealed by Wa Azania’s narrative. Her story is not a reflection of freedom, rather an epitome of the on-going struggle for economic, political and mental slavery. Although the nation attained its democracy through the release of Mandela is not an important site of memory for the black majority as it did not yield much for them. The chapter also reveals that identities can be accepted or rejected as seen through Wa Azania who rejects the born free identity thus the born free concept is under deconstruction and construction. The following chapter discusses complications inherent in biographical production. A project whose objectivity and neutrality are constantly under close scrutiny to satisfy biographical requirements.

CHAPTER 5

The crisis of Representation: Betrayal, silencing and reclamation of voice and name in TIhabi's *Khwezi: The Remarkable Story Of Fezekile Ntsukela*

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the construction of the nation through Wa Azania's memoir to unmask the continuities of the apartheid in the Post-apartheid moment by creating a utopian discourses and aporia. While the subject in chapter four represented herself, chapter five how the subject is represented and the complications inherent. In this chapter Renders and de Haan (2014) posit that across the decades, roughly after the nineteen seventies, biography writing underwent remarkable changes that have endeared it to multiple interdisciplinary projects. The site of these changes has largely been the centering of the subject traditionally construed as marginal into spaces reserved for the masculine subject and the subsequent interrogation of the constricting heteronormativity and exclusionary conceptualizations of the nation and self (McClintock 2003). This chapter investigates how one of these projects – feminism, has been deployed by Redi TIhabi in *Khwezi: The Remarkable Story Of Fezekile Ntsukela* (2017) a biography, which by pitting a relatively marginal female against Jacob Zuma, a stalwart of the ANC (on charges of rape). A masculine hero of the struggle against apartheid and one of the key participants in the founding of the post-apartheid South Africa, provokes questions on the complicated relations between the self/subject and the gendered nation; the complex interplay that rises between genre (biography) and the representativity of the biographee suggested by TIhabi's feminist project which takes it for granted that Khwezi's story or stories capture similar experiences of other women or female subjects across the nation and the need to interrogate the overlapping of the biographee's voice in the biographer's project. A project whose objectivity and neutrality are constantly under close scrutiny to satisfy biographical requirements (Denzin, 1994).

This chapter argues that the author's project to retrieve the biographee's name by the same ploy, her voice, is limited/ becomes impossible by the process of biographical writing. This is because biographical writing is a production/construction process. Backscheider (2014) makes some illuminating interventions in her book *Reflection on Biography*, about questions on the biographer's objectivity and neutrality, by pointing out that the study of biography must pay attention to the choices a biographer makes in the context of voice and interpretation. It is crucial here to note that such choices made by the biographer do not necessarily involve the

participation of the biographee in the implementation of the said choices and methods of interpretation. This opens space to the discussion on how the author's professional background as a journalist may compromise objectivity since the demands of a profession may dictate or influence modes and contents of writing. Bacscheider proposes that it is the voice of the author and not the biographee that interacts with the audience and thus such a voice is a palimpsest of the biographee's voice, thus rendering authorial objectivity and neutrality impossible.

The biography reveals that, Khwezi is always changing identity positions and mobile across and through multiple geographic and cultural spaces and thus refuses the tired typologies of fixed terrains and narcissistic cultures and ideologies. Questions raised by Tlhabi's writing concern the conceptualizations of self-identity in a gendered and sexed nation. The nation as gendered (Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler, 2002) is also an imagined community (Anderson 1983) whose origins are paradoxically hidden and created in the mists of time (Bhabha 2004). In this context discussing the positions of the self together with the notion of nation demands examining primordial, modernist and postmodernist or postcolonial theories of nation construction. To be emphasized in this chapter is the position that the assumed connection between nation and state produces a unified narrative of collective identity is nothing but a fiction (Yuval-Davis 2015) and that in certain societies some people are excluded and do not regard themselves as part of the dominant group.

Another issue that demands attention in this chapter is whether the self (biographee) as an individual and as singularity in experience and narrative, can represent a section of the nation in connection to sex, gender and identity formations. Contemporary theorizations on this topic have sought to depart from the fallacy, long held, that the self's singular experience can provide a site for a stable and unitary collective identity (Levi, 2014; Loriga, 2015) something that risks collapsing biography into prosopography. If singularity is the mainstay of biography, one must resist the temptation to conflate singularity with uniqueness, rather, attention must be paid to the "exemplariness" of the self, "how that individual's life serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture as a whole" (Lepore, 2001:133).

5.2. Textual Analysis of Fezekile's story

In telling the story of Fezekile, Tlhabi draws attention to the stories of women who were sexually abused during the liberation struggle in the MK camps, as well as in the new South Africa. The biography does not simply chronicle the trials of women in this society, but it also

triumphantly narrates how Fezekile courageously fought her violation by society. Her triumph is not hers alone only, but the success of all the suffering women in South Africa. The biographer shows that despite the attempts to obliterate Fezekile from society's memory and to completely drown her voice, the biography brings her to life and amplifies her voice. The biography is a celebration of her refusal to be 'erased' from existence by society.

In this biography, there are two important voices, the voice of the narrator, Redi Tlhabi, and the subject, Fezekile, whose story is being narrated by the biographer. The narrative is about the story of a young woman fighting to reclaim her dignity and her name in a patriarchal society that had done everything possible to shut her up. According to Tlhabi, "This is her (Fezekile) story" (7), an account of how the South African society participated in her "lynching" and "allowed the erasure of a young woman's presence" (4). Through the biography, she "reclaim(s) her name" (7). However, Tlhabi also makes it clear that this is not just Fezekile's story, but it is also the story of power as exercised in a patriarchal society. She declares: "Khwezi is politics – a symbol of the arduous fight against political and patriarchal power" (7). In her introduction to the biography, she states that "Fezekile's journey – presents us with an opportunity to interrogate concepts such as justice, equality and fairness, which the law may not always serve" (3). This is reminiscent of the second wave of Feminism which identified women's cultural and political inequality as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand how their personal lives reflected sexist power structures (Drucker, 2018). In the introduction to the biography, she states that Fezekile's story presented her with "an opportunity to interrogate concepts such as justice, equality and fairness, which the law may not always serve" (3). It is clear from the narrative that Tlhabi is of the view that women are unfairly treated in this society and, to that end, raises fundamental questions about the condition of women in this society:

Has society had the conversation about barriers to justice for women who approach the law? Have we fully confronted the entitlement of men in positions of power to young women's bodies – and how society facilitates this entitlement by not demanding the highest moral conduct from its men? Does the law, with its fixation on facts, represent the limits of human endeavor? (4)

Thus, through her choice of events, the biographer does not only tell us the subject's story, but she also reveals what she considers to be important in relaying her message. Tlhabi's biography gives the reader a feminist perspective of the rape trial and through it shows how society and

the justice system let not only Fezekile down, but many other women who have suffered sexual abuse in South Africa. Through Fezekile's story, Tlhabi gives a scathing attack of the ANC, the judiciary and the police, as well as the South African society which participated in Fezekile's humiliation.

The biographer highlights that, despite attempts to silence her, Fezekile refuses to be muted by the courts and society. It further argues that, even though Fezekile died in 2016, this biography continues to amplify her voice from the grave helping her to reclaim her name, dignity, identity and sexuality which the patriarchal society had tried to take away from her during the high-profile trial. To that end Tlhabi declares: "In this book, Fezekile's voice rings loudly and defiantly" (5) and that "in these pages, she is here to reclaim her own name" (7). The book symbolizes her triumph over a system that had done everything possible to silence her in life; it is timeless and defies any attempts to silence her. The chapter further challenges the notion of nationhood embodied in popular characterization of the post-apartheid society as a rainbow nation in which all who live in it are free and enjoy social justice. Values embodied in the Freedom Charter (1955) written by the ANC and its allies that the South Africa they were fighting for would respect the economic, social and legal rights of all who live in it are interrogated in this biography. In addition, through this narrative, Tlhabi does not only tell us the kind of person Fezekile is, but she also constructs self.

Oftentimes, in writing a life, the life narrator and the biographer also engage different kinds of evidence. Most biographers incorporate multiple forms of evidence, including historical documents, interviews, and family archives, which they evaluate for validity. Relatively few biographers use their personal memories of their subject as reliable evidence, unless they had a personal relationship to the subject of the biography (as a relative, child, friend, or colleague) (Smith and Watson, 2001). Likewise, Tlhabi makes use of most of the above mentioned forms. For example, she admits that her interpretation of what happens to Fezekile in the courtroom were with the help of a legal expert. She writes: "When I first spoke to Fezekile, I already read the entire court transcript twice with the help of a friend who is a judge" (68). She also visited Fezekile's mother to corroborate her story, "I find her on a Saturday afternoon, outside, bending over a tap.....washing pots. They receive me warmly" (229). Inputs from Fezekile's mother and others help the biographer bolster the narrative with images of young Fezekile (20, 40, 248, 197, 193) her family (213, 234) her funeral (243, 246) and the silent protest while Zuma was addressing the nation in the 2016 local government elections (212). She spoke to many people who were in Fezekile's life, for example, Danielle whom Fezekile met in Dar es Salaam

(185), Shaun who helped Fezekile and her mother to get to the Netherlands (166), Marc and Teresa who assisted Fezekile to get a job in Tanzania (177). Thus, biographers do not rely only on information given by their subjects to write her narrative, they also collect materials from other sources to depict their experiences and to authenticate their stories. However, it is important to note that these sources are also chosen carefully to promote the biographer's narrative.

5.3. Biographical writing and representation

Biography as produced by an external or third person consciousness who tells a story, "interprets [...] gives a depiction of a historically real, lived life of a central character" (Possing, 2017: 22). So, biography is generally defined as that form of narrative life writing which is produced by someone else other than the subject. It is a representation of a life lived. Tlhabi's biography evokes what Denzin (1997: 4-5) calls the crisis of representation as stated below:

It involves the assumption that much, if not all, qualitative and biographical writing is a narrative production, structured by a logic that separates writer, text and subject matter [...] Any social text can be analysed in terms of its treatment of four paired terms: (a) the "real" and its representation in the text, (b) the text and the author, (c) lived experience and its textual representations, and (d) the subject and his or her intentional meanings. The text presumes that there is a world out there (the real) that can be captured by a "knowing" author through the careful transcription (and analysis) of field materials (interviews, notes, etc.). The author becomes the mirror to the world under analysis. This reflected world then represents the subject's experiences through a complex textual apparatus. The subject is a textual construction because the real flesh and blood person is always translated into either an analytic subject as a social type or a textual subject who speaks from the author's pages.

This means that a biography is a construction and artifact Bourdieu (1994). Biography is also described as encompassing both a reconstruction of a human life, and a representation of a human individual (Possing, 2015). Thus, the notion of biography encompasses more than a pure life depiction. The following section analyses the approaches employed by Tlhabi in her construction and reconstruction of Fezekile. Such an analysis derives from (Denzin, 1994), will

provoke questions of biographee representativity and biographer's subjectivity, objectivity and neutrality.

Posing (2015) posits that experiences from the reconstructions of human life, and the representations of historical individuals through two thousand years have shaped the biographical conventions, every biography is a life from cradle to grave, every biography has an intention, a plot, an agenda or a motive beyond that of telling a life, every biography is shaped by the biographical triangle (the relation between the biographer, the protagonist and the audience), and every biographer holds the fate of someone else in their hands. Historical biography expresses interest in the individual, and its place in culture and society.

5.4. Tlhabi's attempt to reclaim Fezekile's voice and name

Throughout the prologue and introduction Tlhabi's intention is to give Fezekile a voice. Tlhabi declares her agenda right from the beginning that her biography is a feminist project, "I wanted her to know that I was writing, unapologetically, as a feminist who believed her – this being precisely why I approached her" (5). Through the narrative Tlhabi is trying to reclaim a voice silenced by a violent patriarchal society. She writes the biography as a feminist who understands that women have been suppressed for too long. The narrative is also a means to reclaim the power that Fezekile was at risk of losing. By shutting her mouth, Fezekile's betrayers were trying to obliterate her existence. People exist because they can define themselves, stand up for themselves, create a space, and have a voice that can be heard. If everything is cut out it then means one stops existing. However, biography written from a feminist perspective, whatever that theoretical perspective might be, is also concerned with locating the subject's life within a broader social, political and intellectual context (Jeevaraj, 2014). It is rightly stated by Clifford (1986:18) "revealing the nature of gender relations and reconceptualising them are key concerns of the feminist project". Thus, biographical research, when informed by a feminist theoretical perspective, gives a voice to women's lives which have previously been obscured in sociological research. Hence, biography has the potential to represent the female experience by bringing women from the margins to the centre of analysis.

Also, from the beginning of the narrative, the biographer makes it clear why the biography was written and what its launch was aimed at achieving. According to Tlhabi, the biography aimed "to introduce her by her real name" (1). She had adopted the name "Khwezi" (3) during the trial for fear for her life and to hide her true identity because she had dared speak against one

of the most powerful men in South Africa. When TIhabi asked her which name to use when sending the biography, (Khwezi, her pseudonym or Fezekile her real name), she boldly declares ‘My real names, dear. Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo’ (1). Fezekile’s tone is both emphatic and shows a determination not to be obliterated anymore by the patriarchal society. She defiantly proclaims: “the rapist is not hiding why must I?” (1). TIhabi constructs her as a fighter, a woman of courage who is making her presence felt and is not prepared to be silenced by society anymore. She refuses to be sent into hiding by her tormentors and firmly declares her identity and her presence. To add on, Fezekile rejects all the labels imposed on her and defiantly claims her true identity. In the process of reclaiming her name she is also reclaiming her dignity. In this case finding her name is like finding her voice. It is a refusal to be cowed and labelled anymore. When Fezekile finally laid the charges against Zuma, she is quoted saying:

I did not set out to change history [...] I just wanted to fight for myself, at last [...] My body has been a soiled space, you know from when I was a child [...] This is what he did to me and I had to fight for myself. Qha! (That’s all) (76).

Taking one of the most powerful men in South Africa to court shows her determination and her refusal to be silenced like the women in ANC camps. Her courage is further underlined by the fact that she is prepared to have her story documented in the form of a biography. This biography by TIhabi is Fezekile’s ultimate triumph over the patriarchal society which, according to TIhabi, had allowed the erasure of a young woman’s presence (4). Fezekile refuses to be erased and is today speaking from the grave through the biographer. The biographer is placing Fezekile at the centre of the narrative, and is writing her subject into existence and persuading the readers of her version of the story. One of the fundamental ways in which TIhabi gives Fezekile a voice is through the use of verbatim quotations to add weight to the telling of her subject's life.

Just as Fezekile refuses to hide her true identity, she courageously takes control of her body by being involved in both heterosexual and lesbian relationships while she is in exile. In *Da er Salaam*, she comes out of the closet to declare her lesbianism by having an intense relationship with Danielle” (185). She also has a relationship with Allan Mapundi, a young farmer, whom she describes as a soul mate (189-191). Choosing to have a lesbian and heterosexual relationship could be interpreted to mean that she is in control of her body especially taking into consideration societal attitudes towards homosexuality. Attitudes of some sects within some religions. Homophobic attitudes in society which can manifest themselves in the form of

anti- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People (LGBTI) discrimination, opposition to their rights, anti-LGBTI hate speech, violence against them. This is a woman who is refusing to succumb to patriarchy's containment and definition of the female body. Instead, she defies society's definition of what the female body should do or not do.

Fezekile's coming back from exile to a space that had denied her justice, a place which vilified her is an act of defiance and shows courage. It is also an act of trying to reclaim that which was taken from her. Through this biography she is fighting back for her life and voice. The biography itself is Fezekile's story and her refusal to be silenced by the powerful forces in society. Tihabi is writing her into history and the existence of her biography is Fezekile's triumph over the patriarchal system, the legal system, ANC and a powerful voice that cannot be silenced. Fezekile's voice lives on despite her death, as she speaks defiantly from the grave. Her narrative pokes holes on the claims of equality and justice enshrined in the constitution of the country. A narrative that South Africa is a democratic country which bases its principles on human dignity and equality yet Fezekile's voice is muted. Fezekile's story highlights the fallacy of a democratic nation. Democracy upholds the voice of all people yet in South Africa hers is silenced. This raises questions about the leadership in South Africa which cannot lead by example.

Despite an attempt by the police, courts, ANC and the society to silence Fezekile, through her testimony she can no longer be silenced. Fezekile has triumphed over all forces, her story is symbolic of her triumph as Tihabi states in the prologue (1):

Here I am, attending a funeral instead of a triumphant book launch. We had imagined the scene so many times; the exultation we would feel at the launch when she showed her face to the world, told her story.

The biography is Fezekile's testimony that can never be erased. Tihabi wanted the triumph to be a physical one as stated in the quote. They both wanted it to be physical but death denied them however, that did not stop them from triumphing. Fezekile might have been a woman betrayed, but through her biography people get to know her story. Fezekile is brought back to life although she is dead at another level but she is alive through her book and her voice is shouting from the grave, never to be silenced again. A biography attempts to locate individuals in their overall life experience as well as the wider socio-historical contexts in which they live. In short, the actions of individuals are reflected in their life stories and those of others, but equally, their experiences reflect other variables (such as their gender, class, race, ethnicity)

which have impinged upon them and moulded or constrained their experiences and actions (Bernard and Meade, 1993).

Tlhabi writes that Fezekile's attempt to regain control of her began in exile wherein she enrolled for a short course at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (172), contribute to a course on HIV/Aids and speak to students about her life as an HIV-positive woman at Wageningen University. Tlhabi notes that, Fezekile's confidence grew in leaps and bounds because of this opportunity. Samuel (2020) observes that disclosing one's HIV status is empowering, it helps deal with any shame, combats stigma and results in the increase of access to support and care. It was during that she developed a love for teaching. In Dar es Salaam, she taught for two years at an international school (177) and at a Cambridge school (179). Back in SA from exile she found another teaching job at Tree Tops Primary School in Musgrove (183). Not only did she teach, but learned how to talk back in her defence and also shoot a nude picture with a calabash on her back with her back turned from the camera (186) in Dar es Salaam. Tlhabi opines that it was a "triumphant image, confident and cheeky Fezekile who was striking back, a death of shame and subservience, but a rebirth of sorts (186-7)". Through this Fezekile reasserts the power of her body, to show that she is in control of it and no one has any right to tell her what to do. Besides, she does this to gain acceptance of who she is, to celebrate her body by looking past the flaws or the pain, and instead focus on the beauty it brings, such as the strength, agility, speed or either feminine or strong shape. Like the many nude pictures people see, the intention is not to be sexy or erotic, the motive is about expression, conveying confidence and contentment with herself.

5.5. Voice in biography

Although the evidence in the text suggests that Tlhabi wants to give Fezekile a voice, this is not what materializes. Tlhabi's voice reverberates throughout the narrative emphasizing how the ANC, Judiciary, police and society betrayed Fezekile thereby revealing the state of the nation. This is a betrayal of her intention. Haffenden, (1996) observes that when writing about others the biographer cannot help but portray themselves in the story. In *The Art of Literary Biography*, Carpenter (1995:273) believes that as biographers "we're all really writing about ourselves. That's the hidden agenda". There is some sort of betrayal that happens whereby the dominant narrative is the biographers story. What informs the biographers' construction method is their positionality. To rehash, what I stated in the introduction, Tlhabi is a feminist (5), journalist (4) and black South African woman born in the last years of apartheid. In the

biography Fezekile emerges as having child-like innocence, naive and too trusting, opens her to abuse as shown in the following paragraphs and sections. At the same time, Tlhabi is showing that she is a strong and powerful woman that has a voice. It is as if Fezekile is both a child and adult at the same time. This suggests that Fezekile is not strong, Tlhabi is. She is writing for herself that she is strong and wants Fezekile to appear as strong and empowered woman whose vulnerability is overcome. Tlhabi is projecting herself on to the text because of her positionality as a black woman who does not want another black woman to be seen as an overgrown child and naive.

Tlhabi is also out to show her skepticism of the claim that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that the liberation of South Africa from apartheid would bring equality and social justice to all its citizens regardless of gender among others (The Freedom Charter, 1955). Her agenda here is to expose men in power, politics that they abuse subalternised women who have encroached into male spaces, the inequalities within the South African justice system to show that even the powerful can fall.

5.5.1. Fezekile's betrayal by national patriarchy

Throughout the biography, Tlhabi reveals how social institutions, such as the ANC, the courts and the police, should have protected Fezekile and ensured that she got justice. Rather, they were complicit in denying her the justice she deserved. Instead, these institutions did everything possible to cover up for the perpetrators. For example, the liberation party, the ANC, callously and unfeelingly denies her justice and other women and children when they are raped in the MK camps. By the age of fourteen, for example, Fezekile had been raped three times, at the ages of five, twelve, and thirteen (29) in the MK camps in exile by men who should have protected her. It is ironic that a party which set out to liberate South Africa and bring justice to the marginalized members of the society, as captured in the Freedom Charter, is as guilty as apartheid in marginalizing and denying justice to those amongst them who need their protection most.

Tlhabi underscores the heinous nature of this betrayal by emphasizing Fezekile's innocence exhibited by her total trust of those who eventually betray her. For example, at the age of twelve, she trustingly got into Malume Godfrey's bed (39); at 5 years old she can be forgiven for not seeing anything odd "about a young girl going to Auntie Martha's house to bath [or] how 'uncle' ran a bath for her, told her to take off her clothes" (38) before raping her. The

adults who should have protected her took advantage of her innocence and violated her instead. On another occasion, Fezekile was kidnapped and raped at Mashaya's house and Godfrey's girlfriend beat the 13-year old Fezekile severely after finding her in that house (39). Instead of taking Godfrey to task for abusing the little child, Godfrey's girlfriend assaults the child. In her adult life, the betrayal by those who should have protected her continued when she was raped by the then deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma (76, 159), a man who was a very close friend of Judson Kuzwayo, Fezekile's father, and whom she considered a father. Not only is she betrayed by Jacob Zuma, but she is let down by the ANC for which the father dedicated his life. This raises questions about the liberation narrative of the ANC. If the ANC cannot protect the most vulnerable in society and ensure justice for them when they are abused or treated unjustly, then how can they claim the high moral ground of being liberators of the nation? Through this narrative Tihabi indicts the ANC for betraying Fezekile when she needed them the most. Perpetrators of the infamous crimes of rape against children and women are not brought to justice for their crimes; in fact, they escape with very minor sanctions compared to the magnitude of their crimes such as being docked six months of their allowances (104), a minor sentence considering that this man had raped a minor.

The biographer also exposes the ANC's double standards and hypocrisy in their treatment of Fezekile during the trial. Fezekile is pelted, vilified, threatened and humiliated outside the courtroom by members of the party (3,19,87,138,160). So afraid was Fezekile of the blood thirsty ANC supporters (160) that she expected a bullet to land on her body from any direction (87). The ANC supporters brandished weapons and chanted songs against her. She was humiliated in the media and on social media (Berry, 2017). Instead of the state and the ANC protecting her, they were in the forefront of humiliating her. This was the party whose Freedom Charter promised social justice for all, regardless of race, gender and class in a democratic South Africa. In the biography, Tihabi describes how this vilification by the party whose ideals her father had fought forced Fezekile to change her name to "Khwezi" to protect herself from the people who were buying for her blood. She is forced to hide from people who should have protected her and ensured that she got justice. To Tihabi therefore, the state and the ANC have failed Fezekile. Instead of chastising its supporters, the ANC leadership watched in silence as Zuma sang his archetypal phallic and violent anthem "Awuleth' Umshini wam" (Bring me my machine gun) (162-3) outside the court room. His song reinforced notions of militarism; a gun is a phallic symbol, so in some way he was mimicking the rape he claimed not to have committed (Suttner, 2016). Showing the privileged position of the masculine (Lacan, 2006).

Grosz (1989) describes this as a system of representation that upholds a single model of male subjectivity, around which all others are defined. Tlhabi views Zuma's choice of song as inappropriate given the circumstances; she describes the machine gun as representing "obscene power, violence and control; all the characteristics of the crime of which he had been accused" (163). Yet, despite that, chiefs (*amakosi*), the custodians of the culture of [...] dressed in traditional skins occupied the front seats of the courtroom during proceedings (Robins, 2008). Tlhabi then comments "power seldom holds a mirror to its own face. It does what power does; determinedly pursues its target, using other people's lives as stepping stones (163).

Similarly, double standards are seen through selective reference to culture when it benefits a patriarchal narrative. This is seen through Zuma's denial of his father-daughter relationship with Fezekile (153-4). Fezekile regarded Zuma as more like a father to her. Motsei (2007:15) asserts that by denying the father-daughter relationship, Zuma was being disingenuous. He notes that:

As someone who has a keen eye and ear for tradition, he is aware of the principle of 'my child is your child, your child is mine', which, in African societies, encourages biological and non-biological parents to take communal responsibility for the material, psychological and moral wellbeing of every child in the community.

By this, Tlhabi is revealing a society led by leadership that is two faced, in that just before the trial Tlhabi quotes Zuma who was quoted by Mail & Guardian saying "we want to create a society where the value that underpinned my upbringing, that everybody's child is my child, is regenerated" (153). It is ironical that in court Zuma denies such a relationship towards Fezekile. Tlhabi is revealing how leaders are not true to their words and that they just say things to further their agendas.

The biography shows how fragile the foundations of the rainbow nation are, in that the nation lacks unity and oneness. Tlhabi is constructing a society that lacks ubuntu. Tutu (2011) maintains that Ubuntu speaks of spiritual attributes such as generosity, hospitality, compassion, caring and sharing. He further states that, it is an eternal African philosophy of oneness, an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life. It is the essence of a human being, the divine spark of goodness inherent within each being. It is the core of human values and without it mankind is enveloped by greed, selfishness, immorality, pride to mention but a few. Given this understanding, Ubuntu demands respect for human dignity regardless of anything. Tlhabi is showing a society that lacks ubuntu, sympathy for women through revealing how those who

tried to defend Fezekile were intimidated by the supporters of Jacob Zuma. This is a society with rowdy people, for instance, mobs would bang Advocate de Beer's car as she drove off the court, hurl insults and commentaries became vicious (138). Tlhabi states that Fezekile's legal counsel encountered strange things during the height of the trial as on one occasion Adv de Beer found a couple of snacks of the boomslang species left on the doorstep of her home (138). While Adv Broodryk was also witnessing strange happenings he was reluctant to, without proof, link them to the trial. Although Fezekile's legal counsel did not believe in witchcraft and traditional medicine spells Tlhabi states that Broodryk mentioned that "there was something sinister in the air and that for three days in which Adv de Beer cross-examined Zuma, she had been weak and ill, she was pale, dizzy and experienced stomach cramps. This was sudden and inexplicable" (139). The biographer further states that a sangoma from rural KwaZulu-Natal was brought to Johannesburg to fortify Zuma's home and was present in all court proceedings. Tlhabi says "the battle to save Zuma from a rape conviction and by, extension to ensure his political survival was fought inside and outside the courtroom, using every tactic imaginable. All these were attempts to psychologically unsettle Fezekile, demoralize, frighten and to force her and her mother Beauty into submission. All this violence was against her voice and story. Fezekile was not safe amongst her people, in her own country, the country that her father died whilst saving. The evidence suggests that they threatened and forced her to be silent. It was as if Fezekile was almost fighting against the entire nation. She represents the oppressed not only women but all South Africans who cannot speak for themselves in the face of this powerful nation represented by Zuma's judiciary. Everyone seemed not to want to hear her story, if anything they were all silencing her.

The biographer shows that naming is another means that the society and the court used to betray Fezekile. During the trial Fezekile was called all kind of names, all of them negative. The ANC demonstrators outside the courtroom who had come to show solidarity for Zuma, for example, hurled insults at her shouting "burn the bitch" (3). Calling her a "bitch" (3) is a deliberate act aimed at not only intimidating and painting her as a belligerent and malicious woman, but also dehumanising her. Gerber and John (2010) state that self-identity and the behavior of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them. Labelling Fezekile is an act by the ANC supporters to create a horrible identity and other her. According to Retzlaff (2005), naming is a political act which is used to include or exclude. The way people are named or labelled shapes their perception of self as well as how others view them (Retzlaff, 2005). Naming, according to Lynch (2016), is not only political, but it also

assigns a set of characteristics to the subject which will “legitimize certain forms of inquiry, engagement and action, and delegitimize others”. Negative naming can disempower the individual or group and act as a powerful tool to exercise control and manipulate them (Retzlaff, 2005). This attack terrified her and contributes to her adopting the pseudonym “Khwezi” to hide her identity. Tlhabi is showing that, even though there were attempts to rename her in the negative, Fezekile, fights back to reclaim her name. The act of hiding her identity not only disempowers her, but it also silences her. However, she is a woman of courage. Temporarily she buckles under these threats by changing her name and fleeing the country to live in exile. But she comes back and declares her true identity when she firmly says her name is “Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo” (1).

Fezekile does not only suffer betrayal in the MK camps, but she is betrayed in the new South Africa for which the ANC and her father fought for. The nation’s legal system denies her justice when she accuses one of the most powerful men in the country of rape. The patriarchal nature of the legal system in democratic South Africa mirrors that of the MK camps where men dominated society at the expense of women. Tlhabi reveals this when she says “I contend that Fezekile stood no chance in a patriarchal trial” (5). During the trial, Advocate Kemp’s line of questioning is not only irrelevant and humiliating for Fezekile, but it also labels her negatively as a woman of loose morals. The deeply personal questions about her sexual history are aimed at portraying her as a promiscuous woman and a liar whose testimony should be dismissed with contempt. This is aptly demonstrated by the following extract:

Adv Kemp: ‘So did you stop in 1996 to have sex with Z’?

‘Yes.’

‘And from 1999 to the middle of 2004 with how many people did you have consensual sex?’

I remember the male that I had sex with in 2004. You said up to when, sorry?’

Up to the middle of 2004 because you testified that is the last time that you had sex before the events in question’

‘Any sex’

‘Yes, consensual sex with a male.’

‘With a male?’

‘Yes.’

‘Maybe I will remember later, I cannot remember later, I cannot really know the timeframes and things, I cannot remember now. I cannot think of someone.’

Kemp continues, ‘Are you still thinking or can I ask you a question?’

‘You can carry on.’

‘That number was just, I meant to say less than five, number one, but also if you want me to include non-penetrative sex then I can remember two people, two men, that was non-penetrative.’

‘And in Zimbabwe what is your answer to that maybe?’

‘There was some form of sex it may – it is very possible – that it was penetrative on that occasion in some flat in Zimbabwe yes.’

I want you to tell the court what do you regard as non-penetrative sex?’

‘A penis not entering my vagina or any other part of my body or mouth or anything, that is not penetrative.’
(119-121)

Labelling her as a prostitute and a liar strips Fezekile of her dignity and self-respect in the courtroom. What is of great concern is that the sexual experiences that Advocate Kemp was referring to happened when Fezekile was thirteen years old, further underscoring the injustices that women and children suffer in this society. Tihabi's disgust of this society and its legal system is captured in the following extract:

Adv Kemp: "Mashaya took you to his house and it seems on the possibilities had sex with you."
She was thirteen years old.

Adv Kemp: "Mashaya will testify that what happened in his house was consensual.

Fezekile: "I was thirteen years old and any sex with any kind of consent at that point would not be sex at that age [...] I (would) not necessarily [...] have known what I was doing or understood the situation because I was young."

Adv Kemp: "Ms Kuzwayo, I take note of that, I want an answer from you on the factual issue, do not worry about what the legal position is. Did you consent or not?" (100-101)

In the courtroom, during the rape trial, Advocate Kemp tried to use the rape incident of a twelve-year old as consensual, resulting in Tihabi declaring contemptuously, "Perhaps what is odd here is not a little girl getting into bed with an uncle, in front of her mother, but that the uncle and society interpret this as an invitation for consensual sex" (39). Section 15 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, No. 32 of (2007), in South Africa, clearly states that a fourteen-year old cannot consent to sex and that it is an offence to have sex with someone who is below the age of 16, even when sex is consensual. The judicial system which should have protected Fezekile used her traumatic childhood rape experiences to dismiss the rape claims made against Jacob Zuma. The narrator is concerned that the judge describes the three rape incidents when Fezekile was a child as her "bad sexual history" and as evidence that "at young age" Fezekile made "allegations of rape when no rape had taken place" (111). The judge concluded that "the complainant was inclined to falsely accuse men of having raped or attempted to rape her" (111), implying that the sexual abuse she suffered as a child cannot be classified as rape. The legal system, thus dismisses Fezekile as being promiscuous and a liar based on her sexual experiences as a child.

The court's conclusions thus send a message to society that it is OK to sleep with a thirteen-year-old as long as the child agrees, missing the point that there is no consensual sex with a child whatever the circumstances. Tihabi is showing a nation that is unprotective of its women through turning a blind eye to Fezekile's rape encounters. Solnit (2017) observes that violence against women is often against their voices and stories. Fezekile is violated, through thwarting her story in the courtroom. Her rape is trivialised thus she is silenced. Rape survivors, like Fezekile, who speak out about their assault experiences are often punished for doing so when

they are subjected to negative reactions from support providers. These negative reactions may thereby serve a silencing function, leading some rape survivors to stop talking about their experiences to anyone at all. The way Fezekile was treated in the courtroom was aimed at intimidating and silencing her so that her story would not be heard. TIhabi's disgust of this betrayal by the judiciary is captured in the following extract where she states that:

This is where the chasm between law and justice becomes most obvious. Adv Kemp knows the law; he does not need a lecture on it. But, by elevating a factual argument about whether Fezekile consented or not, and basically arguing that the legal definition was not relevant in this case, I believe he put Fezekile at a disadvantage. She was being asked to ignore what the law says about consent, to ignore that the law says a child cannot. That she did not have the maturity, emotional capital, to give consent should be relevant, it wasn't. The legal process demonstrates its limitations by failing to appreciate the politics of power and how they are skewed in favour of the adult male (101).

So disgusted is TIhabi with the South African legal system for allowing Mashaya to get away unsanctioned when he testified in court that "he had had sex with" a child (101). According to TIhabi, Mashaya did this because "he knew he could confidently affirm that he 'had sex with' a child because male privilege was guaranteed and power relations inside and outside court would protect him" (102). The notion of equal justice for all articulated in the Freedom Charter is exposed by TIhabi as a myth. Her revulsion at this injustice is so apparent when she angrily states:

There is absolutely no grasp of what it means for a grown man to creep up on a child and not recognize that this child does not have agency and maturity to be an equal partner – that her 'consent' has no value because she is a child. That even if she had said yes, it still constituted a violation (104).

TIhabi's tone towards the legal system and society is thus condemnatory for betraying Fezekile. She exposes a society that upholds male privilege and fails to grant power to women and children. Not only is this legal system and society failing to protect Fezekile, but is by extension failing to protect children. As TIhabi reflects on the rape trial, she shows that there is no justice for women and children in South Africa as the court undermines the rights of women. Discourses such as "we the people" stated in the Freedom Charter (1955) or the "rainbow

nation” by Tutu (2011) are exposed as empty narratives which hide the inequalities and injustices in the South African society and perpetuate male privilege.

The biographer highlights the patriarchal nature of the legal system through her description of the demographics of each legal team in the courtroom. There were four Afrikaans males, one Afrikaans female and two black males, clearly giving males an upper hand in the handling of the case (128). The biographer suggests that Fezekile could not have made it without females who understood what she was going through. Tlhabi writes: “A court of law is intimidating. In a court dominated by males - who, by virtue of their gender, may not be acutely attuned to the vagaries of trauma and vulnerability - Fezekile was othered” (117), and further states that “there was only white Afrikaans female (128), who also might not understand the challenges of a black woman in post-1994 South Africa. Thus, Tlhabi appears to be underscoring the point that Fezekile stood no chance of getting justice from this court which was dominated by males. This could explain why Adv Kemp readily and cynically abandons his understanding of the law to label Fezekile promiscuous because of what happened to her when she was thirteen years old.

Tlhabi’s discovers so many wrongs in the post Apartheid South African society. However, the fact that Zuma was taken to court on charges of rape reveals that the justice system works. It shows that at least someone listened and a docket was opened. At least Fezekile’s efforts did not go unnoticed, her agency materialised into the arrest of a Vice President although he was acquitted in court owing to the subjectivity of the judges ruling. Issues of evidence in court are not objective rather they are subjective to the judge. It is a big achievement that she brought a whole Vice President to the court of law for rape charges. Fezekile challenged the patriarchal system of justice which is overwhelmed by police and majority of lawyers in court were men. Despite that, she still brought Zuma to the dock. She could have been frustrated and not listened to but she was given a platform to be listened to in a court of law. This provides a glimmer of hope to the entire nation and those violated to report whenever they are violated. With hindsight, the former president Zuma was later imprisoned in July 2021, for 15 months on contempt charges, after he defied an order to appear before a corruption inquiry examining the breathtaking financial scandals that tainted his tenure as the country’s leader from 2009 to 2018.

5.5.2. Rape myths

Another issue that informs Tlhabi’s construction method is the community she grew up in and the society she exists in. Tlhabi’s experiences and construction methods are shaped by South

Africa whereby cultural oppression of women still exists. According to theorists ‘biography’ is a form of literary production, but it is also a form of cultural production as biographical texts reflect social reality and also help create it. Nadel (1984) argues that biographers recover the society and culture of the subject in their narrative through the textualization of events. He observes that, “In this way, biography embodies the discourses of a culture, preserving (but also rewriting) a past culture while enacting a new one through certain choices of style, valuation and presentation” (74). Thus, biography and biographers can, indeed, highlight the society and culture of their subject and can emphasize specific cultural experiences. Tlhabi’s biography shows judiciary system that bases its judgment on the belief that, to be raped it a women’s fault.

Rape myths were used in the courtroom to dismiss Fezekiles’s case. Matthews et al (2018) & Lonsway, Fitzgerald (1994) argue that rape myths are a set of beliefs that largely place blame on the victim for her or his assault because of their clothing choices, words, actions. Blumell (2018) also defines rape myths as socially constructed, fabricated beliefs, extensively and obstinately held about rape. Patriarchy through the courts allowed Zuma’s defense to get away with uncontested notions of rape myths. For instance, Zuma’s defense arguments were based on cultural ground, claiming that a woman dressed in the way she was, Kanga type of a sarong, (69) was an invitation for sex, she did not sit properly with her legs together nor did she cross them and if he did not he would not have acted as a man, had he not indulged, he could have even been accused of rape (156-7). During the trial, the mundane cotton kanga was sexualised and transformed into an object of seduction (Robins, 2008). Zuma’s description suggests that Fezekile is responsible for what happened as she asked for it through her actions.

Tlhabi shows how South Africa as a nation accepts these myths. Johnston (2006:69) states that, the African kanga 'has been the hallmark of female modesty and respectability [and is] handed out at political rallies emblazoned with slogans and the faces of political leaders'. Acceptance of such beliefs by the court of law shifts blame from the perpetrator of sexual assaults to those who are victims. Bohner *et al* (2006) argues that these myths commonly blame victims and absolve the perpetrator of responsibility, and downplay the inherent violence and violation that occurs during rape. Acceptance of these myths was aimed at making the public think that Fezekile was ‘asking to be raped’ because she wore provocative clothing or the man should have fought off the perpetrator (Fisher & Pina, 2013 and Stubbs-Richardson et al, 2018). Kanga dress arguments were bought to vilify and strip her off her dignity. Zuma’s notion of culture, could have been contested but no one did. The court colluded with one version of the Zulu

custom being accepted as being authentic. Accepting Zuma's interpretation feeds into the notion of rape culture, that it is not the urges of a man or impulses of a man that must be contained but women must dress themselves in some particular way (Suttner, 2016) and must not walk alone at night. Failure to comply they are to blame when they get raped. Furthermore, these attitudes provide an understanding of why rape victims are treated unsympathetically by the society and in turn why few victims report their assault to the authorities (Matthews et al, 2018). The wide acceptance of these myths creates a nation that is not protective of its females.

Tlhabi makes inferences to various rape myths that women suffer in the hands of patriarchy. Women do not have the luxury of behaving anyhow. Tlhabi shows her revulsion on how women are treated in the society as she sympathizes with Fezekile, she writes:

We live in a world where women are constantly policed and told not to act in a particular way-not to wear certain clothes, lest they tempt their potential abusers. These potential abusers have no agency or self -mastery, and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. They have assumed authority over women's signals and what those signals mean-and they always, conveniently seem to mean an invitation (94).

Life stories mirror the culture wherein the story is created and told (McAdams, 2006). Tlhabi is showing that mistreatment of women is part of the culture of this society as stories live in culture.

Additionally, Adv Kemp's line of questioning suggests that rapists should appear like monsters and if they do not the issue is somehow treated differently. For example, Tlhabi writes that, "Godfrey stopped when Fezekile told him it was painful" (99). Tlhabi concurs with Gqola (2015) that rapists are caring human beings as Godfrey enquired about his victims' wellbeing (99). Gqola further debunks the dangerous myths that perpetrators are monsters who are abusive all the time. Rapists and other abusers are normal people, they can be very loving and gentle to those close to them. Adv Kemp's line of questioning reveals of the beliefs about rape:

Adv Kemp: You did not freeze?

Fezekile: No, I did not

Adv Kemp: Did you consent to this or not?

Fezekile: Was crying and kicking and screaming

Adv Kemp: Was your clothing removed by force?

Fezekile: Cannot remember

Adv Kemp: Would know afterwards whether any of your clothing was torn

Fezekile: I do not think anything was torn, no, no (100-101).

Adv Kemp line of questioning further reflects misconceptions about rape. He also insinuates that there is a standard or set of behaviors that must be displayed by a victim. Fezekile's lack of showing expected behaviors limited her chances of getting her story heard. Myths make people doubt what the victim says. The public may think that 'she was not really raped'. This can mean that the victim does not get the support they need from people around them resulting in rape survivors feeling too ashamed or too guilty to report the rape or to share it with others (Smith, 2014 and Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Tlhabi notes that "so many victims walk away because they do not reflect the perfect picture of what a rape scene and victim should look like" (102). Levine (2017) observes that rape and rape myth acceptance are closely tied to gender inequality in society, since gender is the chief source of organizing social relations. Gender arrangements at the societal level serve to control the socialization and power relations in society. Godfrey and Charles were aware of the power they had over a 5 and 13-year-old.

For the reason that fear of revictimization causes many people not to report rapes; many of the statistics and rates on rape are reported inaccurately (Burt, 1980). Myths hide the fact that a rapist can come from any race, social class or environment, they take away the dignity and humanity of the survivor, causing more trauma and pain and lowering chances of recovery. The court's acceptance of these beliefs provide an enabling environment for the support of rape myths, both subtle and overt, and ultimately contribute to the persistence of sexual assault as a major social issue and unsafe environment for women as they are the most vulnerable.

5.5.3. Betrayal from the press and public

Tlhabi's profession as a seasoned journalist sets her agenda with regards to issues determining what to include or exclude due to the index set by publishers and editors, especially of media organizations. This tests Zelizer's (1992) rejection of the 'paradigm of professionalization', a move in which he 'identifies journalists as an interpretive community whose authority stems from discursive sources operating both inside and outside the professional sphere' (Schudson and Anderson, 2009: 98). Tlhabi is located within the journalism profession, which operates within the jurisdiction of her profession. This jurisdiction, establishes its own authority and legitimacy (Abbot, 1988) on the occasions it vies for an ascendancy in the face of epistemic contestations. Abbot's observation that professions differ from occupations since they are marked by 'a knowledge system governed by abstractions, a knowledge system that can redefine its problems and tasks, defend them from interlopers, and seize new problems' (Abbot, 1988: 93), is positioned in the examination of Tlhabi's location of gender and profession. As a

TV, Radio talk show host, author, columnist and production company owner Tlhabi's sites are on issues of rights and recourse, sexual harassment, the exploitation of women (Malingo, 2020). Hence, Tlhabi's biographical project is to give voice to Fezekile by exploring her experiences of the pre and post-independence periods. This places biography as writing that can protest against gendered exclusions (Renders and de Haan, 2014).

As a journalist, Tlhabi is exposing the nation's two key national institutions, the media and the police for being complicit in perpetuating the subordination of women. Both institutions played a major role in undermining Fezekile's story. Instead of protecting her, they made her appear like an unreliable person to discredit her story. Superintendent Khan, for example, played her up, in order to portray her as a confused woman who was not sure about what she was doing. He trapped her into telling different stories to two newspaper companies the Sunday Tribune and Sunday Times so that they could carry different stories and the result is that, "in court, these two versions were used to depict Fezekile as unreliable and a liar" (79). Fezekile expresses dismay at this betrayal when she states: "I had never felt so stupid in my entire life. They made it look like I was just a confused liar making statements and withdrawing them. It wasn't like that" (78-79). Fezekile's version of what happened to her was twisted to make the perpetrator appear innocent. The media, together with the police, silenced her voice by distorting her story, casting doubts in the minds of people about the veracity of her account of events. Police also framed her as dishonest in their deliberate failure to protect Fezekile during the trial. Tlhabi believes that they violated Fezekile's rights when they took her into witness protection without legal representation and made her talk to the press without legal advice (89-92). Tlhabi states that Fezekile did as she was told. Confined to witness protection she had lost her freedom, authority and ability to make choices. She did not have legal representation at this stage; later, her legal team advised her to enter NPS's witness protection programme as the police were not mandated to provide the kind of protection she needed. In ensuing confusion and fear, she was stuck with the police, believing that surely they were on her side (78). Tlhabi also adds that, "Fezekile was rattled and unsure of herself, but she decided to trust police" (89). Through this Tlhabi is showing that police take advantage of the vulnerable in the society and they cannot be trusted at times. Fezekile is presented as someone who believed that she would get protection from them but is betrayed. All these were efforts to contain Fezekile, to get information from her so as to build a stronger case than hers and that very few people would have access to seeing her. Later when her lawyer advises her to join NPA as the program was better suited, she had no confidence as police had lied to her that the government is about to

cut the NPA's funding. This speaks to a nation that does not respect the rights of its people as they held her with no legal guidance.

Police further betray Fezikile by taking her personal diary without her consent. It is ironical that the people who were supposed to be protecting her were the ones complicit in silencing her. Diaries are used as evidence of truth in life writing as biographers make their writings accurate by learning as much as possible about their subjects through studying materials such as diaries, personal letters, oral histories and autobiographies (Zachary Leader, 2015). Winslow (1995) also states that autobiographies and diaries constitute the earliest examples of feminism in life-writing. Somehow Zuma's lawyer managed to get Fezekile's private diary without an explanation of how it landed in their hands (97). Taking her diary was aimed at silencing her; her diary was the voice of her experiences, and when they stole it, they effectively took her voice and corrupted it against her. Police team assigned to protect her "constantly fed false information about her advocate and her abilities, asking her what they had discussed that day and why she is trusting a white woman to defend her (89), police advised her to allow Leila one of the guards, to record all her preparatory consultations and all her sessions with her psychologist, with her legal team assuring her that she will get them at a later stage" (89-90). All this information was used to weaken her case against Zuma. Fezekile's predicament raises questions on the safety of women under the police protection. In addition, efforts to unsettle her continued, for example, on the day of the trial there was no water to bath at her safe house. In her diary Fezekile wrote, "water is healing. I will take a warm bath and stay there for at least an hour and wash away all fear and anxiety" (93). Denying her of the most important thing that calmed her was an act of instilling fear in her and the lack of an opportunity to have a regular shower, for personal hygiene was meant to psychologically and physically degrade and humiliate her.

Moreover, Tlhabi condemns the police for not assuring her of her safety during the trial. In the safe houses where she was kept, they would sometimes leave her at night without a guard purposefully keep her afraid and psychologically unsettled. For example, on one occasion, she woke up in the middle of the night only to find out that she was alone; the police were not in sight and every door was wide open leaving her in a massive panic. Police only returned after she had phoned her advocate who then made a few calls (92). In her diary entry Fezekile mentions that since they moved her to Woodlands it was the second time that Leila had not slept in the house (92). Tlhabi also states that at the safehouses Fezekile felt unsafe "she had sent text messages to all of them about feeling unsafe" (171). In her diary she wrote that "she

believed that the crime intelligence people were in the camp out to kill us” (171). This careless disregard of Fezekile’s safety by the police is a betrayal of a vulnerable woman by the state which should protect her. Not only was leaving her alone enough, in witness protection police further betray her by taking pictures and videos of her without her knowledge being particularly affectionate and playful towards male officers yet she behaved in exactly the same way with female officers, yet somehow those images did not emerge. For example, commissioner Mpego would jokingly refer to Fezekile as his girlfriend and would ask her to sit on his lap and Superintendent Linda would talk about but would not play the girlfriend game in the presence of her lawyer which made her suspicious. All this was used in the defense of depicting her as loose, flirtatious woman who used her sexuality and nudity to lure men (92-94). When commenting about the nation, Mahatma Gandhi once said in a speech he delivered in (1931), “A nation’s greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members”. Going by what Mahatma Gandhi said, the South African state’s treatment of Fezekile exposes it as a country whose claims as a leader on the African continent can be contested. When the Vice President, the father of the nation is accused of rape and when the nation throws its towel behind him at the expense of his victim, then the nation is at stake. As a leader, as someone gunning for the highest office Zuma was supposed to lead by example.

What gets to be worrisome about Fezekile’s judgment is that the case relates to a number of aspects of democracy in the constitution. If South Africa as a nation believes in gender equality Fezekile would have received the required protection for someone bringing a charge of that nature. The manner in which they treated her can only make someone raped by a powerful man, fear to bring the charge to the light. It sends danger signals to all abused women in South Africa that the nation cannot guarantee them even the limited protection that people get overseas in South Africa with its more advanced constitution. This was the way in which Fezekile was treated by a violent patriarchal system. It almost killed her, symbolically the society killed Fezekile. She was treated as a destruction in Zuma’s way, who was gunning for the presidency. This scandal was only going to destroy him, to avoid that Fezekile had to be sacrificed through the honey trap conspiracy (130-7).

Fezekile’s greatest betrayal occurred when she and her mother left South Africa for their second exile to the Netherlands since their house was burnt during trial after people had circulated her contacts and address (3&19). Her public near-lynching every day during the trial made living in her country untenable (160). Negative reactions from the society served as a silencing function that could be one of the reasons why Fezekile and her mother left their country (168).

Their fleeing was a result of the indictment from the ANC and the legal system's failure to protect her. The constitution of South Africa calls for equal rights yet the legal system which is supposed to uphold the constitution, leaves her out. Solnit (2017) argues that a valued person lives in a society in which her story has a place. Fezekile's story fell on deaf ears, her story imprisoned her in her own country. Their leaving the country is indicative of a nation which is not protective but hostile to its people. Her departure is as if she is spit out by the nation and going to exile implies that women have no protection from the law. Symbolically her life was by her perpetrators, in that she now had to go to exile because she dared to report that she was raped by a powerful member of the ANC. Burning her house was also an act of taking away her life, because her house is her life where she is rooted. Burning her pictures was also an attempt to erase her completely from life and her claim to South Africa. To add on, Tlhabi is scathing in her articulation of this betrayal when she says: "Comrade Zuma appropriated the body of Kuzwayo's daughter, her house was burnt down, and she was forced into a second exile, far from the land whose liberation was Judson's sole purpose" (19). For Renan (1990), a nation is a "soul" or a "spiritual principle" (Bhabha 1994, 19). It is the result of the profound complications of history: a spiritual family beyond the divisions of language, race, religion, culture, territory, and so on. What constitutes a nation is the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form (Bhabha 1994, 19). This desire is not extended to Fezekile as Tlhabi shows how she was hounded out of the country (3, 141&7).

Attempts to silence Fezekile show a nation that is prepared to hound (141) until one gives in. Tlhabi makes a fundamental opinion about the nation as she observes:

When she left South Africa, I wondered how I could have been a part of a society that had at worst allowed and at best observed her lynching. It was not enough that some of us spoke out-wrote columns, spoke on radio, protested and tried to keep her memory alive long after she and her mother had left to settle in foreign lands, all because male power would not allow them to stay. We were still a part of a society that had allowed the erasure of a young woman's presence (4).

Males are privileged in this society; power is vested in them and, in the case of Fezekile, that power was used to silence her and drive her into exile. Male power is thrown at the victim in order to silence her, hence Tlhabi has no kind words for her society. She sees it as a vicious society that is prepared to lynch a young woman who has been victimized through rape and

further victimized by society (160). Tihabi is showing that South Africa failed Fezekile. Her use of the term “erasure” (4) to describe the actions of this society in trying to silence Fezekile reveals the biographer’s strong feelings of what happened; society’s actions towards Fezekile are being equated to murder. She equates it to killing, her society killed a woman who needed their support and protection. Her erasure is even shown symbolically through the fact that she was nowhere in the voters roll for the local government elections (176), she had been completely taken out yet she had registered to vote. This was a betrayal of the greatest kind by a nation that her father had fought to liberate (15-20 &40). Tihabi notes this when she says to Fezekile:

So, it must have been a setback to see that, while you were fighting and making progress, others had erased your existence anyway? and Fezekile responded saying “I’d been fighting all my life my dear. All my life. It wasn’t anything new. I was coping, sometimes not coping, one fool at a time. Always one fool at a time (176).

The above quotation presents Fezekile as a fighter. Despite the challenges she experienced as a child she manages to stand up and fight for herself.

Her perpetrators fight with her extends beyond her death. The manner in which they wanted to silence her is so deep such that even in death they made her burial difficult. Her family struggled to get a venue for the funeral service. Help came through Mark’s friend Debbie from the civil society networks in Durban (11). After securing a venue, ANC released a statement announcing, Hands off Zuma rally, which was held right next to the church at the same time as the funeral service. Even in death Fezekile had to face one last fight (12), attempts to stop her were still there. Her funeral service was conducted earlier so that the time Zuma supporters flooded the CBD Fezekile would be resting safely in her grave. Beyond the grave her voice is heard, they did all they could physically and psychologically but she still speaks. It is sad that she went to her grave with people still throwing stones at her. Here Tihabi is revealing a nation that is not united, one that hates their own to death.

Fezekile’s astounding credulity, made easy for people to take advantage of her. For example, Throughout the biography, Tihabi depicts Fezekile as too naïve and too trusting of people, making it easy for people to take advantage of her. For example, she marries Thandeka Masuku, a Zimbabwean national to help him get a South African citizenship and this exposes her to a very abusive relationship with a man who had “anger issues” (200-201). With hindsight Tihabi asked Fezekile, “What were you thinking, mara? How did you get into this manure?” (200).

Her being blamed for the marriage is a way of silencing her, a patriarchal society coming back to her. Psychologically she was holding on to the link she thought connected her late father who is buried in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately the link abused her, just like a woman in an abusive relationship.

For the rest of Kuzwayo's life, Tlhabi records, she was constantly afraid that she was being followed, watched and that they knew her every move (171). When asked, who is they? she is quoted saying "the rapist's people. They always know where we are and what we are doing" (175). She became so paranoid, perhaps because of the rapes she suffered she felt as if everyone around her was out to rape or harm her. The paranoia became a mental problem, not in a negative sense, but in the sense that she has been abused that she has become suspicious of the world within which she lives. According to Mind for better mental health (2020), paranoia is a symptom of mental health. She agonized about her real name becoming public knowledge, and it is evidence of the great trust she must have had in Tlhabi that she wanted to co-operate with the broadcaster on a book (Davis, 2017) after rejecting several journalists who wanted to interview or write a book about her (171 & 175).

5.5.4. Fezekile's story as representative of other women

Tlhabi's voice reverberates throughout the biography because of her agenda to expose the abuse of women. She is portraying how women are being abused by patriarchy through using Fezekile as representative of abused women in South Africa and Africa at large. Tlhabi transcends representing her subject to giving agency to women using Fezekile's situation. Feminist biographers⁹ have acknowledged, and indeed celebrated, this identification with their subjects. Ellmann (1971) concurs that "biography is essentially social. For the biographer, who himself represents the outside world, the self only comes to exist when juxtaposed with other people". In addition, McVeigh (2013) posits that a common objection to biography is the alleged individualistic nature of the genre, and its devaluing of collective experience. For a biography to stand out it must place the subject within his or her historical and cultural context and thereby "evoke not just a single life but the climate of a whole age" Eagleton (2007: 89).

⁹ Feminists in the late twentieth century understood biography as a genre which could reflect the private as well as the professional aspects of any woman's life and could inform arguments about the dynamic of power and control in gender relationships. As Hermione Lee suggests, "Biographies that speak for alternative or hidden lives, especially women's ... grow out of a feminist interest in 'hidden histories'" (127)

Hence, any biographer's view is a socially located and necessarily partial one" (7) Stanley (1992: 7).

As is the case with biographies, this story is not only about Fezekile's trials as she tries to seek justice for herself, but it is also the story of betrayal of all women who have suffered at the hands of patriarchy. The auto/biography's ability to transcend the story of the individual to encompass a wider society is aptly articulated by Braidotti (1994: 13) who argues that "Were [she] to write an autobiography, it would be the self-portrait of a collectivity". Reinharz (1992) also argues that narratives such as biographies have the ability of presenting social problems in individual stories. Thus, in telling the story of Fezekile, Tihabi draws attention to the stories of women who were sexually abused during the liberation struggle in the MK camps, as well as in the new South Africa.

While literature about the liberation struggle makes it look like it was a glorious era, Tihabi demystifies it, that it was not a glorious era for women as men took advantage of them and lost their dignity. Tihabi writes:

In a way, the rape of some women and children in exile debunks the heroic narrative of the struggle. It also debunks dominant patterns of self-gratification. The ruling party has, largely, been in denial about this, choosing instead a narrative that speaks only of the heroism and sacrifices of so many gallant comrades – a narrative that is true, but incomplete. The war against apartheid was fought on and across women's and children's bodies. Many paid the price (43).

The irony is that the liberation struggle was supposed to liberate South Africans regardless of race and gender. Yet, according to the biographer women were oppressed by their men who wanted to control them. Through this Tihabi is questioning the whole notion of liberation from a feminist perspective.

During the struggle against apartheid, women's bodies were a war zone (43). For years, women freedom fighters from camps operated by the armed wing of the ANC, (MK), have remained silent about the sexual abuse they suffered at the hands of men they called comrades. Tihabi writes, "The war against apartheid was fought on and across women's and children's bodies" (43). Young and old women were sexually violated at the ANC camps (41-61). Tihabi tells these stories of those who suffered such atrocities and how they were named and silenced.

Fezekile's story is not only about Fezekile renaming herself, but is also the story of the struggle of women in patriarchal societies. Through telling stories of other women biography becomes a form of cultural discourse, through its recovering of the past which refigures the encoded values, traditions and desires of an earlier culture. In this way the biography re-imagines the past while recovering it and creates a work that exists in history as history (Noonan, 1993). While the narrative tells the story of how Fezekile was raped and the court processes that she had to go through, the biographer makes it clear that this was the plight of many women in South Africa who were also named. Tlhabi's biography also records stories of women who were raped during the liberation war and how these women were silenced and cowed by the patriarchal society which saw the women's bodies as being available for men's gratification. Tlhabi quotes Williams who described how women combatants were named as "flowers of the revolution" because their male counterparts protected them (44). Naming is a way of concealing something, the process of labelling them as flowers was in a way hiding that they are weak as Tlhabi deconstructs the term "flower" and sees it as referring to fragility. She says, "casting women soldiers as flowers reflects, directly, the gendered roles with masculinity being strong and brave and existing for the sole purpose of protecting femininity [...] makes women unequal" (46-7). It is ironic that the very people who needed their protection are the ones that they took advantage of. In a way these, referring to women as flowers created fertile ground for them to easily "pick them". It was also a way of reminding women that they were the weaker sex.

Sexual violence that women and children endured in the fight against apartheid has not enjoyed the same attention as conversations about how democracy has failed to guarantee economic freedom (41). In the MK camps, Fezekile and other women are raped. When interviewed by Tlhabi, Ivan Pillay admitted that the ANC covered up the rapes instead of protecting the young girls. Pillay argued that covering such incidents was "typical of organisations that depend on secrecy and closing ranks" (44). Other women like Rita Mazibuko were accused of being spies (45) and their punishment was rape. Nkuli was abused not by senior leaders but by members of rank and file. Her reasons for not reporting the matter is that all her comrades would know she was raped and she did not want to live with stigma (53-54). Rape was not confined to the camps, Khethani was raped by a group of five men who took turns to rape her and for years Khethani is said she did not cry, did not speak and did not tell anyone (111-5). Her friend Nomusa advised her to never ever mention it to anyone ever for fear that, "People will use this to insult you" (114). Eventually the burden of her silence began (114). Stigma in these instances

would refer to attitudes and beliefs that women did not want to be associated with from the society. Lastly, Tlhabi relates Lerato's story, a school girl who was jackrolled on her way back home but did not report to the police because, "jackrolling was in fashion. There were so many girls being jackrolled. They had no chance of solving my case" said Lerato (61-62). Lerato's incidence further reveals a nation where in even police do not give the required protection women need. It speaks of a society where woman are not safe even in broad day light. It is ironic that the liberators also raped women just like apartheid police, women were not safe anywhere. When other women suffering the same fate as Fezekile, it shows that a biography is not the story of one person, but it is the story of many.

Tlhabi's biography describes a nation that is hypocritical as it does not uplift orphans, widows and those that fought for the freedom of the country. For example the biographer quotes Fezekile saying, "My mother and I are nobodies [...] My father died fighting for this freedom and the movement does not really care about widows and orphans. It doesn't" (40). The biographer states that Fezekile's family remained stuck in the township despite her father's seniority. Their home was neglected and unfenced, they received a once off pension from the government which was little and could hardly cover their needs. Fezekile spoke of times when they did not even have money for basic needs like food (161). Tlhabi states that Fezekile's life could have turned out better in that she quotes her saying, "I just hate that people took advantage of me. Their lives went on, you know. That Ma and I are the demons who must live and die in poverty. That their power continues. I don't think I would be living like this if my life had not been disrupted (203-4). Emphasis here is on an a nation which is riven by inequalities and poverty. The ANC fought a liberation war to remove these inequalities and ensure social justice for all. Tlhabi, through this biography shows that this is not the case, injustice in the new South Africa is seen through the example of Busi Mthembu who paid dearly for her activism, raped by six police man in an open field for refusing to give information about ANC activities and prominent leaders of the movement (58). Today women who did not go through what I went through are the ministers with bodyguards, you know" (58). They did not say sorry. They did not once say sorry. I want them to say sorry. And to say thank you" (58).

Tlhabi seems to ridicule the hypocrisy of the democratic nature of her country in that survivors of the struggle are still battling to get over the trauma of that period. She avers that victims of the apartheid era who attend the Khulumani Support Group, an NGO, affirm they were unemployed, traumatized, homeless and that some were ill, but all have been forgotten (41-2).

Tlhabi states that when Fezekile's mother took the stand in court she spoke "to the unresolved trauma for which the new South Africa has no appetite" (130). In that the court, the defence suggested that trauma, depression and their concomitant behaviour have a sell-by date to say what happened to Fezekile in childhood or at any stage in her life should have no bearing on her present life (129) yet Fezekile's childhood that began and ended in exile, (21), the rapes, father dying at the age of 10, seeing comrades, uncles dying and being attacked and coming back to a free SA with no educational certificates to get a job or enrol for any programme. The court did not seem to appreciate the enormity of these events (129). These survivors who contributed towards the formation of the rainbow nation are the ones that continue to suffer. To show that trauma does not end, to show the importance of counselling for these victims Tlhabi further shows how Fezekile was still struggling with her experiences, "I don't know. You know, like losing your limb, your eyesight. Something you cannot reverse. You wake up with it every day but are not conscious of it? You accept it as part of your life, a chapter in your journey. Something like that." (13). Fezekile even stopped watching television for years because she did not want to see Zuma. When she saw him she could smell him (59). Samuel (1999) argues that a nation is built not by its ability to withstand the enemy but its ability to do justice to its people. It is the nation's internal integrity which gives its character and strength rather than in its external exploits. The biographer is highlighting that the nation has failed its people and needs to rectify. Whilst acknowledging the representative role of individual lives, for Manganyi (1981:60) post-colonial biography offers a way to talk and write about oppression and discrimination, "in politically extreme situations [...] the value of biographical studies has to be something more than cultural play, myth creation and literary adventure".

5.6. Biographers neutrality and objectivity

5.6.1 Women as enablers of male privilege

Tlhabi seems to contradict her feminist project by highlighting the ironies of women against each other. However, in the process of telling it as it is, undermining her agenda, it adds to her credibility as she is being objective and neutral. In this way she is properly representing Fezekile, even when it goes against her agenda. Tlhabi could have left out that part, rather she decided to add it the narrative, showing that she is a credible biographer.

The biographer, however, is also scathing towards women both in the MK camps and in post-apartheid South Africa. The tone of Tlhabi's biography is condemnatory of the role the women played in denying Fezekile justice both at the camps and in post-apartheid South Africa. It is

not men only who betrayed children and women, the most vulnerable members of society, but women were enablers in their own betrayal. This is seen in the MK camp when Fezekile tried to report that she had been raped by Godfrey. Instead of taking the side of the vulnerable child and reporting the case to the police, her aunties (as she referred to adult women in the camp) silenced her and organized “a kangaroo ANC court case” (103). By so doing these women were complicit in helping patriarchy oppress them and deny vulnerable children protection and justice. When questioned by Adv Kemp, one of her ‘aunts’, Nomaswakazi, told him the man who had raped her were boyfriends (104). This is betrayal of the highest order, especially considering that Fezekile was raped at the ages of 5, 12 and 13.

During the trial, women were foremost in trying to get Fezekile to drop the rape charges against Jacob Zuma (77). For example, ‘aunties’ from exile, Mom Samkele and Mom Jane, phoned and visited her trying to convince her to drop the charges. Their major concern was on how the case would affect the ANC and not what Fezekile had suffered. Mom Jane, for example had this to say: “Could I imagine what this country would be like if Mbeki or Mbeki’s people took over the country again. She said that I should just let it go” (77). Kimmy Msibi, childhood friend of Fezekile who grew up with Fezekile in exile, also came under pressure for supporting Fezekile. Their aunties accused them of being reckless arguing that, “There is a bigger picture here. How dare you disrupt that? This was not rape but an act of affection” (78). The women whom Fezekile trusted betrayed their own instead of standing by her, they enabled the party to harass Fezekile. It is also interesting to note that, even though these women are not her blood relatives, Fezekile still refers to them as ‘aunties’ a sign of respect accorded older women in society. This reveals her naivete and her innocence that she still accords these women the respect that they do not deserve.

Tlhabi’s biography shows that this is a society whereby women do not have voice and power. A society where women do not have the ability, means and the right to express themselves. Women are not receiving the practical aid and help that they deserve. She writes that women maintained a veil of silence around the issue of rape in the camps. This is confirmed by Kimmy when she said “There [were] things that happened, things that we did not talk about. It felt futile to report. It was overwhelming. There were bigger things at stake and certain things had to be put aside” (74). The negative reactions they received served as a silencing function. Negative reactions such as being blamed, being denied help, or being told to stop talking about the assault effectively quashed rape survivors’ voices, rendering them silent and powerless Ahrens (2006). The implication behind this is that women’s bodies were considered

unimportant; they could be violated and the issue brushed aside because liberating South Africa was more important. The female body had to wait while other “important” (74) matters were being addressed, highlighting the subordinate and secondary role of women in this society. This highlights social power structures that privilege some voices while excluding others. This is ironic in that the women who are being raped are a microcosm of the nation which MK is trying to liberate. Reinhartz (1994:180) describes voice as “having the ability, the means, and the right to express oneself, one's mind, and one's will. If an individual does not have these abilities, means, or rights, he or she is silent”. This conceptualization highlights social power structures that privilege some voices while excluding others. As metaphors for privilege and oppression, to speak and be heard is to have power over one's life. To be silenced is to have that power denied. The hypocrisy behind the liberation narrative is being exposed because if the ANC is failing to liberate its most vulnerable members of society, who then are they liberating?

It is also interesting to note that during the court trial those who were at the forefront tarnishing Fezekile and silencing her story were women (88). Zuma even brought his own daughter to give evidence on his behalf (162). The ANC Women's League became the storm troopers of patriarchy by actively mobilizing against Fezekile both in public and in private (Hassim, 2017). Cosatu and SACP leaders and activists thought that the rape trial was a distraction from the “real” issue of “returning the ANC to the branches” (Hassim, 2017). It is ironic that at a time when women are trying to transcend from social expectations it is her gender that tries to hold her back from exposing her plight at the hands of men.

Thus, Tihabi, highlights how women often protect men instead of other women and how they are blind to the fact that their actions endorse patriarchy. The irony, however, is that they are perpetuating their own suffering under patriarchy. Vaillancourt (2013) and Gordon (2015) argue that women by and large express indirect aggression toward other women, and that aggression is a combination of “self-promotion,” making themselves look more attractive, and “derogation of rivals,” being catty about other women. This is because as women come to consider being prized by men their ultimate source of strength, worth, achievement and identity, they are compelled to battle other women for the prize (Shpancer, 2014). He further argues that many women are beset by what Karl Marx called, 'false consciousness', a failure to see that the real threat to their achievement, power, value, and identity are not other women, but the male establishment that controls their lives.

Thus, through this interaction between men and women in the new South Africa, Tlhabi is raising serious questions about the notion of nation as imagined by South Africans in the post-apartheid era. Anderson (1983:6) defines nation as “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. He defines the nation as an imagined community because, despite the inequality and exploitation that may prevail, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. It is the sense of community that inspires people to feel proud in the achievements of compatriots and to feel sympathy in their miseries and misfortunes. It is the spirit and unity of this imagined nation which makes the members willing to make sacrifices for it. However, Tlhabi’s biography exposes the whole notion of a unified nation where everyone is equal as a fallacy. There is no equality in this society; this is a men’s world in which women still play subordinate roles. According to Bhabha (1994) a nation is created as if it is one homogenous group where people have a coherent culture. Tutu concurs referring to South Africa as a “rainbow nation” meaning that they are one people, all equal and united in their diversity. Instead, Tlhabi’s biography critiques these concepts, she sees the concept of Rainbow Nation as merely an idealistic symbol of liberation, the government has failed to equalise material and social relationships in society. There is no equality for women, Fezekile did not get the protection and support she deserved from the court.

According to Davis, (2017), Tlhabi writes candidly of a woman who could be maddeningly flighty (178&185), unsure of what she wanted and prone to squandering opportunities. Fezekile comes across as by turns exuberant and trouble, often depressed but capable of easy joy (181). The Fezekile in Tlhabi’s pages is garrulous and funny, an over-sharer (66), but hard to pin down, impulsive and a poor planner. One fool at a time is her wry catch-phrase (224). She was complicated, and human (Davis 2017). In exile, Fezekile is a woman who has been erased from her country. It is impossible to expect her to behave normally. Psychologically, the trauma she faced can be understood. The manner in which she behaved was of someone whose life source had been cut off. She was finding it difficult to find her space even in the developed countries. In a way her identity as a young vibrant South African woman was completely decimated. In Netherlands Fezekile was part of the ARV movement and worked at various HIV programs which she was introduced by Shaun Mellors whom she met at the XIII International Aids Conference in Durban in July 2000 (164-165). Despite working in these programs Fezekile went off ARV’s and would not be persuaded, even when her health was deteriorating. Shaun is quoted saying that, “she believed that there were healthier alternatives” (165-180). There

Fezekile started many projects but did not necessarily finish any as Jacqueline, a friend she was introduced to, confirms (169).

Fezekile's failure to complete a project is seen through her changing teaching schools in a short space of time (176-177). Although teaching brought strength and courage in her each time she got bored her classic pattern emerged again, she wanted to leave. Perhaps exile had made the constant need to move a part of her DNA. Her unstable character during this difficult time is typical of a person who is rootless. When she had no reason to leave she created one (177). At that school, kids loved her, she would go into their world, like she did with Zora Teresa's child who had down syndrome. She could go into the imaginary world and enjoy it and not feel uncomfortable in it at all, Teresa recalled. Fezekile got another job at a Cambridge International school. When she was thriving and her social life abuzz with friends from all walks of life again Fezekile wanted to stop teaching and join dance dram class (179). Being in exile and not rooted in any kind of job was a sign that psychologically she was a lost woman with no roots. Since she was in asylum, a country that she did not belong to could be the reason why she failed to establish roots. Her rootlessness is also seen through the way she handled her relationships, for example while dating Danielle, she began looking for the next exciting thing and urgent project (186). Fezekile was jittery again resulting in disagreements in their relationship. Danielle was focused with clear goals, a master of corporate life yet Fezekile was always on the lookout for something new and exciting (186).

For Fezekile to root herself she had to find her identity by going back to South Africa. Again in her country, KwaMashu, she did not stop complaining, she wanted to be in Pretoria or Johannesburg. After she got a job she began driving lessons and was keen to sign on for sign language course (183). Psychologically she was traumatized and uprooted. For example when a tree is uprooted it withers and dies, the same happened to Fezekile which made her flee for exile. Her rootlessness killed her spiritually, coming back to South Africa meant coming back to plant those roots. It was not easy for her, hence her failure to keep a job because she was a woman who was trying to find herself once again in a society that had rejected her. Her sense of rootlessness was caused by a system which killed her and threw her out hence it is a process for her to try and re-root herself in a society that did not want her.

Another means to reclaim her identity was through visiting her father's grave. While in exile Tlhabi quotes Teresa stating that Fezekile, "started talking about the urge to visit her father's grave" (181). Going to Zimbabwe to look for her father's grave is a result of a person who

wants to affirm her identity. This also speaks to the reason why people in general hold on to their land where the graves of their forefathers are as it gives them a sense of rootedness showing that they belong. Fezekile's search for her father's grave was an attempt to define herself and to find something that would root her. Biography states that her father died when she was almost ten (18), at that age she had no connection which rooted her. That is why she went back to find out where exactly he died for closure's sake and tangible proof of his grave.

5.7. Conclusion

The chapter examined the biographer and biographee representativity and concluded that it is not possible to deploy a singular self to tell a story rather to include the lived experience of others differently positioned provides a holistic of the predicaments and prevailing situation of the society. The chapter also interrogated the biographer's objectivity and neutrality. It was discovered that the biographer tried to strike a balance in that she did not only emphasise her agenda to give Fezekile a voice, to expose the ANC and judiciary but showed that women are complicit in their oppression.

In this chapter, it has been have argued that despite the violation Fezekile suffered, she courageously raises to fight the system and even in death her voice still speaks through the grave. This chapter has posited that biographies are written from the biographer's point of view, in this instance TIhabi makes use of this opportunity to highlight how women are abused by the justice system and the society at large. She shows how this minimizes women's agency as they forever fall prey of an omniscient patriarchal culture. However, the narrative reveals a ray of hope in that the justice system listens. Fezekile brought the Vice President to court on charges of rape, she was given a platform to state her case even though Zuma was acquitted. The following chapter dicusses the effects of the comparison of the Public Protectors office with the duties of a VhaVenda Makhadzi.

CHAPTER 6

Unpacking the Makhadzi metaphor in *No Longer Whispering to Power: The Story of Thuli Madonsela*

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five focused on the biographical productions, focusing on the biographer's objectivity and neutrality in giving Fezekile a voice. Similarly, chapter six discusses a biography. The present chapter *No Longer Whispering to Power: The Story of Thuli Madonsela* (2017), an approved biography, Gqubule uses the makhadzi¹⁰ metaphor to try and understand the formative events in Madonsela's life which culminated in her becoming a fearless and respected South African Public Protector during Jacob Zuma's tumultuous presidency. Gqubule also intends to write a biography narrating Madonsela's path to leadership and how South Africa lost its way in the quest for a just society and how they tried to find their way back to a path of progress of a just and more equitable society (3, 9) but what actually emerges is a political biography (Renders, 2014 and Walter, 2009). It is political in the sense that all writing is political (wa Thiong'o, 1981), for there is no innocent writing, consequently her narrative reveals much about the South African history. Madonsela's memory sites and remembering are projects of (re)construction, (re)membering and reinvention and not the events as such but the thing or truth purportedly (re)produced. The point of political biography is not simply to tell a life story, but to say something about the conduct of politics (Walter, 2009). Political biography then, deals, with how people function within institutions, why people engage with (and dominate in) groups, what are the factors in success and failure, what we might expect of those who favour particular styles – that is, it is the application of biography to a set of analytical tasks (Davies 1972b).

The understanding of political auto/biography in this chapter is stretched beyond the politics of governance, genre and narrativity but highlights the details of ordinary experience. There are alternative modes of life writing that do not discuss issues of nationalism but dwell on ordinary issues, such narratives pose as politically "unconscious" (Jameson, 1981), yet when carefully analysed they turn out as political auto/biographies. Jameson (1981:20), argues that the "recognition that there is nothing that is not social and historical- indeed, that everything is in the final analysis political." Politics exists in the ways in which the powerless or the

¹⁰ Senior sister of family head's or chief's father (Matshidze, 2013). The paternal aunt (Ross, 2017).

marginalized, imagine and are made to imagine their own identities. When these people from the margins narrate their experiences they articulate a politics that both confirms and refuses certain projections of their own identities.

The biographer addresses issues pertaining to the livelihood of millions of South Africans, how the nation is run by the highest office, issues of corruption, abuse of authority and public funds by the highest office. Hence, Madonsela's tenure as Public Protector is framed within the larger issues of her resistance of gender stereotypes from her father and her resistance to the racist and oppressive apartheid regime. Madonsela's life story is therefore portrayed as the story of ordinary South Africans, especially women who continue to suffer from the double oppression of patriarchy and economic exclusion in the "post post-apartheid" state. Her attempt to hold those with political and economic power to account through the office of the Public Protector therefore becomes ordinary people's fight for economic and social justice. It is not surprising then that the crux of the biography is about Madonsela's final days of her tenure, which coincided with her compilation of the highly publicised State Capture as well as Secure in Comfort report which implicated the former President Jacob Zuma in the misappropriation of millions of Rands during the state-sponsored upgrade of his private rural home in Nkandla in KwaZulu Natal province. Gqubule foregrounds this report as the center piece of Madonsela's tenure as Public Protector and to portray her as a fearless fighter against high profile corruption by state officials. The biographer uses this report to explain why Madonsela frequently found herself at the center stage in the increasingly fractious South African political scene. The courage Gqubule portrays through the biography seals Madonsela's place in the recent South African history as a champion of the rights of the exploited millions of ordinary people whose lives have not improved much since the attainment of black majority rule in 1994. Clearly, Gqubule marshals selected episodes in Madonsela's childhood and early academic and political life to reflect what she sees as the pinnacle of her protagonist's accomplishments towards the consolidation of the South African democratic dispensation. More importantly, Madonsela's tenure as a Public Protector is cast as contributing greatly towards the advancement of the rights of women in contemporary South Africa.

In this collaborative biography, the biographer seeks to construct a biographee whose moral and ethical stature is credible to the public or groups that the biographee represents. Through drawing from VhaVenda customs and culture, Gqubule attempts to compare Madonsela through the Makhadzi metaphor. By stating the character makhadzi, a title appropriated by Madonsela herself, Gqubule, through tropological and metaphorical transference, positions the

biographee as a credible, legitimate and morally approvable leader, since makhadzi is a custodian of approved values and norms in the VhaVenda culture. This metaphoric positioning constitutes the biographer's navigation of the turbulent scene of South African politics on which the author bases accusations of corruption and social injustice, especially against the former South Africa president Jacob Zuma. Following on the makhadzi metaphor employed by the biographer, this chapter argues that, the use of makhadzi metaphor shows the political intention in Gqubule's auto/biography because the position of Makhadzi is political in the VhaVenda culture. The chapter explores the ambivalences (Bhabha, 1994) of the Makhadzi office and the ambivalences when Madonsela appropriates the title *visa vi* her role as public protector, a non-political office.

The framing of this argument necessitates some elaboration of the ambivalent deployment of metaphor and the quality of being metaphorical, since the argument of this chapter draws heavily on the makhadzi metaphor. Olney (1972) notes that, the self-expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects and we know it by those metaphors. But conceptualizations and cognitions happen in context: the social, temporal, linguistic, cultural and historical consciousness of the participants and the physical environment (Kovecses, 2008). This means that metaphor makes meaning within culture, temporal and historical contexts to which the participants are aware of.

This chapter seeks to answer the following question: Does the use of Makhadzi metaphor in Gqubule's biography achieve the interrogation of the ambivalences and contradictions provoked by the deployment of metaphor in discussions of biographical constructions of nation, gender and identity and to what extent is the office of the Public Protector which in the biography is similar to the functions performed by a makhadzi in the VhaVenda culture nonpolitical.

6.2 The personal is political: Madonsela's Early Resistance Against Patriarchy

Gqubule uses the personal life story of Madonsela in the service of the political. Madonsela's life story is cast as being irrevocably implicated in the key national issues of South Africa. This coincides with Denzin's (1989) description of biographical research as being two-dimensional. There is the 'lived experience' and the 'situation' (or position) of the person in society. Similarly, Reinharz (1992: 137) sees narratives such as biographies as having the ability of presenting social problems in individual stories. In this regard, Madonsela's biography enables

the reader to gain insight into the social climate of South Africa through her personal experiences. This suggests that auto/biography is a product of and a response to social, historical and cultural conditions and greater societal issues which are embraced within the narrative.

A biography just like an autobiography is always written in retrospect. Lejeune (1989) states that autobiography is “a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality” (1982: 193); in essence, an older self looking back at a younger experiential self. Similarly, biographers look back at a person’s life and ask themselves why the subject became what she became. This is more so in Gqubule’s case who seems to have engaged in an openly collaborative and consultative relationship with her subject. In launching the biography on the NCA, a well-known private South African television news channel, Gqubule and Madonsela appeared side by side reflecting that it was a collaborative work. This blurs the lines between biography and autobiography. Stanley, (1992) posits that a collaborative process sees both the narrated and the interpreter as being active participants in the construction of a life history. In both autobiographies and biographies, the highest point in a person’s life is the coordinating point of everything that the biographer states. So biographies and autobiographies are always written at what is seen as the highest point in a person’s life and Gqubule and Madonsela seem to be in agreement about this high life point. In this instance, the highest point in Madonsela’s life is her tenure as the South African Public Protector at a time when the country’s institutions were undergoing both moral and financial erosion due to the seemingly reckless and patriarchal corrupt president. Significantly, Madonsela’s early resistance against patriarchy is framed through this seeming zenith in her life. To achieve that, Dosse (2005) argues that the biographer is required to provide a narrative of the transformation of the private individual into a public figure and provide a personal narrative, so that we can better understand the incubation of his political ideas (Renders, 2014). According to Were (2017) the biographer has to make clear that a person’s private background has influenced his/her public achievements. To prove this Gqubule begins by examining Madonsela’s childhood.

Gqubule suggests that Madonsela’s fiery character as a Public Protector can only be fully understood by examining her formative years. Arklay (2006) and Were (2017) note that where private experience is presented as shaping a public persona it is often the experience of childhood and adolescence which serves as evidence. Early on in life, she is shown resisting patriarchy in the domestic sphere and several other spaces she inhabited prior to her becoming

the Public Protector. Foucault (1986:23) claims that “the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space [...] we live inside a set of relations”. In the case of Madonsela, the patriarchal domestic space, the school and the university in an apartheid environment are all spaces which draw Madonsela out of herself. That is where the erosion of her life, time and history is shown to have occurred. These are the varied spaces or set of relations which are presented as having clawed and gnawed at her through their formative impact on her personality. Although Madonsela’s biography has claim to factuality, these are facts that the biographer has arranged and framed through the perceived pinnacle in the subject’s life. They do not at all reflect the randomness of life’s occurrence. It is at the point of narrativity where, although factual, an auto/biography comes to resemble (Arklay, 2006 and Eakin, 2014) fictional accounts. Bakhtin’s notion of chronotope is applicable to both factual and factual accounts. As Ndlovu (2010: 10-11) observes, “in keeping with Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘chronotope’, this narrative moulds together space and time to produce linear narratives when describing circular and disjunctive time”. Bakhtin (1981: 85) defines “chronotope” as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature”. This suggests that narratives are by their very nature artistic expressions which attempt to capture an intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships of one kind or another. Therefore, for Bakhtin chronotopes constitute the places where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. Extending Bakhtin’s idea, Schalkwyk¹¹ (2001: 1, 2) argues that chronotopes are informed by historical and ideological pressures”. This is obviously the case with Madonsela’s biography. Bhakhtin’s notion of chronotopes is useful in trying to understand how Gqubule’s biography grapples with time, space and place in explaining how Madonsela’s formative years influenced what she became. To appropriate Ndlovu’s words in his examination of Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) and Ngugi’s *Detained* (1981), *No Longer Whispering to Power* is clearly “grappling with how to meet the requirements of a linear narrative when describing circular or disjunctive time” (2010: 17).

Gqubule is at pains to show that Madonsela’s father had both a negative and positive enduring impact on his daughter’s personality. Despite the patriarchal tendencies of Madonsela’s father, he was determined to educate the girl child in order for her to escape the poverty which often

¹¹ I am using this Bakhtinian notion of chronotope as it is employed by (Schalkwyk 2001: 1, 2), he defines chronotope as “the distinctive molding together of space and time into representational form and substance” and argues that “chronotopes are informed by historical and ideological pressures” (In Apartheid Narratives)

afflicts the unskilled working class. Madonsela's father wanted his daughter to become a nurse while Madonsela herself wanted to do law (20). When Madonsela defied her father in the choice of a profession, she was kicked out of the house and her father stopped funding her education (24). Gqubule provides these details about Madonsela's relationship with her father to show that her confrontation with the former president Zuma during her tenure as the Public Protector was not an isolated incident. In the scheme of things of Gqubule's narrative, Madonsela's defiance of her father's oppressive patriarchy in the matter of her profession apparently prefigured her much larger role as the Public Protector where she confronts patriarchal corruption at the highest of government hierarchy. Madonsela's defiance is seen at a family nucleus spiraling to the highest office as symbolic of protecting everyone, especially the oppressed, hence the title public protector. She is rejecting patriarchal detects not as a person but as representative of what was happening to young girls who were not given the opportunity to choose the profession they wanted to pursue as elaborated in the subsequent paragraph.

Madonsela's whole life story seems to be one of going against patriarchy right from the beginning. Unfortunately, Madonsela's father wanted to force her to become a nurse because he stereotypically believed that nursing is a feminine profession. His belief is influenced by his daughter's character which is described as "kind and compassionate" (29) and the narrative also suggests that societal views played a role in that, "most black parents in those days made this choice for their daughters – teaching or nursing" (29). By refusing to be a nurse, Madonsela is not saying it is not a useful profession or that one cannot resist sexism and patriarchy within nursing. She is also not saying law is masculine and nursing is feminine. What she is doing is challenging stereotypes and showing that a girl child can engage in any profession, including those considered masculine such as law. These are the stereotypes she intends to demolish so as to demonstrate that law is as feminine as it is masculine and that anyone can do law. It has been socially constructed, so, as much as it is about nursing. By so doing Madonsela is deconstructing patriarchy. The writing of auto/biography of women who live within patriarchal orders that silence, interrupt or disarticulate women becomes political as it opens discursive space that shows that women can do what is ordinarily considered masculine. Gqubule uses such space to show Madonsela's willpower and determination to resist and fight any oppressive structure.

Gqubule further selects certain awakening acts and or details in Madonsela's life's vicissitudes in order to explain the woman she subsequently becomes, a fearless but compassionate public

protector. Theorizing about the beginning of autobiography acts in the space of the self, Smith and Watson (2001: 53) call such a point(s) of awakening a ‘coaxer’. This is an act, detail, something, an event or anything that prods the self towards assembling a narrative. This coaxing moment(s) show(s) the gradual construction of the identity of Madonsela as an advocate for women/human rights and democracy whilst at the same time illustrates the dynamism inherent in the mutability of selves in her encounter with the events that facilitate her changeability. Gqubule’s presentation of Madonsela’s life shows that she was saddled with personal pain which became part of her childhood. For example, the tragic loss of Madonsela’s siblings one being a victim of a car accident, another died of pneumonia while suicide claimed a third (25). The biographer had many facts to include and exclude but what informed her choices was her agenda to present a strong and brave woman. This is indicative of going back in time, it is not by coincidence that the biographer included these details, it is all meant to build up on her agenda. It is important at this stage to note that autobiography is thus a retrospective narrative, meaning that it draws from the events of the past. Olney (1972:44-45) advances that in the autobiography, the author is endowed with the poetic license to choose what events to interpret, to excise, reorder and to recast depending on his/her imagined audience. Her experience because of this loss is meant to advance the narrative that she had the strength to overcome later trials. This is because the biographer writes, “it is often said that a difficult past can strengthen one, and prepare one for leadership. This is particularly so if, like Madonsela, one processes the experiences of one’s struggle and learns from them in tangible ways” (25).

Throughout the narrative there is a consistent attempt to show that one can resist if they adopt certain qualities. In this instance Madonsela reacts in a way that reveals that she is valiant as she bore her loss without breaking down. Generally, women are viewed as humans which are soft, kind, easily broken and nurturers which is quite different from man who are believed to be the opposite. For example, the biography shows that Madonsela was once a victim of bullying (24) while she was at high school in Swaziland. Gqubule narrates that Madonsela felt unloved as she was named ugly and having a big head. The biography gives evidence of a letter that Madonsela wrote to her 16-year-old self for The Oprah Magazine during the time she was facing this ordeal (24-25). The letter reads:

I know you are socially awkward, plagued by a nagging feeling of being unloved and ugly. Perhaps this comes from being teased that you have a big head [...] recently two of your academically inferior classmates have started taunting you, too. [...] all

these life lessons have been necessary to help you bloom. You have come to realise that you are perfect for your life's purpose [...] keep dreaming for dreams have wings (25)

The letter to herself further proves that her childhood was not an easy one. A “big head” can metaphorically suggest that she was clever and intelligent and the “academically inferior classmates” could represent the corrupt leaders who thought they were clever, could undermine her authority and not account for their wrong doing. The bullying she faced signals the endless fights she had with the President who wanted her to give into his demands over the state capture but, because of her buoyant character she stood up for what she believed.

While Gqubule and Madonsela are going against the societal stereotypes they are also going against who they are. It seems as if women only earn respect through doing things that men can do. If so, something is fundamentally wrong about that aspect because, women sacrifice their femininity to become like men in order to be admired as men. *In No Longer Whispering to Power* there is an admiration of Madonsela as a pseudo man playing in the arena of men and has assumed the masculine traits in order to beat the men at their own game. It is as if a woman cannot be strong in their own right unless they acquire some masculine traits. Such an attitude denies the fact that a woman can be a mother, which could be the reason why there is little information about Madonsela's family and her motherhood. Gqubule's admiration lies in Madonsela's navigation of male spaces where she gets her accolades valorised. If women want to be like men, and to be admired, then there is something wrong about women because women will be refusing to be who they are.

Madonsela is constructed as a woman who contests the idealistic representations of women, restructuring their everyday struggles within the matriarchal system and stages of her political agency within the African structure. Her strength is not only shown in her resistance towards patriarchal institutions, her intelligence placed her in positions of power. She is seen breaking stereotypes at two levels, the first being that she is a woman, the second being an educated woman. Generally, women are relegated to the private spaces of the house yet she was the first woman to hold the position of being a public protector in South Africa (28, 71-72). The second level she breaks stereotypes by being part of the few educated women who got an opportunity to learn at Wits University at a time when it was hard for black people to get an opportunity. At that time students who wanted to pursue university studies were required to obtain a permission from the Minister of Internal Affairs (52), thus Gqubule writes that, “for Madonsela

– born poor, out there – it had been a long road to Wits” (53). Madonsela competency is through her securing a scholarship at a prestigious institution, Harvard University, to pursue her law degree which she declined not because she did not want but wanted to take part in the drafting of the constitution (58) which resulted in her publishing a flurry of articles on gender rights and other human rights (60). Madonsela had achieved so much under her belt at a young age. Inclusion of this detail is meant to underline the fact that she is a highly competent woman who can match men and white people at their own game. She is a woman getting into a masculine territory, a black woman getting into a hitherto white institution. People who break into new ground are pioneers and usually pioneering provides and affords the authoring and imposition of new discursive realities on the already existing space. It is essentially a process of naming and taming the unfamiliar. Pioneers like Madonsela often go over rough terrain to get to their intended positions hence her exacting experience.

While using the personal in the service of the political to present Madonsela’s life, the personal (such as motherhood and romantic life) is not mentioned at all. It cannot go unnoticed that Madonsela had a life beyond being a public protector. Her personal life hardly features, as a public figure it is well known that Madonsela had a partner and has children (City Press, 2013) yet the biographer does not emphasize this because the writer is not interested in personal aspects but the affairs of the country. So the personal is completely left out in preference of what biographer deems as more relevant political acts. This is reflective of the selective nature of biography, for particular rhetorical purposes (Harbus, 2011) which is Madonsela’s highest point in life. Her motherhood pattern is not included in the biography, this could be that the biographer regarded it as irrelevant hence its omission as it is a very open space. If Madonsela is seen operating in that space in detail it would derail her authorial intention. Rich (1995) views motherhood as an institution, a practice that oppresses women by promoting biological essentialist stereotype that their ability to reproduce has programmed them to be better carers and nurturers than men. From this perspective, such notions oppress women’s capabilities outside their private roles as mothers. By that their identities as women are homogenised as mothers, ignoring their individuality. The narrative does not make mention of men in Madonsela’s life. Readers are not told how she navigates her personal life.

6.3 Madonsela's Fight Against Apartheid

Madonsela's life is narrated in a way of inserting it into both the discourses that depict the apartheid and post-apartheid politics. The biographer's choice of events is not by accident but meant to validate Madonsela's authority in the post-apartheid and a performance of belonging. It is ironic that the comrades needed the oppressor to give them a certificate to become heroes in the post-apartheid environment yet it is the oppressor who imprisoned them. Ironically what the oppressor did to them is what validates their valour and courage in the post-apartheid. The oppressor made them who they are.

Gqubule marshals events that led to Madonsela having to serve jailtime for defying the apartheid regime (43). Prison is a fundamental punishment of the penal system. It's argued that it punishes an individual by removing their 'freedom' and rehabilitating them for their greater good of their future life (UKEssays, 2018). The "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958 & Crewe, 2011) she suffered are the loss of liberty and autonomy. This is because her schooling (43) was interrupted due to the incarceration and the absence of her preferred feminine products (48). Nevertheless, for Madonsela prison was a place of contemplative meditation, she did not pretend to be fearless rather she would analyse and pray (50). Furthermore, she describes being in prison as a "radicalising experience" as it strengthened her resolve to fight on in the ANC underground on her release which lasted for three months. Prison becomes a place that fortifies and propels one to fight even harder for justice.

She makes use of Madonsela's prison experience to validate her credentials in the post-apartheid environment. The inclusion of her jail time authenticates Madonsela's voice and gives her authority, that she has the right to speak for the people because she has the experience and understands what she fought for. Although Madonsela is quoted saying that, "she is averse to using 'struggle credential' to make one's way in a democracy" (50) this is not what emerges. What emerges is the repetition by the biographer to explain where Madonsela derives her power and why she deserved the public protectors position especially when she states that, "she had seen the blood on the streets of Soweto and the inside of one of South Africa's most notorious prisons, and had remained uncompromisingly calm" (63). It seems as if the biographer is trying to give Madonsela the authority to be who she is because she served prison sentence by the apartheid. Through that, Gqubule echoes the same idea by Lewin in the narrative *Stones Against the Mirror* (2011) which revealed that being a political Prison Graduate (PG) gives one prestige in post-apartheid South Africa. Ndlovu (2014) argues that Lewin satirises the ways in which the apartheid political prison experience have been

insidiously appropriated by some in all racial groups to negotiate privileged identities in the post-apartheid moment. The idea is that if one did not have the experience of neither war nor activism chances are that one is bound to be discredited. This is also seen through the authority and respect that the late former president Nelson Mandela got from the people of South Africa and as depicted in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994). In the same respect, Mandela was also sentenced to prison at Robben Island in 1963 by the apartheid government for fighting for his country (Blair and Freeman, 2013). In this regard respect and authority seems to be stemming from one's contribution towards the country. Hence the biographer is not merely narrating a story but revealing something that validates the biographee's credentials.

The biography reveals that Madonsela's life is infused with political elements. Although Gqubule did not set out to write about Madonsela as political per se, her narration brings to the fore Madonsela's political activism. Here it is observed that biography is invariably concerned with the processes of narration which is implicated in acts of selections of vocabulary, excisions, viewpoints and subjective renditions. To understand Madonsela's tenure as Public Protector the biographer goes back to the subject's formative years. The past events are seen and understood through her tenure. Gqubule suggests that, Madonsela's power is described as having derived from the political activities she engaged herself in. She is said to have become an activist as a student, joined civic politics, a member of the Dlamini Civic Association which was affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF) and women's groups (32). Gqubule attests that:

So, Madonsela became an activist – a comrade iQabane – and found her role in the cauldron of volatile politics in Soweto. They were called Amadelakufa – those who defy death – for they had the courage to take on a formidable and tyrannical system armed only with their values and formidable activism – and stones(34-35).

Her experience in the cauldron of Soweto politics, fighting for justice without fear is what grounded even in her tumultuous tenure as Public Protector. Suttner (2005) quoted by Gqubule (35) notes that, UDF viewed democracy as a work in progress not as a one day event – the transfer of power to a peoples party – but as a mirage to be worked towards daily. O'Malley (2021) states that the UDF advocated for a true democracy in which all South Africans could participate and create a single, non-racial, unfragmented South Africa. The UDF was non-racial in the sense that it welcomed support from members of all races. Thus, in the view of UDF, being democratically minded meant building democracy's values in spirit and in deed wherever

one found oneself (36) and this is what set the tone and spirit of Madonsela's political and social values (37).

The narrative here represents Madonsela as a devoted patriot, reliable and thorough worker who has a common good of the nation at heart. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) argue that in the construction of the nation the crucial element is the invention of group memberships. Such inventions bind both emotionally and spiritually those members who felt they share the same destiny and identify with that group. These groups inculcate- such as "loyalty", "duty", "patriotism" (Smith, 1998:119). Gqubule is showing that nationalisms are characterized by emotive appeals built around unquestioning loyalties to the nation.

The biographer suggests that Madonsela did not derive her power from her femininity, but from being an active political cadre. She had to go through experiences that activists go through. It is these experiences that enabled her to possibly get into the masculine space and set the foundation for her power. Presumably she would not have been considered for the powerful position she held had it not been for experience as an activist. Davis (2017) posits that Madonsela and her political consciousness were a product of the UDF which Gqubule describes as focused on grassroots social justice rather than the African National Congress, characterized in the biography as hierarchical, secretive and top-down (38). All this goes to show that she is no ordinary woman, it reveals her courage that she could stand up for herself. It also gave her the basis on which to spring into a powerful position.

6.4 Roles and functions of a makhadzi

While making a speech at the 11th Biennial Convocation of Advocates Africa Madonsela claims the makhadzi role (79). She is quoted saying, "In my office, we try to incorporate the Makhadzi way. We seek to reconcile the state through righting the administrative wrongs of the state, exacting accountability and entrenching sustainable government" (80). The makhadzi is being compared to the role the public protector plays, the makhadzi office is being transformed into a metaphor because the public protector is not a makhadzi. Therefore, there are many features that a makhadzi has which are similar to those of a public protector. The makhadzi metaphor gives an overview of a culture of a society, this is espoused by Gusdorf (2001: 29) who argues that, "auto/biography is not to be found outside our cultural area".

Gqubule's biography is useful entry point in understanding not only individual identities, but the culture of communities it emanates.

A Makhadzi is the father's sister or senior paternal aunt (Buijs, 2002 and Matshidze and Nmutandani, 2016). She enjoys special privileges such as receiving a percentage of all taxes given to the chief, who must grant all her reasonable requests. She is treated with most of the respect and formality accorded to the chief. Even men, Stayt says, to whom all other women kneel, must kneel to the makhadzi (Stayt, 1931). Similarly, The Office receives an annual budget, allocated through the Department of Justice and approved by a vote in parliament (EISA, 2009). Ross (2017) posits that, Makhadzi is not just a name or title; it is a role. An indigenous ancestral role bestowed on Venda women to safeguard spiritual connections, to maintain order in the clan and families, and to assist royal leadership in community governance. Matshidze (2013) states that, makhadzi, whose ritual and symbolic office proves to be the most influential power within traditional leadership. The makhadzi occupies a significant position in the Venda socio-political system. Among the Venda people, the above traits accorded to the traditional leader are also in essence accorded to the makhadzi. The success of the traditional leader lies with the makhadzi because she is the ruler while the traditional leader is the face of the institution.

One of the functions of a makhadzi is seen in dispute resolution. She is valued as an advisory and intermediary person, which could help to solve conflicts (van den Berg, 2018). She resolves problems at family and clan level, disputes between siblings' wives and their husbands. Stayt (1931) notes that when there is a problem in the musanda¹², the makhadzi is summoned to give advice. Her presence is important; she must be there. For many centuries the role of makhadzi has extended to managing the relationships of individuals to their family, clan, community, and society to nature. She has historically played a central role in their clans by advising Vhamusanda (chiefs) on community affairs and presiding over customs (Ross, 2017). It is the makhadzi who sustains family kinship systems, and protects the family from disputes between family members that can lead to its breakdown (Matshidze, 2013). She represents a "matrifocal" centre of power among the Venda people (Adesina, 2013). Matshidze also, states that among the VhaVenda, the makhadzi wields power in her own right. Amadiume (1987:83), notes that women had power, they did not have to "grow" male organs or like queen

¹² Meeting place or court of a leader, usually a royal one (Matshidze, 2013).

Hatshepsut of Egypt fake a beard in order to be accepted as rulers or in order to feel comfortable as rulers. The system itself requires that they have to have power, status and prestige.

The role of the Makhadzi in Venda can be seen clearly in the matter of succession. The chief is supposed to consult her and follow her judgement on all matters concerned with affairs of his people (Buijs, 2002). This shows that the Makhadzi is very important in traditional leadership. Matters of succession are imperative in the continuity of the chieftainship and the royal lineage. The Makhadzi needs to be someone who is able to give direction, and is focused and assertive (Matshidze, 2013). She further states that, among the VhaVenda, makhadzi's word is regarded as law due to her close link and lineage with ancestors: she is perceived to be the spiritual leader within the family structure (Matshidze, 2013).

In addition, Makhadzi, in both the royal family and among the commoners plays a central role in the family and oversees important rituals relative to the family's sacred objects, eco-cultural knowledge, and communicating with the ancestors (Stayt, 1931 and Matshidze, 2013). The makhadzi is the one that communicates with members of the royal lineage who are deceased. She derives her power from her association with the ancestral spirits, whose power she can invoke to enforce her decree. Among the Venda, the main importance of the Makhadzi as a link between the dead and the living is the continuity of the family and veneration for the wisdom of the elders (ancestors) (Matshidze, 2013). Also, Van den Berg (2018), observes that, the Makhadzi gives blessings by performing a ritual to the ancestral spirits. Not only do they communicate with ancestors but are instrumental during the initiation rite (Stayt, 1931 and Van Warmelo and Phophi, 1949). Lastly, Matshidze and Nemitandani (2016) note that the makhadzi holds authority for sustaining and preserving custom in the conduct of arranging marriages. Matshidze's (2013) study found that among the Vhavenda cultural group, members of the family recognise the importance of makhadzi, her functions as well as her obligations. The duties that the Makhadzi has are governed by the family's interests in following custom in matters that affect it hence, she makes important decisions in the family.

The roles stated in this paragraph are silent in Gqubule's biography. Instead, both Gqubule and Madonsela seem to be using the Makhadzi notion mainly as a positive metaphor without worrying about the details of the actual role of a makhadzi as practised among the VhaVenda people as discussed below.

6.5 Ambivalence of the Makhadzi metaphor and the Public Protectors office

This section discusses the ambivalent¹³ nature of the makhadzi metaphor in relation to the public protector's office. Makhadzi is a rich kind of metaphor that insinuates various matters. According to the VhaVenda culture, the makhadzi performs a political function either at domestic or clan level. Matshidze (2013) states that the Makhadzi in the royal family has state responsibilities that relate to governance with the chief, and public rituals. As a sister to the chief she holds an important political office. This is also suggested by Stayt (1931:196) when he writes that 'all vital matters connected to the state must be referred to her [the Makhadzi]'. So the use of the Makhadzi metaphor shows the political intention in Gqubule's auto/biography because in the VhaVenda culture the Makhadzi office is a political one. Such a comparison brings out a paradox in that the public protector's office is a neutral one, it runs head on with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, chapter 9 section 181 (2) which states the institution is independent, and subject only to the Constitution and the law, and they must be impartial and must exercise their powers and perform their functions without fear, favour or prejudice. Instead they are the checks and balances on what politicians do, they are intermediaries between the executive and all powerful political institutions through the manner in which they exercise their power over the public. The public protector mainly stands for the rights of those without executive powers.

The Venda concept of a Makhadzi carries the idea of a 'female father' or a female who takes the role of a man when the situation requires it. This is a powerful metaphor because it exposes masculinity as a social construct. Although biologically she is female she is a "father" considering, the role she plays in certain stages. So she is therefore implicated in patriarchy already. Matshidze (2013:31) equates makhadzi to holding the equal authority of a 'female father' in the royal family as her duty is to advise traditional leadership. Apparently the status given to a Makhadzi is seemingly a masculine role that she plays in a patrilineal society. Madonsela cannot be admiring being a Makhadzi because a Makhadzi is already deeply implicated in patriarchy a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990:20).

¹³ I explore the notion of ambivalence by Bhabha (1994) in the sense in which he describes the relationship between colonizer and colonized. A colonised subject has an ambiguous status in that the colonized has the ability to undermine the power of the oppressor even when he or she is still oppressed. This shows that there is a dominating power but this dominating power is not the only way in which power operates. Foucault argues that no matter how dominating a system is there is always space for resistance. This shows the ambivalence of power. So no matter how big power is there is much more that is happening between the oppressed and the oppressor.

Both Madonsela and Gqubule do not seem to fully appreciate the contradictions inherent to being a Makhadzi or playing a Makhadzi role. They seem to be missing the point when the latter describes Madonsela as admiring being a Makhadzi. In an interview with a knowledgeable Venda Chief Mashau (2017), he says:

One is just born a Makhadzi and never elected to the position like what happened to Madonsela. In each family where a girl child is born she automatically becomes a Makhadzi which is not so with the position of a public protector. A literal Makhadzi has no term of office like the Public Protector whose term of office expires. Office bearers have to apply for the position and subjected to an interview after which they are selected, which is not so with royalty. The Makhadzi's ruling is law on its own while the Public Protector can only make recommendations which can even be challenged in a court of law.

The metaphor also evokes issues of monarchy in that in the Vhavenda culture, Stayt (1931) states that it is the duty of the Makhadzi and khotsimunene to select an heir who will succeed the chief from his sons. It suggests a paradigm of monarchy yet South Africa is a democratic country, suggesting that if the checks and balances on the administration were right there would not be any need of a Makhadzi. By this the biographer is highlighting the maladministration in Zuma's governance.

Gqubule seems to be in agreement with Madonsela as she appropriates the Makhadzi role without thinking deeply how one becomes a Makhadzi and how implicated a Makhadzi is in hegemonic patriarchy. Madonsela is quoted describing her role as follows:

The Makhadzi, an aunt, is a non-political figure who serves as a buffer between the ruler and the people [...] [The Makhadzi] enhances the voice of the people while serving as the king's eyes, ears and conscience. She whispers truth to the King or to those in power in much the same way as her office speaks truth to leaders in government. When altercations between the Public Protector and the government reach the public sphere, the whispering has not been successful (70-80).

Both Madonsela and Gqubule simply appropriate the concept, choosing the positive aspects of the role of Makhadzi, that of whispering to power, that is, a powerful female figure within a traditional monarch who advises the male king when he gets it wrong. Madonsela and Gqubule either choose to ignore or are unaware of the patriarchal nature of the Makhadzi figure. In this regard Madonsela acts as mediator between the South African people and the president.

Madonsela assumes South Africa as her family when she states that she is a Makhadzi of the nation “the conscience of the nation” (p 79). That is why she challenges those in power as they were no longer serving the people as highlighted by the cases stated in the narrative. Matshidze and Nmutandani (2016) further define the duties of a Makhadzi as that of a person who is expected to put systems in place to ensure fairness and consistency in the conduct of traditional leadership and also holds influence in decisions regarding family disputes. This is partly the definition that both Madonsela and Gqubule have in mind when they use the Makhazi concept. According to this view, a Makhadzi is a spokesperson for the down trodden, speaks for other women. She has been given a masculine role which allows her to enter into an arena that permits her to come toe to toe with men. Madonsela cannot speak for South Africans unless she is positioned in a masculine space, so she is already appropriating a masculine space of a Makhadzi. Even within a democracy where people should be speaking for themselves she has become their voice. Just like in the family where other women do not have power to say what they want but, it is Makhadzi who can stand up against men on behalf of the down trodden.

The title *No Longer Whispering to Power* is derived from Madonsela’s own words as she tries to describe her position of the public protector. The title suggests that there was a time when she was whispering to power and now she no longer whispers. Whispering suggests telling the truth to those in power in a peaceful and amicable manner. Gqubule quotes to Madonsela describing the act as “Makhadzi whispers truth to the king”, or those in power, “in much the same way as her office speaks truth to leaders in government” (79). This points out to the many features that a Makhadzi has which are similar to that of a public protector in that, socially and traditionally a Makhadzi is like a mediator for the whole family where disputes arise between a husband and wife, child and father, bride and father-in-law or mother-in-law (Rambau, 1999). She is highly honoured and in most instances her decision is final. After hearing the case, the Makhadzi listens to both sides and adjudicates the matter. In a traditional family, or even amongst people who have a nuclear system, the makhadzi champions social cohesion among family members (Matshidze, 2013).

Madonsela was seen as advancing a political agenda against Zuma and other ANC members when she published reports of his conduct during his rule as the then president of South Africa. Publishing of scandalous reports involving the president is seen as shouting. When altercations between the public protector and government reach the public sphere, the whispering has not

been successful. Her duty is to whisper into the ear of the president but she stands up to shout. Her shouting is perceived as overstepping the office of the public protector, an office which is apolitical. Shouting in this instance is in the form of investigations and reports exposing the former president Zuma. For example, when the public protector compiled the Nkandla report also known as Secure in Comfort (98) whereby the then president Zuma built his sprawling, multimillion-rand home using public funds which he managed to get through the abuse of his authority (86, 104, 127). Her report revealed that Zuma and his family benefited substantially, unduly and unlawfully (96) at the expense of the public. Generally when one give advice, it is done against something and in this instance Madonsela thought that she is being politically neutral yet her actions of trying to curb maladministration and abuse of power and having no opinion on the president impeachment campaign (138, 143) were professed as playing an active role in politics and the response from the Pro-Zuma supporters indicates that they perceived her actions as going beyond the mandate of her office. Gqubule writes that, Pro-Zuma supporters doubted the constitutional court's ruling, stating that nowhere in the world were the recommendations of an ombudsman binding and enforceable (137). Madonsela was insulted, called a spy for Swaziland, Israeli by one of the South African oppositional parties (97, 99).

In addition, the title could also perhaps be referring to a system which all along has been pampering power, allowing it to get away with what it wanted, now there is a system or situation where power is being exposed. Similarly, on another occasion Madonsela is seen shouting through another explosive State of Capture report, detailing the alleged unethical conduct of the president of his improper relations with the Gupta family (156). The report stated that the president's relations with the family had come to erode the quality of democracy and the value of South Africans' hard-won votes. It appeared that the Gupta family had become involved in the removal and appointment of cabinet ministers and directors of the state owned enterprises, resulting in the improper awarding of tender and procurement opportunities and the misappropriation of public funds – all to benefit the Gupta family (157). In attending to two complaints lodged in 2016, the public protector wrote to the president, informing him why she would be investigating him. Similarly, the Makhadzi acts as a conduit of communication, acting as a negotiator or a mediator in resolving family disputes (Matshidze and Nmutandani, 2016). In executing her duties without fear or favour, the prevailing political conditions make the public protector appear as if she is political. In adjudicating the matter, she pointed out errors and it is those actions that were perceived by Zuma as being political. As a public Zuma

felt that he could recourse to the public protector that he felt that his rights were being infringed yet Madonsela was protecting the larger majority from him.

The biographer notes the State of capture report as described by the public is, “Thuli’s greatest gift to SA” (162) in that it resulted in resignations of those complicit in the corruption (169) and thousands of other reports that Madonsela prepared during her tenure, that saw increasing evidence of it (179). Gqubule notes that Madonsela resolved more cases than her two predecessors put together (72). In other thousands of her other reports (3, 180) Gqubule includes the 2013 Pipes to Nowhere report whereby she investigated the municipalities misuse of funds given to them by the government to resolve the sanitation crises which caused the death of a six-year-old grade R learner who fell in a pit latrine toilet (180-181) because of the installation of a sanitation system that was not working (184). In another report titled *Derailed* Madonsela talks about Lucky Montana, the CEO of Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) a state owned entity which invested billions of money on a modern signalling systems (196). The report revealed irregularities ranging from maladministration, nepotism, procurement irregularities, conflicts of interests and corruption to the victimisation of whistle blowers (197). In addition Madonsela produced *When Governance and Ethics Fail* report (208) detailing the systematic governance problems and harassment of senior staff by Mr Motsoeneng (self-made man of Africa’s largest broadcaster) (206) because some of them questioned his qualifications and the spiralling of financial expenditure which resulted in him earning more than the president and undue interference by the Minister and department of Communication (210). Motsoeneng would cultivate mutual beneficial friendships with political figures like Zuma, resulting in the positive projection of Zuma’s image (213). Moreover, the public protector compiled a report titled *Access to Justice* on allegations by prisoners in the North West Province that long, cruel and undue delays in appeal application processing often occurred at the Mafikeng Justice Centre (219) causing innocent people to be detained because their appeals would take years to be heard – if they were heard at all (220). Lastly, a report titled *State and Party* colours whereby she investigated the alleged use of state resources to advance the ANC’s electoral campaign called Operation Hlasela (operation attack) (225). Madonsela found that state platforms had been used to advertise the operation without distinguishing between the government’s Hlasela and the private one undermining the fair play in the electoral process (225). In all these investigations that Madonsela conducted, tax payers money is involved, meaning that the nation, directly or indirectly is affected.

This suggests that the office of the public protector is an ambivalent office, it forces one to take sides although the constitution states that it is a neutral office. This is because one cannot operate as a makhadzi without being political which is the very nature of the office Public Protector being pulled more to one side. There is something ambivalent about this office which works against neutrality. That is what the biography is showing hence she started shouting being pulled towards one side precisely because of the ambivalence inherent of the office of the public protector. Consequently, Gqubule writes that, the public protector has taken a stand for social justice on the side of the poor (191). Her actions are similar to the role of makhadzi as it is the duty of a makhadzi to manage the relationships of individuals to their family, clan, community, and society to nature (Ross, 2017).

Taking a stand for the larger society, is reflective of Foucault's (1980) observation that where there is power, there is resistance, and also that resistance is a necessary condition of power. In this case power is being exercised by a woman given a certain amount of power which she actively uses to pursue social justice (63), hence the name "lady justice" (73). The biographer shows that not only did Madonsela have the courage to investigate public servants for maladministration, misconduct and corruption, but also their political masters. Her ruling and investigations show that she is impartial. Because of that she is exposing power (73). Whereas the traditional thinking is a powerful individual disables someone, for example the claim that the government is so powerful such that nobody can speak against it. Even in the case of the apartheid regime, which people perceived it as powerful but only to be overthrown. Hence, *No Longer Whispering to Power* is not something new, it is something that has always happened with subordinate groups coming together to expose power as it were. This is also exemplified by Zuma who later on succumbed to calls to step down (Onishi, 2018). Foucault (1980) further argues that there is no system in the world that can remain intact that it cannot be resisted. In her case Madonsela has resisted the system that has oppressed the larger majority. This notion of power, opposes the old models which identified power with specific social classes or groups, moves away from the idea that identities are fixed, stable, and clearly defined, allowing for a conception of individuals as vehicles who have the ability to transmit power (Gordon 1980). She is no longer whispering to power because she has the power to do that which shows that in order to destabilise power one needs to have power. In her case the power she has is the legal power which has patriarchal elements. Which is why Madonsela successfully executed her duties because she has been allowed to enter in a masculine space. So she is shouting at power but she herself is power fighting another power. This speaks to Foucault's (1980) observation

that power is everywhere it is exercised from innumerable points. Foucault (1980a:94) He states that “we are all the vehicles of power because it is embedded in discourses and norms that are part of the minute practices, habits, and interactions of our everyday lives”.

Madonsela’s trying experience of power are a top down scenario as espoused by Marxists view¹⁴ which is echoed by Althusser (1984) who invests power in state institutions and argues that people are mere puppets at the hands of the ideological and repressive apparatus of state. That is why power is being challenged through the Public Protector who is there to protect people from those who execute power. This perspective suggests that power is concentrated in the hands of a few. Characterising herself as a Makhadzi makes her part of the elite, those in power, it is only when she starts to shout, speaking for the people that she is alienated from the elite but as long as she is whispering she is part of the elite.

Gqubule constructs Madonsela as a powerful woman. She is inside power, by virtue of being an elected public protector with binding powers, as stated above. She is power in her own right otherwise as an ordinary South African woman she would not have succeeded in investigating and bringing those who had erred to book. To further show that Madonsela was a powerful woman, Gqubule states that Madonsela received a tip off from a whistle blower that a hit on her life was in motion to make it look like a car accident (p143-144). By threatening her they assumed that she would not have power to fight back. But the fact that she changed her routine, fortified her security and restricted her movements shows that she was a powerful woman. She was seen as a threat who could topple down the executive, in that she was “naming and shaming people in high places, and telling all, including where the proverbial bodies lay buried” (164). Her power is further seen through the increase in cases that her office received. On Madonsela’s watch, her office is said to have gained pride of place in the web of legal institutions to which citizens looked for solutions to abuse of power and misrule (200).

Gqubule’s biography positions her subject as the custodian of the values that had inspired the liberation struggle. She is portrayed as grappling with colleagues who were inclined on betraying the cause of the struggle. Gqubule opines that, Nkandla represents the rampant corruption that ravaged the country under Zuma’s tenure (87). The story of post-colonial Africa is filled with legends about how presidents and other powerful figures built palaces in their home towns from which they dished out patronage and elevated themselves above ordinary

¹⁴ Jessop (2014) notes that Marxist approaches to power focus on its relation to class domination in capitalist societies. Power is linked to class relations in economics, politics, and ideology. In capitalist social formations, the state is considered to be particularly important in securing the conditions for economic class domination.

citizens (90). Moreover, the rot ran deep, it had seeped into the fibre of broadcasting practices and society in general. The SABC and its Big Man problem is, it seems, a microcosm of South Africa and its leadership (216). Gqubule notes that, Madonsela's work, in each report she issued during her tumultuous tenure, showed the deeper battle over economic philosophy and values and illustrated how the South African elite had chosen a cynical view to steal and plunder for themselves, rather than to rule in the interest of progress and well-being for all (218). In response to the question of the kind of country Madonsela dreamed South Africa to be, she says, "a country in which everybody is equal before the law, and the law protects everyone" (55) is seen as under threat from self-seeking individuals. The construction of the nation is underscored in a way that shows that the nation was born out of struggle and as such it needed to be defended from the corrupt opportunism of some of those who participated in the struggle. Javangwe (2011) observes that such an analysis seems to miss is the stubborn reality that the rhetoric of anti-colonial nationalism loses its efficacy at the moment colonialism collapses.

Gqubule describes Madonsela's tenure as the public protector as potent in its ability to reveal to South Africa the nature of the political beast emerging in the post-apartheid era (216). The post-apartheid era is described as rife with corruption, nepotism and marginalization of the people by the political elites. Gqubule writes that, in everyday SA some corrupt traffic police would insist on buying them cold drink as a bribe, home affairs officials would ask those who depend on them to issue a birth certificate or a passport to buy them lunch, journalists could be heard in bars saying that they were prepared to take a brown envelope to make stories disappear (109-110). Gqubule's biography is also reflective of a nation that recognizes indigeneity as the element that qualifies one to the inner circle of the nation, and conversely demands patriotic dedication to its values and institutions. For, Madonsela, the nation's institutions needed to reflect the will of the citizens, the good of everyone.

For a Makhadzi to work with men it is as if she has to be stripped of her femininity. She enters their realm as a pseudo man which is what allows her to speak. This is why, one finds that in a community people would usually admire such kind of women who behave like men. It is as if Madonsela's respect is derived from the fact that she is behaving like a man within a masculine space. In her femininity, she would not be allowed to walk in as a woman. She had to assume certain characteristics for her to sit in a discussion with men. This suggests that she cannot tackle the masculine without assuming a "masculine persona". Her strength is not in her femininity but is assuming a "masculine" role. The democratic South Africa is still very

patriarchal, with government agenda largely driven by men. So this is the environment within which Makhadzi has become. She has appropriated the role of Makhadzi in so far as she is speaking for the down trodden.

The Makhadzi metaphor feminises the position of the public protector making readers question if men cannot hold such a position since a Makhadzi is always female. The Makhadzi is a force to be reckoned with, an advisor whose presence is necessary at all important times in the life of her brother and in the lives of his children and wife (Buijs, 2002). From this perspective, Madonsela is presented as a woman who is in charge showing the power she bestows. This is also highlighted by Onselen (2018) who observes that Madonsela's independence was startling for a party that prides itself on controlling all "levers of power".

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the depiction of Madonsela as a political protagonist in activism as evinced by the quest of the political self to effect change, in this case, change in the social order: a quest that invites the rule of law and the recognition of women/human rights and democracy. However, the depiction of her life story shows a high level of selection, of the events that led to Madonsela obtaining the office of the public protector. This is in reference to Madonsela's everyday oppressive experiences from childhood, which are shown through her defiance of the patriarchal society. The chapter reveals that political refers to any power relationships from the domestic level to those of government and elected officials.

Gqubule's depiction of Madonsela is written in such a way that marshals events that would tell what she wants to bring about. As a journalist, Gqubule writes as if she commenting on social issues which are overtly political, yet in essence she is revealing the state of the nation, politics of governance which expose the former president of his abuse of power.

The chapter also argues that the use of the makhadzi metaphor reveals the political intention of the biography since a Makhadzi holds a political office in the VhaVenda culture. It has also been argued that the office of the public protector is an ambivalent institution in that forces the public protector to take the side, especially of the oppressed which works against neutrality. The following chapter discusses femininity, Human Rights discourse and how the subaltern has a cogent case to engage in situated confrontations against the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) totalizing discourse. A discourse which often subordinates and homogenizes individual experiences and perspectives. The chapter was

guided by Foucault notion of discursive practices that provided ways of understanding Mukoko's experiences.

CHAPTER 7

Self-writing, Femininity and Human Rights Discourse

7.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the *The Abduction And Trial Of Jestina Mukoko: The Fight For Human Rights In Zimbabwe* (2016) a harrowing and detailed recollection of the journalist and human rights activist Jestina Mukoko's time as a victim of abduction and torture by Zimbabwean state security agents in 2008. She once worked for the government controlled media and decided to become an activist in so far as the discourse of Human Rights is concerned. Her autobiography reflects on the prevalent political violence of the post-2000 Zimbabwe which was characterized by rife human rights abuse. This chapter argues that Mukoko is giving a counter narrative to Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) totalising discourse. A discourse which often subordinates and homogenises individual experiences and perspectives (Young, 2007). Also, to the narrative exposes a dominant discourse which imposes its own rationalities upon the discursive possibilities of others. The chapter is guided by Huddart's (2008) post-colonial theory and autobiography which affords the subaltern with a cogent case as it is primed to engage in situated confrontations against this totalising discourse. In this case, Mukoko is a privileged subaltern because of her prominence and positions she holds. The theory affords the subaltern in positions of gender or race with a voice to breach and disrupt the circumscriptions of the 'patriotic history'¹⁵ (Ranger, 2004-2005) of Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, if one goes against ZANU-PF it means one is no longer patriotic. If one exposes human rights breaches such that women are abused, that ZANU-PF's secret agents abduct people and criticizes the government, then one is labelled as unpatriotic. These are stifling circumscriptions of the patriotic history of Zimbabwe which mute the subaltern who is doubly oppressed. The theory also gives her the space to grapple with the complex issues of the self and nation.

¹⁵ Ranger (2004:215) uses in the expression to refer to the state's promotion of pro-ZANU-PF historiography – what he calls "history in the service of nationalism". Patriotic history is a form of representation that is narrower than nationalistic historiography in that it "resents the 'disloyal' questions raised by others. This is how ZANU-PF has sought to represent the nation to the exclusion of other views. By installing itself as the only legitimate representative of the Zimbabwean anticolonial struggle, ZANU-PF equates itself to democracy, patriotism and Africanism, thereby narrowing the discursive field of national identity down to those who support ZANU-PF (Raftopoulos 2002:413, Alexander & McGregor 2001:511).

Mukoko's narrative is a quest to effect change not only to herself but to others and those in similar positions as herself from the lawlessness to the rule of law and the recognition of human rights. Giddens (1992: 96) posits that the self, "comports towards both its interiority and exteriority: to merge private projects of the self and causes that can only be played out in the public sphere of 'emancipatory politics'". Mukoko aims to end exploitation and enhance participatory democracy through which leadership can be held accountable. She wants to eliminate exploitation, inequality and oppression (Giddens, 1991a: 211). Mukoko's narrative is a reaction to the state of exception which denudes her subaltern of her rights.

Literary works are discursive projects with discursive effects. They therefore often provide multiple and open-ended writings and readings of history, identities and meaning. Foucault (1972) formulates discourse as a mode of relating to reality in which the subject is constituted simultaneously as the object is constituted in a subject-object relationship. Foucault argues that discourses emerge in relation to specific institutions such "as economic, social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms techniques, types of classification and modes of characterisation which disciplines the object. Such disciplining is done through enunciative modalities which are acts or types of discursive activities that involve forming hypothesis and formulating regularities" (Foucault, 1972: 47). Foucault limits the agency of the object/subaltern by restricting them to the regulating power of discourse. Language, according to Foucault, constructs discursive formations in identity as the subject's becoming, through 'enunciative modalities' (Foucault, 1990: 216) and demonstrates that the power of the superordinate is not absolute. Enunciative modalities help the subaltern who possesses subjugated knowledges to challenge the subject. Discourse empowers Mukoko and gives her power to demand for discursive attention to the arbitrariness of the injustices of the government or ruling party. The government is forced discursively to pay attention to what the subordinated has said because of the power it also wields shown through how the state reacted when Mukoko compiled a Human Rights abuse reports. Mukoko notes these injustices through formulating a discourse of her painful experiences. She formulates a discourse simultaneously as relating to her reality.

The narrative shows that Mukoko relies on her gender as a woman to draw the readers' sympathies over what she went through. This shows that autobiography as a genre is an individual's attempt to define the self by positioning the self strategically within the historical and cultural continuum. The repressive political environment obtaining in Zimbabwe shapes

the way Mukoko narrates the self. Javangwe (2011) observes that the increase in autobiographical writing in Zimbabwe is a testimony to the quest of a more subjective interpretation of experience especially after the socio-economic and political crises that Zimbabwe has been experiencing. This suggests that moments of national crises invoke more pronounced responses to national experiences and ultimately contesting voices.

Mukoko narrates issues of torture, trauma, dynamics of the humanitarian discourse and prison conditions. Her story is illustrative of the fate of other political prisoners and by extension may be read as representative of Zimbabwean history during this time of crises in the country. Bernault (2003) argues that post-colonial African prisons should be understood through the prism of exploitive and oppressive political and economic colonial and imperialist discourse of late 19th century Europe. Similarly, Sarkin (2008) traces the trajectory of the current deplorable human rights abuses in most African prisons back to the way the prison first emerged as a tool of political and social subjugation of Africans when European nations scrambled to establish their political and economic dominance over the continent. In addition to the written text, Mukoko narrates her story by inserting photographs as a means of authenticating her story.

Given the burgeoning of work on gender in Africa, particularly Zimbabwe, only a few studies have been conducted on the intersection of human rights violations and life writing. Autobiographical accounts are terrains where human rights abuses are exposed and where identities are constructed and contested. In Zimbabwe, there is a long tradition of the use of autobiographies and life-writing in general to expose the abuse of human rights by the ruling authorities. Informed by feminist sensibility and intent on exposing the silences, boundaries and achievements of women in a politically polarised post-2000 Zimbabwe, Mukoko's narrative falls within the ambit of such life writing which champions the human rights of those who have been targeted by the country's intolerant post-colonial rulers.

Numerous life accounts such as Mukoko's that address the hidden atrocities perpetrated against people under repressive regimes have helped to condemn African regimes as politically and socially draconian states in the eyes of the West. Mukoko's experience shows that Zimbabwe has a terrible record when it comes to upholding the human rights of its citizens who hold dissenting voices against their governments. In the light of the current global scrutiny of poor records of human rights and perceived aggression on the global political stage, Zimbabwe and other countries such as China, Iran and North Korea, have been placed under targeted economic

sanctions by the West. The brutal implementation of repressive policies across Zimbabwe has resulted in a widespread abuse of human rights since that country's inception as a postcolonial nation (Grice & Woods 2012). Life writing narratives of captivity such as Mukoko's, seek to show that individuals who dare stand up to expose human rights abuses in Zimbabwe suffer dreadful ill-treatment.

7.2. Mukoko's abduction

Mukoko's name reverberated around the world when she was abducted, held incommunicado, placed in remand prison before her subsequent release. On 3 December 2008 around 5 am (xi) she was abducted at her family home in Norton to a secret location where she was kept for 21 days incommunicado¹⁶. On the 23rd of December 2008, together with other abductees she was handed over to the custody of the police at Matapi police station in Harare. On the 24th of December 2008, she made her first public appearance at Rotten Row, Harare Magistrate's Court. Later, she was transferred to Chikurubi Maximum Prison. On the 29th of December 2008, she was charged with contravening Section 24 (a) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act. Allegations were that they recruited or attempted to recruit individuals for training in banditry, insurgency, sabotage or terrorism to overthrow a constitutional elected government. At last, on the 20th of January 2009 she was taken to the Avenues Clinic where she was examined by private doctors. Illustrating the unreasonableness of the officials who held her, she relates how they refused to get her leg chains off for the X-ray until she was taken to Chikurubi prison hospital. She went back and forth Avenues Clinic and prison hospital several times until she was released on the 6th of May 2009. She was given stringent bail conditions as she had to report every Monday and Friday at the Norton Police Station.

Omuteche and Kesero (2016:6) posit that besides photographs, autobiographical writers support the truth value of their texts by the presence of dates and the descriptions of historically correlated events and incidences as such the narratives strives to be consistent with other evidence that accounts for veracity and sincerity. In this way, the autobiographical story aligns itself to fidelity about the author's narrativized life. In her narrative, Mukoko provides readers with dates in every account she stated, to authenticate her narrative as exemplified by the above paragraph and (x, 2, 6, 57, 68, 74, 95).

¹⁶ Morentin (2014) describes incommunicado detention as a situation of isolating the person. One cannot speak or communicate with anyone not even a trusted lawyer or doctor other than those under whose custody the person is held for interrogation purposes.

7.3. Social, Political and Economic discursive formations

7.3.1 Social discursive formations

Since Mukoko's autobiography is a discursively informed narrative, this section analyses the social discursive space that Mukoko relates to her reality. Gubrium and Hostein (2009:16) posit that "stories aren't simply conveyed, but they are given shape in the course of social interaction". Recently, there has been a call to situate narrative construction within social dynamics and context and to find analytic strategies that would allow treating narratives not only as a "window" into the subjective or private aspects of the narrator's experience but also as communicative acts, based on shared socio-cultural resources and practices (Atkinson, 1997; Duranti, 1986; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

Discursive practice refers simultaneously to the "things said" and to the rules that explain how it becomes possible to say (or know) certain things—"the rules governing a knowledge" (Cousins & Hussain, 1984:94). A discursive practice is not a blueprint; it establishes "an interactive relation between otherwise heterogeneous material elements (institutions, techniques, social groups, perceptual organizations, relations between various discourses)" (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014:188 & Foucault, 1972). This is precisely because it is a practice that it is mutable. Foucault (1971) further states that it is inappropriate to confine the concept of discursive practices to textual studies. Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them.

Butler (1988:519) argues that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts precede". Instead, she says that gender should be viewed as a subjective and performative category that is socially constructed, "an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (519). Mukoko's recounting of her experiences, first as a girl child in colonial Rhodesia and in early independent Zimbabwe and subsequently as a young adult in post-colonial Zimbabwe suggests that Butler is accurate in her description of gender as time bound, socially constructed, subjective and repetitively performative act. Constructed retrospectively from the standpoint of her current activism, Mukoko's narrative suggests that from childhood, political struggle has always been a part of her life. Her narrative begins with her early awareness of segregation realities of the colonial situation in the allocation residential areas. As a child, Mukoko began to grapple with the overt

truths of a race-conscious society that designated different spaces for its African and white population. She grew up in Gweru's Mambo township, a high-density suburb where the black majority lived (6). Mukoko shows that this painful colonial experience thoroughly destabilized fundamental assumptions about the dignity of humanity, equal opportunity and rights and engendered a critical interrogation of self-identity and belonging in her at an early age. Mukoko also shows that colonialists succeed even in further dividing black people along tribal lines to better exploit them (6). For example, when Mukoko moves from Gweru town dominated by Shona speaking people to Bulawayo an isiNdebele dominated town, she witnesses disturbing tribal disputes among black Africans. She states that political trouble seemed to have followed her since childhood as her household was targeted in Bulawayo because they were Shona speaking. Her family was constantly woken by stones thrown on the roof of the house. Through a series of encounters with war veterans of the liberation struggle in the Bulawayo township of Entumbane (9), a precocious sense of existing at the fringes of mainstream society develops. Because of this hounding by fellow black Zimbabweans, they were forced to move. Mukoko notes these issues as a reaction to the techniques used by the government, types of classification and social processes she found herself in as they were ostracized in Entumbane. This conforms to Hall's (2000:17) argument that "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference". The black subject under restive early postcolonial conditions of necessity gropes for, even creates, space(s) for self-definition as well as contest colonially assigned identities. For Mukoko, these early encounters become critical in the formative years of self-definition and cultural space. She posits these unpleasant encounters in her formative years as having been preparatory for the greater trials that she would subsequently suffer as an adult championing human rights in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Mukoko's autobiography illustrates the discursive perspective on widowhood as a social activity. The challenges faced by women and how they overcome them preoccupy Mukoko's mind as she recounts her traumatic experience at the hands of Zimbabwe's security agents. For example, she portrays widowhood as a space that strengthens women to work hard for their families instead of a limitation. She and her mother shared similar losses of their loved ones. Her mother lost her husband (7) when Mukoko was just five years old and Mukoko herself lost her husband (10) when her son was four years. In negotiating widowhood, they both embraced their situation and became successful in life. Mukoko's mother tilled land and sold doilies for the upkeep of her family (7). Likewise, Mukoko took one job after the other until she became a powerful woman defending rights of the people in Zimbabwe. Her autobiography testifies

personal experiences of a woman who displays bravery by withstanding the pain she encountered.

However, Mukoko does not use her widowhood status to show how courageous they were to overcome economic challenges that this misfortune brings. Without minimizing Mukoko's pain, her narrative reveals that she uses her status as a discursive formation to draw sympathy from her readers as she recounts her painful experiences. She shows that in most underdeveloped African societies, widows have a common experience of loss, deprivation and hopelessness. The death of a husband who is often the main means of economic support, results in trauma, grief and a total restructuring of one's life. In this regard, Woof and Carter (1994) in (Akujobi, 2006) point out that widows experience economic hardship, emotional and social problems. Her narrative shows that her precarious widow status made her even more vulnerable to abuse, oppression, and victimization by her captors. Therefore, readers are compelled to be sympathetic towards Mukoko not only because her human rights are abused but also because as a widow she already suffers from numerous economic uncertainties and emotional. Despite these problems, Mukoko presents herself as a strong woman who managed to secure a high economic position and social status that only a few Zimbabwean women could attain.

Moreover, Mukoko's abduction, creates the emergence of discursive formations between her, the subject, and the government as a system (Foucault, 1972). The narrative reveals that she is not just explaining how the police came and took her from her house (xi, 12) rather she is showing the social violation of her private space. The description of her abduction shows that a possibility of being killed by the unknown state agents was real. In describing the event she writes: "Six-grim faced man, were charging towards me, dark heavily built man, barked at me, firmly grabbed my hand, bloodshot eyes, I was force-marched out, strangers, I was shaking like a reed, having difficulty in breathing, I was in detention" (13-15). The violent manner of her arrest illustrates the paranoia and desperation of the Zimbabwean government. The fact that six able-bodied strong and angry men come to violently and illegally arrest an unarmed single mother is indicative of the lack of human rights. Dressed only in her night gown, barefoot, denied time to dress decently, her prescription medicine left by her bedside, she disappeared without a trace. She writes: "I feared being raped" (15). Their denial to give her a chance to dress decently leaves Mukoko in a fragile and vulnerable state. Along the way, one of her abductors forced her to lay her head on his lap, something she had never done to an unknown man, upon seeing a rifle on the floor she states that she reluctantly obeyed (15). According to

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention (2011), violence against women:

Is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Her narrative also relies heavily on her gender as a woman to draw the readers' sympathies about her horrific experience. Mukoko's description of her abductors and the fact that she is manhandled heightens tension and suspense in her story by suggesting that she was in real danger of being raped from the day she was abducted. Metaphorically Mukoko is stating that she was sexually violated. These are the discursive modalities that Foucault (1972) refers to, that are created in the manner in which Mukoko relates to her reality.

Mukoko exposes discursive formation of violence as a political process that discipline the subject. Physical torture and rape have often been used to inflict violence especially on the female body in many repressive states. Peltola (2018) argues that, in developing countries where political instability, suppression of human rights, gender bias, inequality and discrimination are commonplace, cases of sexual violence perpetrated against women are exponentially higher. In this case, when a female detainee is physically abused by male interrogators there is always risk of her being raped which is a form of physical abuse, which female detainees suffer more than male detainees. The threat of being sexually abused is often linked with being female not just physical abuse. According to the Human Rights Watch (2014), Boko Haram Violence against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria, abducted women are subjected to physical and psychological abuse; forced labor; forced participation in military operations, including carrying ammunition or luring men into ambush; forced marriage to their captors; and sexual abuse, including rape. In addition, Human Rights Watch (2016) reported that abducted women experience some form of gender-based violence in reprisal for their activism, ranging from rape and assault to threats of rape, attacks on their reputation and verbal harassment. The report further states that, in most cases, perpetrators of these abuses were identified as national security agents or police. This illustrates how women activists are at risk of abuses which their male counterparts are far less likely to experience, from brutal acts of sexual violence to damaging attacks on women activists' reputation. Some of the incidents also illustrate how security personnel can use the threat of social stigma to intimidate women they

subject to sexual violence into remaining silent about the abuse, abandoning their activism or even fleeing the country altogether. Likewise, Mukoko was tortured in that manner as espoused below.

Force, violence, torture, instilling fear and surveillance are some of the ways in which the government used to discipline Mukoko. Although Mukoko was not eventually raped, the danger of being raped was always at the back of her mind, because being female, abducted and detained incommunicado (26), raise the risk of her abductors going beyond just physically abusing her. The fact that she is physically abused suggests that being raped was a real possibility during her detention. That is what causes her anxiety and the way her interrogators behaved suggests that they wanted to do that. Her tormentors instructed her to place her legs on the table while sited for them to easily beat her on the soles of her feet. As she struggled with pain, her attention was also keeping her thighs covered. Noticing this, one of her interrogators shouted, “No one here cares about your legs, so don’t waste your time and get in my way as you try to cover those legs” (31). By denying that no one cares about her legs, her torturer is in fact admitting that this is what is in his mind.

Mukoko’s abduction speaks to Agamben’s (2005) argument that it has become the norm in most modern societies to suspend the legal and operate as though there is a state of exception. Her abduction speaks of a nation that is in a perpetual state of emergence. She shows how the government uses emergence powers arbitrarily on an unarmed, fragile and ill woman. Mukoko also reveals a state of repression whereby she was violated by unwelcomed visits by state operatives using state machinery to follow innocent women. By recounting the torture she experienced, she exposes the government’s ruthlessness on a vulnerable woman. She notes that, during her illegal detention she was blindfolded (29) except for times she was bathing eating or being interrogated. On one occasion, she was blindfolded and driven at night to an undisclosed destination under threat of unspecified action (39). She notes that she feared for her life when the car stopped in the middle of the night and heard sounds of people shuffling about as if preparing to execute her (39). Mukoko provides images of the red van which was their mode of transport through her abduction, clothes she was given at the detention center. According to Adams (1994:463), “photographs are in a sense physical traces of actual objects, they somehow seem more referential than words”. Photographs play an important role in authenticating Mukoko’s claims in her autobiography.

During this period of illegal detention, Mukoko only spoke to Alice the lady who would lead her to the interrogators and Cosmas the security guard. About solitary confinement (27), she writes, “I think solitary confinement is meant to send its victims to the brink of depression”. The central feature of solitary confinement is the reduction of meaningful social contact to a bare minimum and is insufficient to sustain mental health (HRFoT, 2007: 2); (Mendez, 2011:54). In this light, it is the interface of painful solitary confinement and the self-reflexive interiority that isolation fosters (Ndlovu, 2012:18) which cause Mukoko great pain. She indicates that the lack of social interaction during solitary confinement had a dehumanizing effect on her. She writes, “I was deposited in what I had taken to be a pantry, the door was unlocked [...] I could see two sets of feet of a man and woman” (26-27). The word “deposited” signals her feelings of being treated as a commodity.

Fear was used to keep Mukoko agitated. Her autobiography states that she sensed potential threat to her life when she saw one of the rooms being covered with curtains. She writes: “Sweating and sensing danger I sat up [...] I thought the worst was about to happen and I wanted to see the person who was going to do it [...] I heard people talking in the next room [...] my mind went wild as I speculated” (49). She also notes that her anxiety was heightened when one of her tormentors said: “You simply have to follow what we want here or you go extinct. There are several others buried around here” (38). Linking Mukoko with other victims of the government violations, she becomes a potential victim, a member of the group targeted violence and elimination. Mukoko’s experience shows how the government abuses state apparatus to formulate and normalize abnormal situations. Her description of her incommunicado experience explains the discursive spaces between specific institutions, in this case the government uses the police to abuse Mukoko. These are the discursive formations in relation to the object and the government abusing state apparatus.

Mukoko’s psychological and painful experience during solitary confinement suggest that stable notions of the self-start to disintegrate in the absence of social interaction. For example, she states that, “old magazines and novels that he gave me helped distract me from the nightmare that continued to unfold and without which I might have lost my mind” (48). These moments suggest that, instead of being bounded, the self exists in state of continuous interaction with fellow humans (Ndlovu, 2012:23). Mukoko’s lack of meaningful social activity heightened her longing to keep herself busy and shows that time is largely socially constructed, like the idea of the self as pointed out by Ndlovu in his assessment of Ruth First’s solitary confinement

during the apartheid years (2012:27). This is illustrated by her resorting to drawing out threads from her dress, she writes, “whenever I wasn’t wearing it as a blindfold and was not in interrogation it occupied me [...] drawing out threads from the dressing gown was therapeutic. I would take my time doing it and it occupied me for hours” (28).

Moreover, she notes, that early in her detention she was tortured endlessly (31), denied access to medical care and gravely neglected. Subjected to *falanga* (30), a method of torture popular with the security agents in Zimbabwe where they beat a person under the soles of their feet until the feet are tender. This method saves the security agents from being held responsible for torture in court because once swelling on the soles subsides, it leaves no trace or visible marks of abuse. However, doctors are now able to detect the dilated veins that are consistent with type of torture using a colour doppler scanner (30). She says, this torture continued for several days alternating with more questions. In addition, Mukoko was forced to kneel on gravel for hours while being interrogated in an attempt to force her to sign a statement that she had recruited an ex-policeman to the supposed plot. She describes the experience as intense, painful and numbing, “I drifted out of my own body and watched this woman from the ceiling” (46). She was also forced to read false statements on camera and pressurized to admit links to the former policeman Fidelis Mudimu.

The disciplining of Mukoko as espoused by Foucault (1972: 47), is done through ‘enunciative modalities’ which are acts or ‘types of discursive activities that involve describing, forming hypotheses, formulating regulations’. The regular way to handle her situation was for the police to call her and to find out where she lived instead of placing her under surveillance and bribing her guard (18, 19), or invited her to the police station, perhaps for an interview which is regular and expected of the police. In stating her experience, she shows these discursive modalities, revealing the state of relations between individuals and government. How the government deals with journalist who publish news that exposes its ruthlessness and violation of human rights. Such journalists are regarded as unpatriotic and because of that Mukoko was a threat and a sellout. When she becomes a human rights activist, she compiles reports of these violation which expose the government which she once worked for. Journalism is regarded as a watchdog the fourth estate of the three arm of the arms of the state (Luberda, 2014). Foucault (1991) argues that knowledge is power, hence the government is aware of the power she wields as a journalist. This suggests why the state goes to extremes to try and silence her, in the way in which so-called sellouts were treated during the liberation struggle.

To further elucidate her experience Mukoko creates a religious discursive formation as an empowerment tool which gave her strength to endure. She presents her Christian faith as one of the things that enabled her to survive the abuses she suffered during the incarceration and thereafter. Each time she felt that she was in danger she would resort to singing religious hymns to gain courage (49). Her faith enabled her to survive the emotional battery. She writes: “Singing hymns always brought me closer to the family during the dark days and nights and somehow after singing I gained a bit of courage to face my tormenters” (45). She attributes this solid family values which later distinguished her as possessing a strong and outstanding self-identity. Mukoko’s identity was molded during her youthful days as she benefitted from the example of an industrious, prudent and morally upright parent (7, 8). Her development both mentally and socially can be attributed to positive influences of Christian teachings from her mother.

Mukoko uses the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) discursive formation to explain her experience. She refers to her PTSD in the present not in the past, showing that she is in this state because of what happened and what the state operatives did to her. She notes that her experience was very traumatic and had a lasting psychological effect on her even after her acquittal. She also indicates that the aftermath of political imprisonment and other heinous human rights violations committed under the ruling party left mental scars on the Zimbabwean society. Even as she wrote her life story, she notes that “some sections brought tears and nightmares” (112). One of her bail requirements was to report to the station once a week. Still in fear of being abducted again, she did not have the courage to drive on her own (98). Vincent became her personal driver. As for reporting to the police station, she would go there in the company of a trusted human rights lawyer Alec Chademana fearing that she might be turned in again (98). After her acquittal, it was not easy getting used to being a free citizen in that she constantly had a nagging feeling that she had not reported to the police like she used to every Friday (102), attended several counselling sessions (98), peeped into suspicious looking vehicles searching for blindfolds, while driving around Harare (102), kept my eyes open for faces she had seen during her detention, I broke down several times and had nightmares (105), she was easily irritable and cringed at a knock on the door or just the turning of a key. She is also afflicted by uncontrollable anxiety as it is seen on one occasion when she shouts at her son for forgetting to lock the door and also experiences nightmares (105). She relates her mental suffering and makes comprehensive correlations between her experiences and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Mukoko’s narrative suggests that a wider understanding of the

PTSD symptoms and their manifestations such as anger, depression, violent tendencies, hypervigilance and anxiety, may contribute to a greater understanding of the damage that the misrule of the Zimbabwean authorities has caused on the population.

She feared continuing living in her house in Norton where she was abducted, imagining that her abductors were at the gate. After few days of moving to a new place the same problem started, she says she began experiencing sleeping problems again, sleeping tablets stopped being effective hours before it was time to wake up (94). Gobodo-Madikizela (2008) observes that a person who experienced trauma is continually haunted by it in dreams, flashbacks and hallucinations. When the traumatic memory is not processed, it becomes a debilitating memory, and it places excessive demands on people's existing coping strategies. Subsequently, she also suffers from memory loss. For example, when she got back home, her inability to remember the name of their dog, demonstrates the psychological turmoil that detainees experience. Here, Mukoko recalls her inability to remember as the worst part of her entire prison experience.

The enunciative modalities that help the subaltern who is subjugated to challenge the subject which is the state. Mukoko uses these events to empower herself discursively. As a result, a Western organization offered her specialized Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) therapy to help her deal with the aftermaths of her ordeal. According to the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies current research and clinical observations indicate that exposures to traumatic events vary markedly by gender and that men and women may respond differently to traumatic events. For example, risk factors for PTSD differ by gender, men and women manifest symptoms of PTSD in different ways and, most notably, women in the general population have a prevalence of PTSD that is two to three times higher than that of men. Women have a greater risk of developing PTSD after exposure to trauma (Kobayashi and Mellman: 2012). As a woman, she began to show signs of this disorder.

7.4. Female activism ZPP and Zimbabwean crisis in context

Discursively, Mukoko's narrative repeatedly reminds readers of the situations that Zimbabweans and those in her position experienced in the post-2000 period by pointing to various scenarios where her life was threatened. To explain the events that transpired before her abduction, Mukoko creates a discursive formation explaining the then political situation. In one such instance, her narrative reveals that on several occasions she lived with friends (16)

but after the Global Political Agreement (GPA)¹⁷, was signed, she writes: “I felt slightly more secure and did not anticipate any harm befalling me” (16). This shows that the lives of those who dared expose the human rights violations of the Zimbabwean government was in constant danger. For example, Mukoko relates how some of her workmates such as Broderick Takawira, the Provincial Coordinator of the ZPP and Pascal Gonzo, the Driver of ZPP were killed by state agents, similarly, Tonderai Ndira died only minutes after being snatched by state agents (17).

Although Mukoko shows that women are generally excluded from powerful formal and informal networks, she managed to rise against all odds to occupy very powerful social positions which eventually made her the target of the oppressive Zimbabwean state. She depicts herself as breaking the often quoted “glass ceiling”, the invisible barriers, created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices, to block women from executive positions (Haack, 2014). Mukoko indicates that she rose to become the Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and Board Member of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Forum. Mukoko’s leadership qualities are seen during her high school years, she mentions that she was chosen to be the Head Girl at Fletcher High School, graduated at University of Zimbabwe with a Bachelor of Science Honours degree in Politics and Administration in 1989, became a teacher at St Patrick Secondary School between 1990-1992, worked for ZBC in 1994 where she had an opportunity to apply make up on the then president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, in the ZBC studio, she also worked as Public Relations officer at the West Gate Mall, as a journalist at Radio Voice of the People, in 2002 she joined Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET) and lastly in 2007 she moved to be the head of ZPP where still worked at the publication of her autobiography (10-11). Looking at all the profession she entered, one can say they all prepared her to be the person she is today who fights for the rights of the people.

Broadly, Mukoko uses photographs to authenticate her reality. Technique is the second element in autobiographical strategy. This refers to the strategic uses of devices to “build a self-portrait from its inside out” (Howarth 1980: 87). Mukoko’s narrative is bolstered with photographs for example, an image of her graduation with her grandmother, cousin, brother and sister as her

¹⁷ Raftopoulos (2010) GPA was signed between two Movements for Democratic Change and the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in 2008 brokered through SADC, in which a ruling party facing an organic political and economic crisis used the space to reconfigure and renegotiate the terms of its existence with the opposition, civil society and the international community.

support system. She writes the self by providing detailed sequence of her becoming a human rights activist and her abduction. Within the narrative of her becoming, she weaves the story of her family and family values, and comments on events that shaped her professional as well as her personal becoming. This is because she is not merely telling the story of the self, but the autobiography can also be read as a cultural narrative. The narrative is not merely a private account, but a reflection of a group of people and their experiences. (Omuteche, 2016:44). It is also a story of her family and their life and institutions she interacted with and who made an impact on her becoming. An image of her sited on the news desk at Zimbabwe Broadcast Corporation (ZBC)1994 is evidence of one of the jobs she mentioned at the beginning of her narrative and how she rose to prominence. Autobiographers determine style in so far as it serves the desired goal. The inclusion of pictures, for instance, which is a technique used most of the selected texts for this study, could be seen as authenticating documents meant to prove a certain point that would otherwise be contested, in the absence of the photographs (Nyanda, 2016:39). Photographic images do not only serve as a visual support to the narrative, photographs are co-producers of meaning in the text and accompany the narrative to participate in the construction of an autobiographical subject.

It is her maneuvering in male dominated spaces, that partly provokes the ire of the clearly patriarchal Zimbabwean state agents. Huddart (2008) states that postcolonial life-writing was born out of the question of resistance, in the same manner, Mukoko's narrative shows her resistance to the stifling circumscriptions of the ruling party. Her life narrative reveals that the Zimbabwean authorities were angered by her role as a human rights defender and a leader of an NGO whose mandate is to monitor and document politically-motivated violations and abuses of human rights. The notion of human rights has become a contested one in the past few decades. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) by the United Nations in 1948, human rights discourse has become an essential part of global politics (Thoba, 2017). The politically embattled ZANU PF led government subsequently labelled organizations like the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) whose mandate is to expose human rights violations, as subversive Western sponsored institutions meant to champion regime change in the country. At that time, ZANU-PF viewed Mukoko's organization as a threat to its rule and a puppet of the West which was funding the organization. The term "project" in the ZPP's name suggested that it was being funded since projects depend on donors or government funding. The term project also suggested that Mukoko's organization was a 'project', a tool to pursue an agenda.

Mukoko's autobiography shows that she has appropriated what the Human Rights discourse capacitates her to do. Mashingaidze (2016) states that the ZPP emerged in 2000 under the aegis of local church-based groups and human-rights-based NGOs as a non-partisan vehicle for civic interventions in a moment of national political crisis. Therefore, the ZPP emerged in response to the Zimbabwean political crisis. The crisis broadly refers to the country's post-2000 state-sanctioned land seizures of white-owned land, wanton physical and polemic inter-and intra-party violence, and the shrinkage of democratic space through the enactment of restrictive laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA)¹⁸ and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA)¹⁹ that curtailed basic freedom of expression and association. These enunciative modalities were meant to punish the subject through formulating these regulations (Foucault, 1972). Thus, anything anti-government was regarded as unpatriotic (Ranger, 2004; Raftopoulos, 2002). At the center of this crisis were intense contestations for political turf between the ruling ZANU (PF) government and the then newly formed opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Mukoko indicates that if a local NGO's name includes a word which suggests human rights advocacy amongst its objectives, then it is precluded from receiving any foreign funding by the Zimbabwean government. This is done to prevent NGOs from carrying out human rights work as local companies lack the resources to fund human rights initiatives due to the poor economic conditions in Zimbabwe.

Instead of being instrument of regime change, in Zimbabwe, Mukoko's narrative shows that NGOs, such as ZPP, play an important role in supporting women, men, and households that cannot meet their welfare. This role ranges from counselling and support service, awareness raising and advocacy, legal aid and microfinance (Desai, 2005). These services help people to achieve their potential, skill and knowledge, and take control over their own lives and finally become empowered. Mukoko's autobiography suggests that this is especially important in a country like Zimbabwe where the state does not make enough provision for such services. Therefore, the increase in the number of NGOs since the year 2000 indicates the important role they are playing in the provision of needed humanitarian services created by the failure of the

¹⁸ Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) of 2001 governs the operation and general conduct of the media in a way that leaves it with little breathing space. It states that all journalists must be accredited by the Media and Information Commission (MIC).

¹⁹ Public Order and Security Act (POSA) of 2002 contains provisions that curtail freedom of expression. It deals with publishing or communicating "false statements" considered prejudicial to the State. It also makes it a criminal offence for a person inside or outside the country to communicate a statement that is wholly or materially false.

Zimbabwean state. However, the arrest and cruel treatment of Mukoko shows that the Zimbabwean government assumes that NGOs work in cohorts with Western nations to politically destabilize the country and lead to regime change. This is because, critics have argued that human rights discourse does not exist in a political vacuum (Moyn, 2010 and Catling, 2012). Postcolonial thinkers have indicated the growing suspicions, “that dominant countries, especially the United States and its coalition partners, are using humanitarian pretexts to pursue otherwise unacceptable geopolitical goals and to evade the non-intervention norm and legal prohibitions on the use of international force” (Donnelly, 1995: 609). Mukoko’s narrative shows that instead of working against the state, NGOs, such as the one she leads, are very essential in bringing human rights abuses to the attention of the United Nations, the international community and the public at large. This is necessary because the Zimbabwean police does not document all human rights abuse as Mukoko’s own illegal abduction indicates. Mashingaidze (2016) notes that ZPP compiled and circulated historical profiles of influential and habitual violators as a poignant reminder and indictment of the police and other law enforcement agents for failure to uphold the rule of law by apprehending and prosecuting politically motivated criminals in the face of overwhelming incriminating evidence. Failure to document human rights violations is further seen while she was in prison in that in all the papers she received state owned newspapers did not cover her disappearance (78).

Mukoko makes it clear that her abduction and her subsequent prison ordeal had to do Zimbabwe government’s failure to protect or promote human rights and its lack of respect for a just rule of law (xxii). Due to her advocacy work, which exposed the government as complicit to the abuses, the government then labelled her organization as a Western sponsored institution that was bent on politically destabilizing Zimbabwe. This is also noted by the then late ZANU-PF national chairman John Nkomo who argued that Western countries were using NGOs to foment political instability and to pursue a regime change agenda in Zimbabwe. He is also quoted saying that NGOs received money from Britain and the United States of America to create disturbances in the country. He was quoted saying: “They are creating an unAfrican culture, giving money to people to remove their leaders. They are fronts for regime change who have no real purpose or reason to be in the country,” (The Herald: 2007: 2). In a volatile environment of Zimbabwe, Nkomo’s words clearly indicate that foreign donors are seen as representing former colonial powers. The Zimbabwean government claimed that NGOs were hypocritical and were in fact Western instrument of neo-colonialism. As result of this hostility of government officials, Chakawarika (2011) states that local NGOs involved in democracy,

human rights and media advocacy often fear being denied accreditation because of their objectives. Contemporary skepticism of human rights in postcolonial Africa has been around the issue of cultural imperialism, use, and (mis)use of human rights for hegemonic goals and use of human rights institutions for the service of Western global political agendas. It is from this that Tharoor (1999/ 2000: 3) argues that, “the concept of human rights is really a cover for Western interventionism in the affairs of the developing world and that human rights are instruments of Western political neo-colonialism”. Such arguments have been advanced within the contemporary human rights discourse. The African continent has constantly voiced its discontent regarding the use of human rights institutions, doctrines, and treaties to target the continent (Nascimento and Simão, 2014: 1). While it is true that many third world-based NGOs depend on foreign funding for their operations, it does not always follow that they want to change governments as alleged by Nkomo.

7.5. Conjoining the illegal and the legal spaces: Prison identities

Discursively, Mukoko further uses her experience to explain how the government abuses state institutions. Her narrative illustrates that the illegal and legal means of managing perceived state enemies interpenetrate each other in the politically unstable Zimbabwean context. This is seen when she states that, after 21 days of being held in incommunicado, she is suddenly brought into the legal space, firstly at Matapi police station (53) and then moved to Chikurubi Maximum Prison about which she writes: “The institution reduced us to a number. I was ‘723 of 2008’ meaning female prisoner number 723 of 2008 and my identity was lost in so many ways within the high walls of the prison” (74). During this period, fortunately her whereabouts were known, meaning that she could fight her case through the legal means no matter how flawed the Zimbabwean justice system is. Notably, Mukoko again foregrounds her femininity and highlights the high number of females imprisoned in 2008 most likely on trumped up political charges as it was in her case. Flores (2012) argues that an imprisoned person faces different challenges of identity management and loss of freedom, first, his or her identity usually changes to a number as Mukoko notes above. Also, Quinlan (2006) observes that identities are constructed by means of a conjoining of the personal and the historical, the social and the spatial. The individual within this triple dialectic constructs her subjectivity as it is not constructed in isolation but in relation to the historical experience, and in relation to the social and spatial milieu, which individuals inhabit. Foucault (1974b:158) also argues that a criminal identity is very powerful. The individual who has been identified by the criminal justice system as criminal may be punished by the state with a prison sentence. The model of crime and

punishment that embraces imprisonment as its ultimate sanction consistently and insistently reduces deviance to the level of the individual where the individual, generally a member of the “fringe of the lower class which is constantly in contact with the police and law” is deviant, and responsible for that deviance. Elsewhere, Foucault (1977: 252) also connects the confessional space offered by the autobiographical with the forced disciplinary self-interiority fostered by imprisonment.

7.6. Zimbabwean prison conditions as a violation of human rights

Mukoko further creates a discursive formation of the Zimbabwean prison conditions. After her illegal detention, Mukoko was then moved to the legal space. In narrating her ordeal, Mukoko reveals how Zimbabwean police cells and prisons are unfit for human habitation. To show how unfit these cells are, Mukoko was moved from one police station to another in search for a better place (51-53), after checking three stations, she finally got a better place on the fourth station, Matapi police station, as others were deemed unfit and their conditions of the cells were described as unsanitary. According to the Research and Advocacy Unit [RAU] (2008), report the court declared Matapi as one of the police stations in Harare as constituting cruel and inhumane treatment in violation of the Zimbabwe’s Constitution. Such conditions are meant to torture detainees.

In prison, Mukoko acquires new identities which add up to her previous biological and social identities. She recalls that some wardens called them all sorts of names such as ‘magreen’ (those in green dresses). She laments that they “ceased to be human” (74). In line with Goffman’s (1963:15) insights, this suggests that imprisoned individuals have spoiled identity or stigmatized self that they must deal with. Goffman points out that individuals with stigmas are thought of as not quite human and that people assume that any defensive response on their behalf to their stigma is a reflection of the condition, “a direct expression of defect”. Goffman concludes that, for society, both the stigma and the defensiveness occasioned in the stigmatized by the stigma, are expressions of “just retribution”. However, Mukoko indicates that for falsely accused politically prisoners like her, their stigma is neither a direct expression of any defect nor is it just retribution but a mere miscarriage of justice.

Taking her to prison was a deliberate way to dehumanize her seeing the extent to which the abuse that the government initiated on her according to her narrative. Eventually she was taken

to court and was to remain in custody at Chikurubi maximum²⁰ (62) prison where she was kept in the men's section alone, housed under the same roof with the worst criminals (75). At Chikurubi, prisoners were made to use a 20-litre plastic container with the top cut off as a makeshift toilet at night. She writes: "It was inhumane to make us use it while others watched, even if we were all women" (63). She also relates a disgusting episode where one of the inmates Violet, had a running tummy, which she relieved in plastics bags which were placed outside the room through the window for disposal in the morning (63). Prison conditions were reflective of the microcosm of what was happening in the country and in prisons in general.

Mukoko's experience is reflective of the economic modalities that the government uses to punish her. She uses this episode to enunciate how the government has failed its citizens. This is seen through the prison food which she describes as almost inedible since it was always sadza garnished with salt-less and oil-less green vegetables. She did, however, eat fresh hot food brought by her family daily. By stating her experience in prison Mukoko is speaking for others. For example, officers would ask her to collect her share of prison food to give to them so that they take it home to further garnish the saltless and oil less vegetables, since she received fresh food from home (75). This was a clear indication that the situation was desperate. Bernault (2003) argues that the post-colonial African prisons should be understood through the prism of exploitive and oppressive political and economic colonial and imperialist discourse of late 19th century Europe. Similarly, Sarkin (2008) traces the trajectory of the current deplorable human rights abuses in most African prisons back to the way the prison first emerged as a tool of political and social subjugation of Africans when European nations scrambled to establish their political and economic dominance over the continent.

Mukoko also experiences the same negligence, prison commissioners defied court orders that she be taken to Avenues Clinic for medical examination and treatment (80). She states that she was only taken to the clinic after the Chief justice had sent another order that she be taken for examination immediately (83). Ignoring the dire situation, the police still gave the doctor attending to her a hard time as the police did not want to remove her handcuffs and unchain her legs (82). Examinations confirmed that her medical condition deteriorated and she needed to be admitted. Still she was denied admission and was referred to a prison doctor who came

²⁰ Basildon (2011) notes that Zimbabwean prisons are notorious for alleged mistreatment and human rights abuses. The prison is known for its overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions. Cells typically measured 9 metres (30 ft) by 4 metres (13 ft), and there is as many as 25 prisoners housed in each cell.

the following day to attend to her. Due to that ill-treatment, she experienced severe weight loss. Before her detention she weighed 80 kg and after her detention she weighed a mere 52 kg having lost 28 kg (65). This is attributed to factors such as the anguish, misery, pain and her deteriorating mental and physical health.

Mukoko's narrative does not make Zimbabwe appear better, not that it should appear better but in terms of benefiting the very oppressed ordinary citizens. The discourse does not enable those things. Her narrative suggests that Zimbabwe needs "to be pitied" (Wainaina 2005: 92) by the Western European audience. This is seen through her description of the prison situation at Chikurubi, she notes that prison officers often diverted lorries from transporting inmates to collecting maize meal for prison officers' food handouts (76). The desperate situation is also seen when she describes how it was normal to pass by dozens of dead bodies every day in the morning at the reception who died due to the outbreak of cholera since there were water shortages, scores of inmates developed pellagra and a significant number died either of starvation or cholera. She notes that the sadza which is ordinarily white was brown indicating that it was rotten, full of weevils and unfit for human consumption was served (77).

While these events indeed took place during the height of Zimbabwe's politically induced economic crisis, the way Mukoko writes about them makes her narrative to belong to what one writer has called poverty porn (Nathanson, 2013) in relation to the way Africa is portrayed in Western media. Mukoko narrates a spatial category of the prison as a zone where the female subject is dehumanised in the form of poor living conditions, being forced to eat bad food, constant beatings and sometimes instances of unjust treatment by warders (63-78), who within the prison context symbolise the law. McAdams (2008) argues that stories are told in social relationships. As such narrative expression of the self should be understood in the context of its audience. Personal narratives, therefore, solicit for a reaction and are "designed to make a point or produce a desired effect" (McAdams 2008: 245).

While poor conditions in police cells affect both men and women, women suffer more injustices because of their biological make up which inevitably means that they have special needs. Mukoko's account also shows that failure to provide the means to manage menstruation in detention is a violation of their human rights. For example, during the night of her second day in detention Mukoko began her monthly menstrual cycle and had to use toilet paper before she was given a new underwear and some sanitary towels (40). Menstruation in almost all

societies is considered a private and personal woman's issue (RAU, 2008). This is very humiliating for her because she recalls a time when she was growing up her mother telling her that periods are a private affair and are not to be announced to strangers (40). Therefore, she experiences this event as a violent invasion of privacy. The following day the boss wanted to know if she got her parcel (42), her right to privacy was violated as everyone who held her captive knew that she was on her periods something women hardly share with people. She notes that for her, that it was so torturous because the man who brought her the pads went to his home knowing that she had begun her periods. She therefore, experiences it as some form of violence. Sanitary requirements for women are not properly catered for because women who have the misfortune to start their menstrual flow in custody are not given any sanitary wear to help them deal with their needs. RAU report further states that, the Zimbabwe Republic Police has made it a public matter for women in custody because of the mismanagement of the issue.

Mukoko views herself as representative of the Zimbabwean women in her position because she is concerned about the female experience at the hands of the oppressor. An illustrative instance is when she states: "During my travels I realized that I represented many people who face injustice, but most of all I saw myself representing the multitude of committed Zimbabweans who were demanding that human rights be respected" (103). For example, she writes about Rosemary who claimed to have been set up for an armed robbery (75) and Nyasha who was in for stock theft which was later found but was not released (78). Her narrative reveals a myriad of life journeys depicted in the construction of her life story. There are life journeys of becoming, a career journey in the making of a professional human rights activist, major and minor transformative journeys. There are also described major crossroads in the journey of becoming. All these journeys are significant in the identity formation through cultural dialogue.

7.7. Humanitarian discourse as a hegemonic tool

Mukoko's story is also animated by the discursive practices of the human rights discourse that are championed by the Western liberal democracies which exercise hegemony throughout the world. This is seen through the cultural capital she gains as a result of her illegal detention and unjust imprisonment, despite the Zimbabwean government's attempt to stigmatize her through an unjust criminal record. A similar idea is noted by Ndlovu (2014) in his analysis of Breytenbach and Mashinini when he observes that these individuals gain cultural capital precisely because the political prisoner experiences criminality in a different way. Her political prisoner status is what enables the narration of her experiences. In the case of South African

political prisoners, Ndlovu (2014:1242) observes that it is ironical that the process that brutalized them is the same process that subsequently give them cultural capital. Similarly, in the case of Mukoko, after her release she wins several awards from different Western human rights institutions. For example, she received the International Women of Courage Award from the US Department of State in Washington D.C which was presented by the then American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama (103). This award recognized Mukoko's exceptional courage and leadership in advancing the rights of women. As evidence of this award, Mukoko provides a picture of herself flanked by these powerful American women. It is her brutalization by a repressive post-colonial African regime which ironically makes her attain such global prominence.

Mukoko adds a photograph with Clinton and Obama (52-53) is an undeniable testimony of not only what she suffered at the hands of the Zimbabwean government but it is also evidence of the high social status that such suffering has enabled her to achieve. Marsh (2003) states that, as an "indexical sign," photography is seen as a trace or an imprint of reality. Omuteche (2016:49) states that descriptions and images of travel are important strategies in an autobiography. They highlight the passage of time and changes that mark the development of the individual.

Furthermore, in 2009, the city of Weimer in Germany handed Mukoko a Human Rights Prize. Again, she provides an image of herself along with her son and her Serbian co-winner posing for a photograph after receiving Weimer Human Rights prize (103). She is also seen outside the Catholic cathedral with a priest who prayed with her through her journey of recovery. In 2011, the French Embassy in Harare announced that she had been awarded the Legion d'Honneur, which dates back to Napoleon's time. Furthermore, two academic institutions accepted her as a visiting fellow for being a human rights defender, Oak Institute and Colby College in USA and the University of York Centre for Applied Human Rights (103-104). As the titles of these awards suggest, Mukoko was officially acknowledged not so much as a local survivor of the abduction and torture but a global defender of universal human rights and supranational protector of universal human rights. Had she not suffered all this brutalization she would not have gotten to where she is in terms of her international stature. Writing about the experiences of Hugh Lewin, a former prisoner of the South African apartheid regime, Ndlovu (2014:1242) says that Lewin ironically notes that political prisoners became Prison Graduates, where the apartheid prison became like a university for anti-apartheid activists.

Similarly, Mukoko's traumatic abduction and prison experiences give her international recognition in the Western world.

On the one hand, these US-based awards show how a global human rights discourse network has the power to confer global identity and influence on its subjects. On the other hand, these awards are likely to be used by Mukoko's detractors as a confirmation that the NGO she led was indeed part and parcel of Western nations interference mechanism in the internal politics of African nations. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the very idea of writing the book about her painful experiences at the hands of the Zimbabwean government originated in New York where she began to write with encouragement from Juliana Mensahs²¹. Therefore, without minimizing what Mukoko experienced, her narrative may be seen by others as falling within the West's othering discourse when it comes to its relationship with third world countries.

Mukoko's winning Western awards for her courageous stand against a repressive African government is similar to the Western literary awards won by African authors discussed by Bourdieu (1993) and English (2005). These scholars note that the process of submission for awards, selection, shortlisting and eventual process of awarding literature is determined mainly by power relations between the systems of cultural production and consumption. An analysis of the award bodies reveals that the major literary prizes for African literature are administered in Europe, and whether consciously or unconsciously, they are still implicated in the history of colonial domination, a theme which continues to echo in the prize-winning works as well as in the structure of the award institutions. Ironically, whatever success Mukoko's autobiography may enjoy in the West is likely due to what (Desai, 2005:523 and Ndlovu, 2016:32) calls African writers' accommodation of the West in a negative sense by being co-opted into the West's hegemonic and negative perceptions and representations of Africa. In this case, Mukoko is awarded prizes for championing human rights in Zimbabwe, enhancing a big brother syndrome that is evident in Western nations relations with Africa which is perceived as lagging behind when it comes to human rights issues. In a strange way, hegemony is being installed when Mukoko thinks she is dismantling it. Through awarding prizes to Mukoko, Western institutions do not see themselves as worsening the situation in Zimbabwe rather they see themselves as participating in the liberating of the oppressed. Yet, the reverse is what

²¹ Mensahs was a Ugandan artist resident at University of York Centre for Applied Human Rights (104)

actually takes place. When African regimes are portrayed as abusing human rights, the result is that the suffering of the poor is worsened by the actions of western countries. The appropriation of Mukoko's story/status seems to be for selfish ends in that they are the very people who benefit from the chaos that takes place in Africa. Because of the chaotic nature of African states, it enables capitalism as the west comes in to champion human rights and impose sanctions²².

Although, Mukoko did not request for the awards she received, the international community saw her story as worth an award. Showering her with awards is not an innocent move. It shows how the western institutions have appropriated her status/story to castigate the government of the day. They are effectively stating that she has won against this repressive government that abuses its citizens and stood against it. This is seen through her case of triumph over impunity. ZPP (2018) issued a statement stating that the High Court ordered the defendants to pay \$100 000 to Mukoko in respect of her claims while a further \$50 000 to be paid as a contribution towards her legal costs. Mukoko's compensation, shows that her voice was heard and that she is an empowered subaltern. This also reveals that irrespective of being doubly oppressed by patriarchy and the government one can win against the state. Such a situation benefits them more than the Zimbabweans because they become champions of human rights. Zimbabwe continues to sink deeper into poverty and that discourse does not help ordinary Zimbabweans because sanctions imposed by the west on Zimbabwe do not necessarily make the ruling elite who are oppressive suffer. Without minimizing Mukoko's pain and narrative, her story reveals that discourses such as these are the ones that are used by the West to impose further sanctions on Zimbabwe which further lead to the erosion of liberties and freedoms of others. Sanctions have never produced benefits for the oppressed in all the 20 years that they have been in place (Chingono, 2010).

²² Chingono (2010) states that between 2000 and 2003 Zimbabwe received a set of sanctions mainly from the United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the European Union. These issues include widespread reports of political and election violence, alleged human rights abuses, violation of property ownership rights and disrespect for rule of law. Regarding the Zimbabwean situation, consensus prevails among the Western states that the fundamental objective of the Zimbabwe sanctions is to restore democracy and normalcy as according to the Western modern standards of democracy. On the contrary, the Zimbabwean government perceives the use of economic sanctions as an illegal tool meant to destabilize the internal political affairs of the country (particularly the land reform exercise) and a serious contravention of the principle of non-interference in political internal matters as they have caused a problems on the Zimbabwe's sovereignty.

Although the Zimbabwean government should be condemned in the strongest terms possible for its brutalization of those who use legal methods to oppose it, it is also noteworthy that international organizations use incidents such as what happened Mukoko to highlight Africa's terrible human rights records without acknowledging the double standards of Western nations when dealing with developing countries. The exposure of human rights abuses in Africa ironically benefits the West since it serves to emphasise how different and better they are compared to the dark Africa. Also, liberal voices in the West use human rights discourse to re-imagine and understand the West reflexively, reaffirming its moral superiority (Chandler 2002, Grovogui 2004 & Nair 2004). This, then, is often used to justify the bullying tactics that Western nations often use to extend aid and enter into trade deals with Africa. Bourdieu's (1993) argument that systems of domination are present in almost all areas of cultural practice is true in that contemporary skewed relations between Western institutions that give awards and Africans who are seen to have made significant achievement in the advancement of global human rights.

7.8. Conclusion

The chapter has argued that the totalizing discourse of ZANU-PF has resulted in a lot of contesting voices which the ruling party has tried to silence through violating their human rights. Mukoko is one such woman whose rights were violated after she was abducted by state agents. In unpacking her experience, Foucault's notions of discursive practices were used, as they give ways of thinking about these issues. Discursively Mukoko creates discourse formations which relate to her reality to explain the events that took place. She uses the social, economic and political discursive formations to show how the government abuses state apparatus to invade one's private space, abuse state apparatus and economically disadvantage offenders who do not conform to the patriotic discourse.

Mukoko's narrative exposes human rights violations and violators. Through her story she hopes to see these issues corrected. The discourse of human rights remains Eurocentric and are therefore an expression of the West, as it embodies the dominant West's views and interests. It is from this that postcolonial perspectives on human rights challenges the claim to universality, exposing the hidden biases and presumptions of humanitarian discourse. The following chapter summarise and concludes the study. It presents the findings of the preceding chapters and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This study's overarching goal was to examine how South African and Zimbabwean female writers perceive and construct the self and the nation. The study focused on exploring auto/biographies of the selected prominent women, exploring their experiences in a male dominated world and how they construct and negotiate their identities in a fraught postcolonial space. The selected auto/biographies for this study have not been subjected to solemn academic and literary scrutiny. Narratives are a medium that captures the uniqueness of an individual, in this instance female's experience. Even in the context of the selected countries literary canon, the complexity of women's experiences is evident through the different re-presentations made in narratives written by different women writers. Selected narratives attest to the complexity of female experience and the need to resist generalisations in literary representations thus the need to self-define themselves.

For decades, women have always been relegated to the margins of the nations. Although female marginality exists throughout the world, the representations made in these texts show that the specificities of history and culture account largely for the differences. Avowals from womanist and feminist discourses insist that women are at the margins and periphery of existence in most communities, a standpoint that seems to have been universalised (Magosvongwe and Nyamende, 2016). Because of that women's issues have become fecund ground for scholarly reflections. My analysis of the selected auto/biographies has demonstrated the dynamics of how violence and resistance are shaped by specific cultural contexts and ideological forces. The narratives I have analysed deal with dissident femininities that seek self-definition beyond the limitations of an unreformed patriarchy. The complexity of their experiences of gender violence has been exposed and it has been shown that women characters are agents more than they are victims.

Chapter one, of this thesis sets the tone and main arguments defining my area of investigation. The chapter also highlights the methodology, literature review and theoretical frameworks utilised and guided my reading of the selected auto/biographies. The chapter revealed that auto/biography provides various meanings to interpret and understand identities of both the self and nation. Life narrative genre is fundamental in the literary body to interpret social, cultural and political constructions of South African identities. The study made use of Smith and Watson's (2001) view that autobiography refers to self-life writing which is porous in nature in that the term accommodates various narratives thus the study was able to factor in

biographies and memoirs. Autobiography, biography and memoir opened a space for the investigations of truth, memory, subjectivity and history (Bruner, 2001; Gusdorf, 2001; Weintraub, 1978; Olney, 1972). It was concluded that autobiography and biography, as modes of writing lives, place a premium on narrative invention, retrospection and projection in constructing such lives in the acts of such retrospection and projection.

The postcolonial theory was employed for its deconstructive nature on totalising discourses and its ability to afford women to breach stifling circumscriptions. The study also revealed that women as writers have to negotiate the multiple binds of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. For this study, an African womanist reading was conducted, which provides perspective on experiences of African women from their point of view. Auto/biographies from African women reflect their agency in presenting their experience and shaping of African literature. Womanism, auto/biography, intersectional and postcolonial theories have helped to analyse how gender is reconstituted by means of complex dynamics which women have to navigate, as patriarchy constantly mutates in response to political and economic changes. Various theories were used to give an inclusive interpretation of meaning of women's experiences and constructions of identities of the selected auto/biographies. The qualitative method of interpreting the life narratives was preferred for its capacity to accommodate plural and individualized life circumstances, (Flick, 2002) qualities that are intrinsic in auto/biographical narratives.

The second chapter of this study presents unique ways of seeing and theorizing pre-and post 2000 Zimbabwe through Makoni's life narrative. An argument was advanced that the self emerges from its gendered private space into the public domain, inadvertently transforms autobiography to protest writing (Butler, 2015), as well as a political project (Moore-Gilbert, 2009 and Huddart, 2014). Makoni does this through online and offline activism, social media, and print activism, negotiating political spaces of lawlessness at a time when the violence against women is rife. Makoni life story reveals that activism affords numerous positions for the production of agency, discontinuous and unstable selves and narratives whose pretence to coherence and determinacy will soon be dismantled if and when subjected to an anti-foundationalist reading (Derrida, 2012). Analysis of Makoni's activism, concluded that her activism is a counter-discourse that allows a counter-public discourse whose aim is to create spaces of emancipation for the human subject. The chapter revealed that the feminist activist has the power to disrupt hegemonic heteronormativity and reinvent women's identities and writing as primary rather than marginal.

The autobiography has exposed the flux of identity perspectives both at the level of the individual and society/nation in the autobiography where the nation can be conceived as ailing. Makoni used violence as metaphor to reveal the sickness of the nation. The effect is that it allows her to offer a critique of state and how it has failed to fulfil various aspirations in whose name the leaders rule. The nation is also criticized through exposure of its pretentious identity, which it has to surpass in order to acknowledge the social cost to humanity of downplaying the impact of violence against women.

However, by making herself the narrator and the narrated, the subject and object of her life narrative, Makoni falls into the same trap as any other self-writer: that of narratorial subjectivities. The violator is male. The woman is the victim and survivor. What one finds interesting though is the way Makoni deploys the book as a weapon; from the title, which looks and reads more like a protest poster to the emotive approach of her narrative.

In chapter three, Trent's life narrative discussing the idea that the identities she negotiates contribute to how she sees herself and build her to become who she is, were examined. The identities she assumes include being a Korekore, a woman, a wife, a mother, a sister, an American and a student. Using the intersectionality theory, it was also argued that the identities she hold in the social stratification do not operate independently but interact and interlock creating systems of oppression or privilege. The theory is a concept animated by the imperative of social change. Trent's narrative demonstrates this through interrogating the inter-locking ways in which social structures produce and entrench power and marginalization, and by drawing attention to the ways that existing paradigms that produce knowledge and politics often function to normalize these dynamics. Trent's life narrative is an exemplary testimony of the impact of the patriarchal system on women. Her life story speaks out and calls for social action to eradicate women abuse. She makes use of her own oppression and liberation from patriarchal repression as a springboard from which to address the common concerns affecting the lives of many women. Trent's resistance to patriarchal control offers new insights in the varied possibilities for change. Trent's narrative shows that she does not bask in marginality rather Trent appropriate gender roles as mother and woman in her campaign for the emancipation of voice and space. Trent's narrative also shows that patriarchy is not doom and gloom, through men who are compassionate and respectful towards women.

The focus of chapter four has been on deconstructing the "born free" illusion in post-apartheid South Africa through Malaika wa Azania's life's experience. She opposes the utopian discourse

of being born free to the dystopian continuities that she locates in both pre-and post-apartheid South Africa. In her memoir, she reiterates that the utopian scenario as suggested by ANC and the release of Mandela is a fallacy as revealed by Wa Azania's narrative. This is exemplified through the lack of economic freedom which remains a utopian feeling as she realizes that there is no difference between the way her grandmother and mother lived to the way that she lived, in fact the situation became worse. This is because the struggles that her mother faced before the end of the apartheid regime's administration are parallel to her own struggles in the post-apartheid. Her family still lacks economic freedom justified by their constant movement from one shack to another (86). Wa Azania's disappointment with the rainbow nation takes specific aim at education. Her memoir depicts a nation with an unequal education system. Her story is not a reflection of freedom, rather an epitome of the on-going struggle for economic, political and mental slavery. Although the nation attained its democracy through the release of Mandela is not an important site of memory for the black majority as it did not yield much for them. The chapter also revealed that identities can be accepted or rejected as seen through Wa Azania who rejects the born free identity thus the born free concept is under deconstruction and construction.

Chapter five of the study is concerned with biographical productions confronted by the biographer in an attempt to draw representativity. This chapter argued that the author's project to retrieve the biographee's name by the same ploy, her voice, is limited/ becomes impossible by the process of biographical writing. This is because biographical writing is a production/construction process. Backscheider (2014) makes some illuminating interventions in her book *Reflection on Biography*, about questions on the biographer's objectivity and neutrality, by pointing out that the study of biography must pay attention to the choices a biographer makes in the context of voice and interpretation. The chapter examined the biographer and biographee representativity and concluded that it is not possible to deploy a singular self to tell a story rather to include the lived experience of others differently positioned provides a holistic of the predicaments and prevailing situation of the society. It was discovered that the biographer tried to strike a balance in that she did not only emphasise her agenda to give Fezekile a voice, to expose the ANC and judiciary but showed that women are complicit in their oppression.

It thus could be argued that despite the violation Fezekile suffered, she courageously raises to fight the system and even in death her voice still speaks through the grave. This is reflective of the agency she has to tell her own story in her own way. This chapter has posited that

biographies are written from the biographer's point of view, in this instance Tlhabi makes use of this opportunity to highlight how women are abused by the justice system and the society at large. She shows how this minimizes women's agency as they forever fall prey of an omniscient patriarchal culture. However, the Tlhabi's work gives a glimmer of hope for women in that Fezekile was given a platform to state her side of the story. Zuma was taken to court on charges of rape revealing that at least the justice system works although he was later acquitted in court owing to the subjectivity of the judges ruling. It was a great achievement that she brought the Vice president to court. This gives a ray of hope to those in similar positions that some will listen and that the justice system truly works.

Tlhabi's finds so many wrongs in the post Apartheid South African society. However, the fact that Zuma was taken to court on charges of rape reveals that the system works. It shows that at least someone listened and a docket was opened. At least Fezekile's efforts did not go unabated, her agency materialised into the arrest of a Vice President although he was acquitted in court owing to the subjectivity of the judges ruling. Issues of evidence in court are not objective rather they are subjective to the judge. It is a big achievement that she brought a whole Vice President to a court of law for rape charges. Fezekile challenged the patriarchal system of justice which is overwhelmed by police and majority of lawyers in court were men. Despite that, she still brought Zuma to the dock. She could have been frustrated and not listened to but she was given a platform to be listened to in court. This gives a glimmer of hope to the entire nation and those violated to report whenever they are violated. With hindsight, the former president Zuma was later imprisoned in July 2021, for 15 months on contempt charges, after he defied an order to appear before a corruption inquiry examining the breathtaking financial scandals that tainted his tenure as the country's leader from 2009 to 2018.

Chapter six examines a political biography which evokes the idea that the personal is political. The chapter raises similar ideas as raised in chapter five on the crises of representation. Gqubule's depiction of Madonsela is written in such a way that marshals events that would tell what she wants to bring about. As a journalist, Gqubule writes as if she commenting on social issues which are overtly political, yet in essence she is revealing the state of the nation, politics of governance which expose the former president of his abuse of power.

Gqubule depicts Madonsela as a political protagonist in activism as evinced by the quest of the political self to effect change, in this case, change in the social order: a quest that invites the rule of law and the recognition of women/human rights and democracy. However, the depiction

of her life story shows a high level of selection, of the events that led to Madonsela obtaining the office of the public protector. This is in reference to Madonsela's everyday oppressive experiences from childhood, which is shown through her defiance of the patriarchal society. The chapter reveals that political refers to any power relationships from the domestic level to those of government and elected officials.

The use of the Makhadzi metaphor reveals the political intention of the biography since a Makhadzi holds a political office in the VhaVenda culture. I have also argued that the office of the public protector is an ambivalent institution in that it forces the public protector to take sides, especially of the oppressed which works against neutrality.

Chapter seven argued that the totalizing discourse of ZANU-PF has resulted in a lot of contesting voices which the ruling party has tried to silence though violating their human rights. Mukoko is one such woman whose rights were violated after she was abducted by state agents. In unpacking her experience, Foucault's notions of discursive practices were used as they afford ways of thinking about these issues. Discursively, Mukoko creates discourse formations which relate to her reality to explain the events that took place. She uses the social, economic and political discursive formations to show how the government abuses state apparatus to invade one's private space, abuse state apparatus and economically disadvantage offenders who do not conform to the patriotic discourse.

Mukoko's narrative exposes human rights violations and violators. Through her story she hopes to see these issues corrected. Her narrative shows that the discourse of human rights remains Eurocentric and are therefore an expression of the West, as it embodies the dominant West's views and interests. It is from this that postcolonial perspectives on human rights challenges the claim to universality, exposing the hidden biases and presumptions of humanitarian discourse.

Although the selected narratives clearly reflect men as largely the perpetrators of violence against women and the main creators of gender discord in both public and domestic spaces, it is just as clear that there are some men who are sympathetic to the concerns of women. Also the selected narratives portray the importance of sisterly solidarity in women's struggles in both the domestic and the public spheres of women's lives. This is demonstrated in the many relationships in *Khwezi - The Remarkable Story of Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo* by Redi Tlabi, Betty Makoni's *Never Again not to any Woman or girl again*, *The Awakened Woman: Remembering & Reigniting Our Sacred Dreams* by Tererai Trent. Besides sisterly solidarity,

the narratives also show women escaping their victimisation with the help of men. Examples of this new type of man is seen in Redi Tlhabi's biography and Tererai Trent's autobiography. This part of the reason I chose to use the womanist theory emphasises women's relationships with men working together.

Therefore, studying the depiction of the self and other in South African and Zimbabwean literature, is one way of researching the various strategies a nation chooses to shape its socio-political and economic destiny. There is therefore a need to place autobiographies at the centre of South African and Zimbabwe's literature in order to fully appreciate and understand the nation from the point of view of the self. In the face of the realities of postcolonial South Africa and Zimbabwe, where females' experience is distorted and manipulated to promote a particular agenda, women who choose to write their stories will also be telling the stories of the silent majority. The female written autobiographies discussed in my study are typically narratives of reclaiming one's life and voice. This reclamation of the self as the centre of narrative identity has been done through different narrative strategies. A critical African feminist concern that resonates through all six narratives explored in this study is that of the empowerment of women and the part that education plays in their socialisation and conditioning.

This study contributes to the corpus of autobiographical knowledge in various ways: It focuses on recent auto/biographies by Southern African women as these intersect with liberal notions of democracy and the discourse of human rights. It revealed that as writers, women have to negotiate the multiple binds of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. This contribution is a reiteration also that women have to negotiate the above stated binds although stating all in different manner. It also adds that, it is not possible to deploy a singular self to tell a story but one has to bolster it with story of others and the lived experiences of others who are differently positioned to provide a holistic approach to the predicaments that afflict the society. The study further determines that nationalism is a gendered discourse and that violence against women and resistance are shaped by specific cultural contexts and ideological forces. This study thus makes a contribution to the growing field of autobiography in South Africa and Zimbabwe and especially recognizes women's life writing. Also, this research forms part of the critical scholarship that seeks to understand how authors frame various issues affecting women in and how their experiences have contributed to the positive social and political development of Southern African communities.

The selected auto/biographies have not hitherto been subjected to solemn academic and literary scrutiny. The study focused on the African patriarchal society and called for its modernization so that women can take their proper place in it. This adds to the calls made by scholars and critics for opportunities to be given women to prove their merit. There is a loud cry for African nations to put structures in their societies to make the system work.

The study shows that the selected South African and Zimbabwean female authors have the ability to handle multifaceted matters of self and national identities. The interpretations and constructions produced by this genre show that understanding of cultural identity is not complete if excluded from the study. In that case, it can be recommended that autobiography as a genre be included in curriculums for any level of schooling.

Recommendations

- With the varied nature of the genre of auto/biography, there are other areas where female life stories can be sourced and represented such as letters, oral archives and blogs to mention but a few. These are other areas of exploration for further study.
- This thesis ushers opportunities for further research into the comparison of female written auto/biographies by black and white women writing in South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- Further research may also be carried out in terms of embodiment narratives of disability or auto/biographies of addiction or disease of African women.

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