

Stephen F. Austin State University

**SFA ScholarWorks**

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

Fall 12-16-2017

## "COMRADES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT": WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL

Ntfonjeni Dlamini  
ntfonjenid@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/etds>

**Tell us** how this article helped you.

---

### Repository Citation

Dlamini, Ntfonjeni, "'COMRADES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT": WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL" (2017). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 133.  
<https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/etds/133>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu](mailto:cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu).

---

# "COMRADES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT": WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL

## Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

“COMRADES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT”: WOMEN’S STRUGGLE AGAINST  
APARTHEID IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL

By

NTFONJENI S. DLAMINI, Bachelor of Arts

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the degree of

Master of Arts

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2017

“COMRADES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT”: WOMEN’S STRUGGLE AGAINST  
APARTHEID IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL

By

NTFONJENI S. DLAMINI, Bachelor of Arts

APPROVED:

---

Ericka Hoagland, Thesis Director

---

Courtney Adams-Wooten, Committee Member

---

Kevin West, Committee Member

---

Emmerentie Oliphant, Committee Member

---

Richard Berry, D.M.A.  
Dean of the Graduate School

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the portrayal of women's struggle against apartheid in the South African novel. By means of textual analysis, the thesis explores the different ways in which apartheid oppressed women in South Africa and how women responded to the forces of oppression. In fact, at the core of this study is the contention that the anti-apartheid movement was shaped as much by women as it was by men like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Steve Biko and Albert Luthuli, who often served as the faces of the anti-apartheid movement. Thus, this thesis situates itself within the scholarship that appreciates and recognizes the efforts and sacrifices that were made by women towards the cause for liberation in South Africa. The study explores the portrayal of women's activism in the selected fictional works of Laretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*, Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, and Kagiso Molope's *Dancing in the Dust*. By examining these three South African novelists' portrayal of women as comrades in their own right, and not as mere appendages to men, this study further promotes the reformulation of black women's roles in African fictional narratives.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all those with whom I have had the pleasure to work with when I was writing this thesis. Each of the members of my thesis committee provided me with extensive personal and professional guidance. I especially like to thank Dr. Ericka Hoagland, the chair of my committee. As my advisor, she taught me more than I could ever give her credit for here. Thank you Dr. H!

In the same vein, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor, Dr. L.Z. Dlamini, of the University of Swaziland for inspiring and encouraging me to pursue my Master's degree. I am forever grateful, Nkhosi. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you also for being immensely involved and helpful during the writing of this thesis. To Karen Perkins, thank you so much for helping me with proofreading and editing this work.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my loving and supporting wife, Londiwe, and our wonderful daughter, Siyavuya, for allowing me to be away from home for the past two years while pursuing my studies. Thank you my Qhawekazi for providing me with ceaseless inspiration.

Finally, I would like to thank the following people for their support, encouragement, generosity and affection:

Dr. Marc Guidry, Pastor Kyle Easley, Drew and Cynthia Knowles, Tony and Kim Weir, Paul and Angela Moore, Mark and Tiki Perkins, Leasa Johnson, Kim Cruz, Aaron

Milstead, Leonard Mhlanga, Thabo Mzileni, Reggie and Nonkululeko Magagula, Apostle  
Justice Dlamini, Beauty Mnisi, Telamisile Mkhathshwa, and Olaniyi Ajala.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER 2: Rural Women’s Resistance to Apartheid and Patriarchal Subjugation in Lauretta Ngcobo’s <i>And They Didn’t Die</i> .....	20
CHAPTER 3: Radicalization of the Struggle against Apartheid in the Townships in Kagiso Molope’s <i>Dancing in the Dust</i> .....	42
CHAPTER 4: Waiting Women in Njabulo Ndebele’s <i>The Cry of Winnie Mandela</i> .....	64
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion.....	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	92
VITA .....	96

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

May 1948 is a significant date in the history of South Africa. The National Party under the leadership of Dr. Daniel. F. Malan won the country's all-white elections and immediately established apartheid as the official policy of the country and held political power for the next forty-six years. The term "apartheid" is derived from Dutch to mean apartness or separation. It was a segregationist system that the National Party established in order to maintain its policy of white supremacy as the Prime Minister who had gained office in 1958, Hendrik Verwoerd, declared unequivocally, "our motto is to maintain white supremacy for all to come over our own people and our own country, by force if necessary" (Lapping 5). The National Party also ensured that there were no forms of relations between white and black people in South Africa. However, it is important to note that long before 1948 racial segregation had already been practiced in South Africa. Racial segregation in South Africa dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the British and Dutch, later known as Afrikaners, arrived in the country. The arrival of the British and the Dutch to South Africa was part of the larger invasion of several European countries, including Germany, Italy, France, and Belgium, in Africa and spanned almost three hundred years, peaking in the nineteenth century with the "Scramble for Africa." However, while the origins of oppression and racial segregation in South Africa are rooted in the practices of colonialism which ravaged much of the African continent, and included expropriation of land which belonged to Africans, introduction of forced laboror

slavery, and the elimination of indigenous culture, the institution of apartheid notably distinguished South Africa from the rest of the continent.

In basic principle, apartheid did not differ that much from the policy of segregation of the South African governments existing before the National Party came to power in 1948. For instance, “the controversial 1913 Land Act, passed three years after South Africa gained its independence, marked the beginning of territorial segregation by forcing black South Africans to live in the reserves” (Dubow 3). *South African History Online* explains that the main difference was that apartheid made segregation official and part of the law. Apartheid was also perceived as much worse than segregation because it was introduced in a period when other countries were moving towards abolishing racist policies. In essence, when the National Party won the elections in 1948, it did not introduce a completely new system of governance but just enforced and made more rigid existing policies of racial segregation. The first thing that the National Party did to institutionalize racial segregation was placing individuals in one of four groups: “White,” “Indian,” “Coloured,” “Black.” This was done so that non-white South Africans would be forced to live in separate areas from whites and use separate facilities, as well as to limit contact between these two groups. Once these categories were established, the National Party then started enacting laws that enforced its segregationist policy.

Ronald Hardwood states that some of the most notable laws that the National Party introduced to ensure its segregationist policy included the Immorality Act of 1950, the Black Education Act of 1953, and the Group Areas Act of 1950 (38). These laws set a particularly harsh and cruel tone in the early years of apartheid. For example, the

Immorality Act of 1950 prohibited mixed marriages and sexual relations across races. Hardwood states that this law caused immense trouble for interracial couples because it forced them to divorce. They also had to abandon their “mixed” children. This resulted in many people committing suicide.

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 prohibited whites from attending the same schools with non-white pupils. This act further ensured that African education was under the control of the government and extended apartheid laws to black schools. Before its introduction, many African schools were run by missionaries who were financially assisted by the state. However, the Bantu Education Act ended the automatic financial assistance to the missionaries. Schools were then forced to accept racially discriminatory curriculum in order to continue receiving funding from the state. However, the missionaries remained adamant that they would not allow themselves to be bullied by the government. Consequently, many mission schools opted to close down rather than promote apartheid. This left many African pupils without schools to attend. The highly oppressive nature of the Bantu Education Act was thus seen in its denial of access to equal educational opportunities and resources that were enjoyed by white South Africans. Hardwood explains that this act further “denigrated black people’s history, culture, and identity...instead, it promoted myths and racial stereotypes in its curricula and text books” (39).

In sum, the Bantu Education Act minimized opportunities for Africans to study for professional careers. It aimed at giving the black South Africans an inferior education, only good to make them serve the white race. The least that the Africans could learn

under such an educational system was how to interact with their masters and be useful to them in their mission to boost the country's economy for the benefit of the white population. Those blacks who were able to attain tertiary training could only become teachers in black schools. Due to the fact that a large percentage of black people did not get the opportunity to acquire tertiary training, many of them could only be employed as domestic workers for white people or work in factories, mines, or other menial labor. To make matters worse, their movement into the cities was highly restricted. Those blacks who wanted to go into the cities had to carry with them a pass. The pass law was tied to the Native Urban Act number 21 of 1923. This act regulated the presence of Africans in the urban areas. Brian Lapping states that the pass law required all Africans above the age of sixteen to carry a "reference book" containing personal information and employment history. He emphasizes that "being caught in the city without a pass was a punishable offence" (5). This act also controlled the movement of black people within the city as well as their conduct there. They were allocated a certain amount of time to go into the city and expected to leave without fail before sunset.

The Native Urban Act of 1923 worked in tandem with the Group Areas Act of 1950. Ronald Hardwood points out that the Group Areas Act of 1950 was the most infamous piece of legislation enacted by the apartheid government. This act gave the government power to decree where people should live. It was introduced in order to ensure that white people did not live in the same areas with non-whites. As a result, whites lived mostly in the suburbs near the cities and towns while blacks lived in

townships or locations situated well away from the town, often surrounded by barbed wire and lacking the most basic amenities.

In response to the segregation and oppression that non-whites suffered as a result of apartheid, many people started to protest against this unjust system. A larger portion of the people who participated in the protests were black South Africans. However, it is important to note that some whites were also against apartheid's policy of segregation. Hardwood reveals that "a small minority of whites sacrificed what could have been comfortable, prosperous lives to enlist in the cause of black liberation" (39). In fact, an entire political party, the Progressive Party created in 1959, represented one such group of white South Africans deeply opposed to apartheid. For thirteen years, one of its members Helen Suzman served as the only representative of the party, enduring harassment by her Parliamentary colleagues and even having her phone tapped by the police. As Hardwood notes, Suzman "sought to oppose the government by whatever legal means she had at her disposal" (39).

Although Suzman was an anti-apartheid anomaly in Parliament well into the 1970's, many South Africans were openly opposed to apartheid. Protests against this unjust system came in a number of ways, which included demonstrations and persuasion campaigns. These campaigns were initially non-violent. However, upon realizing that peaceful negotiations alone were unfruitful, the demonstrators then resorted to armed resistance. This led to the formation of the *Umkhonto weSizwe*, meaning "Spear of the Nation" and launched in 1961 as an official wing of the African National Congress. The international community also supported the anti-apartheid movement and this resulted in

a number of sanctions being imposed on South Africa. These sanctions were mostly economic. For instance, Japan sanctioned the import of the Kruger rand and certain iron steel products. The economic sanctions also covered import of products from partially state-controlled enterprises, uranium, coal, textiles, agricultural products, and food as well as export of petroleum products.

Demonstrations against the government often triggered brutal retaliation from the apartheid police. Even when protestors engaged in peaceful marches, the police often treated them harshly. Two of the most shocking examples of police brutality against anti-apartheid protestors were the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the 1976 Soweto Uprising. According to *South African History Online*, the Sharpeville Massacre was a turning point in South African history. On March 21, 1960, without warning, the apartheid police at Sharpeville shot into a crowd of five thousand unarmed anti-pass protestors, killing sixty nine people and injuring two hundred. Sixteen years later, at Soweto, a black township in Johannesburg, black students protesting against the implementation of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools staged a mass demonstration. As the students peacefully marched, they were confronted by a group of fifty police officers who blocked them from going into the Orlando Stadium where speeches were going to be held. However, the students continued to march towards the stadium, ignoring the attempts by the police to block them. Seeing that the students were not heeding to their orders, the police suddenly used tear gas to disperse the students who retaliated by pelting them with stones. As a result, the police shot and killed one hundred and seventy six students. This

incident sparked a massive uprising that soon spread throughout urban and rural areas in South Africa.

Wilmot James states that the hostility of the police towards the protestors did not stop the public demonstrations and campaigns against apartheid. Activists continued to encourage the local communities to express their dissatisfaction with the apartheid government. James further states that the protests gradually gained momentum to an extent that the police were clearly failing to contain the unrest:

South Africa has never previously experienced so extended and violent an expression of the dissatisfaction festering in its African townships as it has in the mid-1980s. In the eighteen months preceding the state of emergency, scattered student boycotts became more violent and gave way to protests and marches by adults, to stone throwing and blockades, to bus boycotts and general strikes. Local officials and the police, white and black, could not contain the unrest; army units also were deployed and moved from township to township, but they, too, failed to bring quiet. (52)

The failure of the police to quell the unrests signaled one thing: the demise of apartheid was near. This led to the declaration of a state of emergency announced in July 1985 – an expression of the state’s impotence and vulnerability. Apartheid eventually ended after a series of negotiations between the governing National Party, the African National Congress, and many other political organizations which was followed by the first free and open elections in the nation’s history.

In the struggle against apartheid, men were often in the forefront, occupying most of the leadership positions. However, women also played an equally significant, though overlooked role. In fact, at the core of this study is the contention that the anti-apartheid movement was shaped as much by women as it was by men like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Steve Biko, and Albert Luthuli, who often served as the faces of the anti-apartheid movement. Nancy Van Vuuren argues that “such was ‘normal’ to a male dominated society, as the government could never have dealt with a female leadership” (vi). Even though women’s participation in the anti-apartheid movement has not been recognized at the same level as the men’s, there is ample historical and literary evidence that illustrates their participation in the struggle.

Women’s participation in the fight against apartheid came in several ways. These included the formation of The Women’s Defense of the Constitution League which was later called The Black Sash. The Black Sash was a women’s organization which mobilized the first public demonstration against the pass law policy in 1954. It also aimed at assisting those who had been incarcerated for violating pass laws. Furthermore, the formation of the African National Congress Women’s League and the Federation of South African Women were some of the foundational establishments for women’s involvement in the anti-apartheid movement. Elizabeth Schmidt states that The Federation of South African Women was formed in April 1954 with the objectives “to bring the women of South Africa together to secure full equality of opportunity for all women, regardless of color or creed; to remove social and legal and economic disabilities; and to work for the protection of women and children of our land” (4).

Furthermore, South African women also used music to protest against apartheid. The impact of songs opposing apartheid included raising awareness and generating support for the anti-apartheid movement. A good example of South African female singers who used their music to wage war against apartheid is Miriam Makeba. Makeba composed many songs that articulated her strong anti-apartheid sentiments. Before delivering his Speech of the Nation Address on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017, the President of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma acknowledged Makeba's contribution to the anti-apartheid movement. He alluded to the fact, coincidentally, on the same day in 1963 Makeba campaigned against apartheid and spoke against it before the United Nations, which led to her exile from South Africa. She subsequently returned after South Africa gained independence and soon became a goodwill ambassador for South Africa to the United Nations.

However, the highlight of women's involvement in the struggle against apartheid was the Women's March to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1956 where more than twenty thousand women marched to protest against the proposed amendments to the Urban Act. This proposed act was a thorn to almost all black women because it required them to carry a pass whenever they went into the cities. Before this amendment, only African men were required to carry a pass. Barbara Hutchmacher MacLean explains that it was during this historic march that the song "You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock, You will be Crushed" was first sung to epitomize the bravery and strength expressed at the march as women stood up and refused to be perpetually oppressed without protesting. Walker describes the scene:

Many of the African women wore traditional dress, others wore the congress colors, green, black and gold; Indian women were clothed in white saris. Many women had babies on their backs and some domestic workers brought their employer's children along with them. Throughout the demonstration, the huge crowd displayed a discipline and dignity that was deeply impressive. (195)

The march was a remarkable success. This is illustrated by the fact that 9<sup>th</sup> August was subsequently declared a Women' Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1994 - a holiday for celebrating women in South Africa. The march also helped to prove that the stereotype of regarding women as politically incompetent, immature and tied to the home, was not only outdated, but also incorrect. Here were hordes of women showing zeal, determination and willingness to risk their lives for their country's freedom from the tyranny of apartheid. Therefore, this march and other activities are part of the rich historical evidence that South African women were significantly involved in the struggle against apartheid.

There is also a fair amount of literary evidence that speaks to the contributions of South African women to the anti-apartheid movement. In "Forms of Resistance: South African Women's Writing During Apartheid," Margaret Miller explores some of the ways in which women writers during apartheid in South Africa conceptualized and represented the agency and activism of black women in forms of resistance. These literary treatments of women's involvement in the anti-apartheid movement are very important as, alongside the historical evidence, they raise an awareness of the role women played in the fight against apartheid. This is important because, according to

*South African History Online*, “previously the history of women’s political organization, their struggle for freedom from oppression, for community rights and, importantly, for gender equality, was largely ignored in history texts” (1). Therefore, such treatments help to shed more light on the accomplishments of women in the struggle against apartheid. Literary treatments of women’s resistance to apartheid came in the form of memoirs, fictional novels, drama and poems.

Many writers responded to apartheid by satirizing or chronicling the events and its effects on the people. Ode Ogede argues that apartheid literature “captured a vivid sense of the emotional and psychological toll that apartheid exerted on its victims” (251). Apartheid literature did not only express the injustices that racial oppression instigated but also attempted to explore possibilities of resistance. One of the earliest South African female writers to use literature as an instrument to attack racial oppression was Olive Schreiner. She wrote the novel *The Story of an African Farm* through which she predicted the end of racial segregation in South Africa even though it was still in its infancy stages. What is most remarkable about Schreiner is that she was white and at the time when she wrote her novel, most white writers on Africa were indifferent concerning the predicament of the victims of colonization. Therefore, she was brave and defied odds by expressing her imaginative empathy by suggesting brotherly love as a replacement for oppression. To express his views on Schreiner’s boldness, Ogede asserts: “She was firmly rooted in what Durix has termed, the value of individual freedom, because in her writing she had the courage to champion views that were opposed to the dominant ideology of her time and society” (252).

Barbara Harlow furthers this assertion when she says that language and rhetorical skills along with armed struggle are essential “to an oppressed people’s resistance to domination and oppression and an organized liberation movement” (1). Taking into account Harlow’s idea, one may conclude that Schreiner and many other South African women writers such as Nadine Gordimer, Sindiwe Magona, Miriam Tlali, Gcina Mhlophe, and Lauretta Ngcobo used literature to voice their concerns on racial segregation and oppression as well as sensitizing readers on the adverse conditions that were stimulated by apartheid. These writers can be described as pioneering and inspiring voices against apartheid and segregation. Writing against apartheid caused their lives to be punctuated by mistreatment by the apartheid police, however, they refused to be silenced. Barbara Boswell elaborates on the challenges that these women writers and particularly the Black women writers endured as a result of their writing against apartheid and also recognizes the fact that these challenges did not stop them from writing:

The apartheid system worked on multiple levels to not only disenfranchise Black women and Black subjects in general, but also to repress creativity and the capacity to dream. Through curtailing the educational opportunities available to women; through politically disenfranchising them; and responding to activism against apartheid through censorship, imprisonment, violence and banning, the apartheid government effectively prohibited Black women from the realm of literary production. Yet, like Sindiwe, Black women writers still insisted upon rendering creative

accounts of life, political events, human relations, and whatever else they chose to depict. (4)

While on one hand, these black women writers used their works to reconstruct the South African nation, on the other hand, they used their writing as a form of activism and resistance to apartheid.

Harlow further states that resistance literature is a category of literature that emerged significantly as a part of the organized national liberation struggles and resistance movements in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. She singles out two genres of literature that can be used as resistance literature. These are poetry and prose. On poetry, she states that “poetry as a part of the cultural institutions and historical existence of a people, is itself an arena of struggle” (33). On the other hand, she contends that resistance narratives help in analyzing the relations of power which sustain the system of dominion and exploitation (85). Ogede’s assertions about Olive Schreiner is that “she understood the novel as a unique space in which even the most private or provoking issues may be approached without fear” (252). I will use three texts: Laurretta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die*, Kagiso Molope’s *Dancing in the Dust*, and Njabulo Ndebele’s *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* to illustrate how these South African texts depict the role that women played during the struggle against apartheid. These texts have been selected for genre diversity and their significance to international black feminist audiences. They also have similar characteristics in that they examine women’s assemblies or unions as a platform through which women were able to make a collective rebellion against apartheid.

This study utilizes Susan Arndt, Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard's ideas on African feminism, especially their premise that African feminism discusses gender roles in the context of other oppressive mechanisms such as racism, segregation, neocolonialism, and exploitation. They also highlight that African feminism does not only involve criticizing patriarchal structures but also attempts to identify both traditionally- established and entirely new scopes and alternatives for women, which would be tantamount to overcoming their oppression. The study further leans on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's assertion that it is impossible to assume homogeneity of feminism because women throughout the world are not confronted by the same challenges and circumstances. In "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Mohanty condemns homogenous perspectives and presuppositions in some western feminist texts that focus on women in third world countries. She argues that the tendency by some western writers to label all women from third world countries as prostitutes, impoverished and perpetual victims of men, without considering the class, ethnicity and racial contexts is wrong. Mohanty's assertion resonates with the "positive" portrayal of women in the three selected texts for this study. These texts counter such inaccurate and misleading representations of African women by portraying the female characters as people who are bold and ready to respond to the omnipresent threat of countless varieties of oppression. The women in these texts are "not portrayed as helpless victims or as invincible super-bitches, but rather as ordinary women who look within themselves and find the strength to prevail" (Etter-Lewis 99). This is contrary to the portrayal of African women by some western feminists such as Juliet Minces and Beverly

Lindsay. For instance, Mince's premise is that all African women are consistent victims of male control – the sexually oppressed (Mohanty 339). Lindsay furthers this misleading assertion by arguing, “all African women are politically and economically dependent and prostitution is their only source of income” (Mohanty 339). While there are women in Africa who live on prostitution or depend on their husbands, this is not true for all women in Africa. For instance, in the selected texts, we encounter very hardworking, socially upright and brave women characters who positively impact their homes, communities and country. In relation to the issue of apartheid, it is important to point out that not every female character in the texts rises to meet the challenge, nor is every attempt to resist successful, “but women’s will to act on their own convictions, in the face of the staggering odds against them ground these texts in the coarse realism of women’s lived experiences” (Etta-Lewis 102).

According to Susan Arndt, African feminism gets to the bottom of African gender relations and the problems of African women. It illuminates and criticizes those causes and consequences (32). Some of the problems faced by women in Africa include gender inequality, poverty, continuing violence against women, as well as lack of equal access to land and property to mention a few. African feminism addresses such problems by improving the situation of women in Africa through upsetting the existing matrix of domination and overcoming it and transforming gender relationships and conceptions in Africa. The selected texts for this study do not only describe in detail the physical and psychological brutality that women suffered as a result of apartheid and patriarchy, but also attempt to explore possibilities of resistance. The authors of these texts have

transferred the roles traditionally assigned to black men to the women characters to depict that women can also competently carry out those tasks, which have long been regarded as being exclusive to men. The authors examined in this study have presented a world where amidst marginalization and oppression, their women characters find ways to survive. Ngcobo and Magona in particular have been hailed by several critics such as Eva Hunter and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard for demonstrating that women's suffering in South Africa was not only instigated by apartheid but also by customary traditions that leaned on patriarchy.

Even though African feminism advocates for gender equality and criticizes patriarchy, it is complementary with men and affirms motherhood and family (Arndt 32). It recognizes the role of the men as a leader of his family. For instance, even though Jezile in *And They Didn't Die* is a political activist, she fully submits to her husband and in-laws. Describing her situation, M.J Daymond says:

Her own deep respect for custom – which includes submitting to the pressure to bear children, particularly male children, as well as submitting to the authority of her mother-in-law, MaBiyela, and the complete control of her husband's family over her – is not a support but a part the problems. (102)

These ideas on African feminism will help me to argue that African women writers have always been eloquent on issues of gender inequality, politics, and social justice. M.S. Serudu states that a substantial number of African women writers have used their rhetorical skills to register their dissatisfaction with the apartheid regime. She identifies

Sindiwe Magona and Bessie Head as some of the better-known writers to have constantly expressed their desire for women to be placed on an equal footing with their male counterparts. Serudu notes that Magona complains about discrimination that was shown against married women and the discrepancy in salaries between blacks and whites who were employed as teachers under the Department of Bantu Education. In her novel, *Forced to Grow* Magona satirizes a conversation between black and white teachers who taught in the same school but the white teachers earned more compared to their black colleagues. In defense of this unfairness, one white teacher once stood up and argued: “I don’t know why you complain. I have a higher standard of living to maintain. I’m expected to have a car for myself, a car for my wife and if my children are university age, one for each” (Serudu 24). This incident depicts Magona’s sensitivity to racial injustice as well as gender. The texts selected for this study do not only provide criticism for apartheid and patriarchal structures, but they also explore different ways through which women can be emancipated from oppression. I will use them to explore how their authors have created a world in each one of them where women’s actions are constantly constrained by laws – traditional and apartheid or both, but their survival is contingent on breaking those laws. For instance, Jezile, the protagonist of Laretta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die*, must contend with “laws” of apartheid and African traditional customs, both which oppress her and her fellow rural women. By definition, these women do not have the privilege of education or access to authority, but nevertheless must contend, and do respond with varying degrees of success to the omnipresent and assorted forms of oppression. On the other hand, Njabulo Ndebele’s *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* focuses on

a public figure - Winnie Mandela to depict women's resistance to apartheid. I will use this text to explore different approaches to resisting apartheid between Jezile, an uneducated rural woman, and the imaginary Winnie Mandela, a powerful and well-educated personality. Unlike Jezile and her fellow rural women who engage in grassroots resistance to apartheid, Winnie Mandela depicts radical activism in her struggle against apartheid in the urban areas. Furthermore, Winnie Mandela's activism is not only confined to the community where she lives but it transcends throughout South Africa and beyond the country's borders. On the other hand, Kagiso Molohe's *Dancing in the Dust* focuses on the unique ways in which women in the townships were oppressed by apartheid and how they responded to the oppression. Her novel illustrates the fact that during the apartheid period, black South Africans living in the townships were victims of police harassment and brutality. Molohe also explores the theme of the growth of Black Consciousness among South Africa's black youth, especially the members of the South African Student's organization (SASO). She examines the involvement of the youth, particularly young girls in rebelling against apartheid.

These three texts reveal the plight of Black South African women during the apartheid era. These texts explore the recurrent theme of oppression in all its ramifications, which include racial prejudice, exploitation at the work place, police harassment and brutality and deprivation of Africans, the disruptive influence of migrant labor on family life, and the subordination of women. These texts illustrate that the struggles of women in apartheid South Africa are twofold: On one hand, women struggle as a result of domestic issues revolving around patriarchy which promote men to

unearned positions of dominance. On another hand, women struggle as a result of the oppressive policies of the apartheid government.

However, amidst the multiple forms of oppression that women were subjected to, the texts further depict women's bravery in confronting the oppressive forces which worked against them. To achieve this, the authors of these texts have deviated from the dominant tendency of portraying women as victimized figures or romanticized wives and mothers. Instead, the female characters in these texts, especially the protagonists are depicted as courageous and active agents of socio-political change. The authors have fictionalized historical events where women participated in the struggle against apartheid to underscore their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement. Through the diverse ways in which the female characters resist oppression, these novels also, show how women have migrated from their previously marginalized status as victims to become assertive and powerful people in their homes and communities. Thus, almost all the protagonists in the narratives hold leadership roles, at home or their communities, roles that were traditionally exclusive for the men.

## CHAPTER 2

Rural Women's Resistance to Apartheid and Patriarchal Subjugation in Laretta

Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*

Recalling the tense and dangerous atmosphere under which anti-apartheid activists operated in the 1970s, Laretta Ngcobo, in her anthology of essays *Let it be Told: Essays by Black Women in Britain*, notes that:

There was a relentless persecution, of those writers and journalists who dared speak the truth. In their reports of the self-mutilating ghettos, they exposed what the system was doing to destroy the lives of men and women. The government launched a witch-hunt against all so-called agitators – and there are no better agitators than those who wield the pen. Most of those writers and journalists were finally forced to leave the country and face exile. So was I. (134)

During Ngcobo's exile, she and her husband lived in several African countries such as Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia, before settling in England in 1969, and where she wrote and published her two novels, *Cross of Gold* (1981) and *And They Didn't Die* (1990), her best-known novel.

Eva Hunter asserts that the “resilience and courage that are characteristic of the characters in *And They Didn't Die*” are clearly exhibited in Ngcobo as well (114). *And They Didn't Die* not only depicts the inhumanity and brutality of apartheid especially

towards women, but it also explores possibilities of resistance. The novel illustrates the many, though often unrecognized or downplayed ways by which women in South Africa resisted apartheid. It further depicts how women's oppression in South Africa was not only caused by apartheid but also had its roots in patriarchal African traditional customs. Through the novel, Ngcobo explicitly shows how apartheid interacted with African traditional laws to oppress women and the ways in which women refused to be oppressed and attempted to take charge of their own lives. The novel ends with a consideration of revolutionary violence as a means of attaining emancipation.

Drawing from her personal experience, Ngcobo blends history and fiction to depict what women in South Africa actually did to survive and resist apartheid and African patriarchy. Her memories as a black woman who lived in rural South Africa during apartheid had a profound influence on her creation of *And They Didn't Die*. In her interview with Margaret Daymond, Ngcobo indicates that most of her fiction focuses on the ordinary people in society: "I do not write about the famous political figures or the wide political landscape. I write about little lives; my stories are about ordinary people. If I write about politics, it will be about how ordinary people are affected by the political climate" (87). In an interview with Eva Hunter, Ngcobo points out that her experiences of apartheid South Africa and subsequent forced exile has resulted in a story that is "deeply painful to read, but takes the reader beyond despair" (114).

In her essay anthology, *Let it Be Told*, Ngcobo further indicates that another source of her inspiration to write *And They Didn't Die* came from the difficult

experiences of her mother. Her mother struggled against African customary practice and white law, which categorized married and widowed black women as legal minors, in order to keep her children. However, despite great hardships, she succeeded.

Acknowledging her mother's resilience, Ngcobo remarks that, "Her strength was greater than that of most men" (248). Therefore, because of all these influences, Ngcobo wrote *And They Didn't Die* to demonstrate that despite their marginalized status, black South African women are equally capable to play leadership roles in their families and communities.

*And They Didn't Die* illuminates the complexities of life in rural South Africa during the apartheid era. It chronicles the story of the South African nation through the experiences of rural women as they raise their families, oppose racist oppression, and cope with impoverishment while attempting to maintain their traditional social structures. In *Let it Be Told* Ngcobo further states that in both her novels, *Cross of Gold* and *And They Didn't Die*, she seeks to disprove, on one hand, the stereotypes that portray blacks as inferior and unintelligent; and on the other hand men being always fit for power rather than women (136). Ngcobo's assertion that women are often perceived as unintelligent echoes Carole Boyce Davies' contention that "African women are denied participation in the shaping of human culture because they are perceived as inert and unintelligent" (561). However, the emergence of many African women writers such as Ngcobo means that the misrepresentation of African women is coming to an end as "African women themselves are beginning to tell their own stories...all this contributes to a true African feminist theory" (Davies 564).

In her afterword to the novel, Margaret Daymond notes, “*And They Didn’t Die* pays homage to the unsung heroism of rural women who opposed apartheid in South Africa” (254). Daymond further observes that fictional representations, such as Ngcobo’s, of how the apartheid system paired itself with patriarchal norms in the rural areas are very rare. Instead, the trend has been to focus on apartheid as an urban phenomenon and to focus on it from a male-oriented perspective (252). In such works, it is only when the main character goes to the city, seeking employment, that he or she experiences apartheid’s oppression. However, in *And They Didn’t Die*, Ngcobo alters this norm by depicting how the grip of apartheid was felt even in the rural areas.

Throughout the novel, Ngcobo depicts that during the apartheid era in South Africa, women were oppressed by both the apartheid system and African patriarchal customs. This chapter, therefore, closely examines how Ngcobo depicts this phenomenon through her portrayal of: the Migrant Labor Law, the Pass Laws and The Group Areas Act, on one hand. In the process, she reveals the debilitating effects of apartheid on black South Africans particularly, women. On the other hand, the women are oppressed by African customary practices dictated by patriarchy. Confronted with their challenging situation, the female characters fiercely resist oppression from these two forces that work against them. Through her portrayal of some female characters, particularly Jezile and Nozizwe, Ngcobo challenges the stereotypical representations of African women that depict passivity and weakness as their dominant traits as found in some recent Western feminist’s texts such as Maria Cutrufelli’s *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* and Beverly Lindsay’s *Comparative Perspectives of the Third World*. These works are quoted

by Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse,” where she condemns the “production of third world women as a singular monolithic subject” (333). Cutrufelli and Lindsay argue that all African women are economically dependent. They further claim that the main source of income for all African women is prostitution.

Mohanty points out that it is wrong for western feminists such as Cutrufelli and Lindsay to group all African women into the same category as if they all belong to the same geographical spectrum and confronted by the same challenges. She highlights the dangers of such generalizations, which include the destruction of solidarity amongst women by creating two opposite groups, the western and non-western amongst them. In the context of the noticeable negative literary portrayal of African women, Ngcobo’s depiction of her female characters compels the reader to conclude that she wants to send the message that African women are strong and independent.

Set in the small, fictional rural village of Sigageni in the then Natal Province, *And They Didn’t Die* outlines the life of Jezile, wife to a migrant worker, Siyalo. As the novel opens, Jezile is unhappy because she faces various challenges that include her inability to fall pregnant and give birth to a child who will complete her role as a wife. This causes serious tensions between Jezile and her mother-in-law, MaBiyela, who often ridicules her because in this deeply patriarchal society a woman’s worth is measured by her ability to produce children. Jezile is also unhappy because she does not live with her husband, who is forced by the South African migrant labor system to leave his family behind in the rural area to work in the mines and only visit home after eleven months. Even then, he

only stays with them for three weeks. The apartheid government prohibits black men from moving to the city with their families; hence, their women and children are forced to stay behind in the rural areas. This means that Jezile cannot move to Durban to be with her husband. Compounding Jezile's problems are the periodic droughts that ravage Sigageni, making it impossible for her as a subsistence farmer to earn substantial yields.

In light of her predicament, Jezile takes matters into her own hands when she initiates a visit to Durban so that she can spend some quality time with her husband Siyalo and, hopefully, conceive a child. However as she makes this decision, she does not consult MaBiyela, a violation of customary norms which dictate that a wife must consult her in-laws before making such a seemingly major decision. Instead, she seeks the permission of the Bantu Affairs Department, to grant her a pass to enable her to travel to Durban. After being ridiculed by the white officers at the Bantu Affairs Department, Jezile gets a pass and leaves for Durban.

On arrival in Durban, she immediately witnesses the horrendous and dehumanizing living conditions that black people are forced to live under by the white supremacist government. Ngcobo sketches a vivid picture of the single-sex hostels in which the African men who work in Durban live. Jezile is shocked by these conditions. Being a rural dweller, she has always believed that the city is a glamorous place. The narrator describes Jezile's impressions of her husband's "home:" "Except for the free flow of the people, in and out of the gate, the place was so austere and grim it could have been a prison. It gave the feeling of prohibition and a feeling of trespassing that made Jezile's heart beat faster" (24). There is also no privacy in these hostels because the beds

are crammed into the long hostel passages, making her wonder how she will be intimate with her husband in order for her to get pregnant.

Jezile's situation temporarily looks like it is improving when she finally falls pregnant and gives birth to a baby girl, Sinaye. However, shortly after Sinaye's birth, Siyalo is fired from work for participating in worker's political protests and demonstrations, and is sent back to Sigageni. He returns home and the family plunges further into poverty. To make matters worse, Jezile is imprisoned for six months together with a crowd of fellow rural women for protesting against Pass Laws by burning their passes. When Jezile is released from prison, she is five months pregnant with their second daughter, Ndondo. Troubled by his inability to provide for his starving family, Siyalo starts stealing milk from a neighboring white man's farm. He is eventually caught and unfairly tried, and convicted for a more serious crime, stock theft, and is sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Jezile later gets a job as a domestic worker in a white family's home in Bloemfontein, where her employer, Mr. Potgieter, rapes and impregnates her. Jezile conceals her pregnancy until she goes into labor. She gives birth to a "white" child, and this draws the attention of the local police because his conception and birth is illegal in South Africa. Mr. Potgieter forces her to return to Sigageni, just a few days after the child's birth.

However, her situation causes great embarrassment to her marital family. The community ostracizes her for giving birth to a "white" child and this causes Jezile to go to her mother's village together with her newborn son where she is happily welcomed. A few years later, Siyalo is released from prison and immediately asks his family to go and

remove his children from Jezile, as culture dictates. The girls grow up in their paternal home, Sinaye becomes a nurse while her younger sister, Ndondo becomes a political activist. One night both girls pay Jezile a visit. However, when Jezile returns from accompanying Ndondo out of the village, she finds a white soldier about to rape her eldest daughter, Sinaye. Jezile demonstrates incredible courage when she stabs the white soldier to death. After killing him, she goes to Siyalo to tell him before he can get the wrong story from someone else. The novel ends with Jezile narrating to Siyalo how she killed the soldier and that murdering him was the only way of saving Sinaye from sexual violation: “I had to kill him. They’ve destroyed our marriage, they broke our life here at Sabelweni, and they’ve broken all our children’s lives and killed many” (245).

Remarking about the multiple forms of oppression that women in South Africa endured during the apartheid era, in an interview with Margaret Daymond, Lauretta Ngcobo notes that:

In South Africa, over and above the oppressive system, a black woman is oppressed by law, which has calcified around the old traditional customs. Under the Natal code, for instance, a woman is a perpetual minor who cannot perform at law even when her husband is dead. She is equally incapacitated socially, economically, all round. (5)

In *And They Didn't Die*, Ngcobo demonstrates how women faced multiple forms of oppression through her protagonist, Jezile. At the beginning of the novel, Jezile is anxious because apartheid through its policy of the Migrant Labor Law has separated her from her husband and this causes trouble for the couple as it limits the amount of time

that they spend together, resulting in Jezile's difficulty to conceive. Adding to Jezile's frustrations is the fact that during Siyalo's absence, her mother-in-law, MaBiyela, a staunch believer in adhering to traditional norms, acts as the leader of the family and wields her authoritative power over Jezile. Remarking upon the amount of traditional power vested upon MaBiyela, the narrator notes: "MaBiyela had so much power. She was permanently vigilant, armed with authority and custom" (16). As a result, MaBiyela constantly pressures Jezile to produce children. Even when she sees that Jezile is not comfortable with the subject, "MaBiyela would not stop. She talked about children, she often, wondered aloud, to all and sundry, what would happen if Jezile was barren, for Siyalo, an only Son, simply had to have children" (4). In her essay "African Motherhood – Myth and Motherhood," Ngcobo comments about the fact that African Motherhood subjects married women to enormous pressure as they are expected to produce as many children as possible:

Marriage amongst Africans is mainly an institution for the control of procreation. Every woman is encouraged to marry and get children in order to express her womanhood to the full. The basis of marriage among Africans implies the transfer of a woman's fertility to the husband's family group... The reason why African families desire high fertility have to do with human capital and social security. (534)

Therefore, MaBiyela anticipates that Jezile will produce as many children as could be reasonably be expected because the children will also serve as human capital and security for the family. Ironically, when Siyalo visits home, MaBiyela significantly reduces the

amount of time that the couple can spend together as she “always has duties that would take Jezile away from Siyalo for hours” (4). This resonates with Ama Ata Aidoo’s assertion about African marriages where she explains that: “Right from the earliest stages of the marriage there is a conscious effort to distance the young wife from the young husband” (535). This mistreatment by her mother-in-law seriously frustrates Jezile who tries to find comfort from her biological mother, MaSibiya. However, MaSibiya also conversant with African patriarchy, admonishes Jezile to “make peace” with MaBiyela. She tells her: “MaBiyela is the pillar of this home and you have to lean on her. You can have friends outside, but MaBiyela is the law and your support. With her by your side, few people will try to exploit you” (156). MaSibiya’s words seem to show that elderly women support patriarchy and do not care even if it oppresses the young women. Through these contradictory yet connected situations that Jezile finds herself in, Ngcobo demonstrates the interaction between the migrant labor system and patriarchal traditions in oppressing Jezile. The migrant worker system limits Jezile’s chances of conceiving by forcing Siyalo to go and work in the city, while prohibiting her from moving to the city to leave with her husband. On the other hand, customary law considers all married women minors and prescribes rigid behavioral codes, enforced by MaBiyela in the absence of Siyalo.

Furthermore, Ngcobo demonstrates how apartheid through the migrant labor system paired itself with African patriarchal traditions to oppress women by detailing the impoverishment that her female characters such as Jezile’s childhood friend, Zenzile endures in her husband’s absence. Just like Siyalo, Zenzile’s husband, Mthebe lives and

works in Durban. He does not care much for his family as he only comes home long enough to get Zenzile pregnant. By the time, Zenzile becomes pregnant with their sixth child, her body is so weak, tired, and sick that she is unable to sustain the pregnancy or care for her children. As a result, she dies of internal bleeding after giving birth at home to a stillborn baby, since Mthebe does not send money for Zenzile to get prenatal care. Making matters worse for Zenzile is the fact that her mother-in-law, who is also a staunch believer in customary traditions insists that culturally, it is a taboo to give birth in the hospital, forcing Zenzile to give birth at home. Therefore, by her willingness to fulfill the requirement for a wife to produce as many children as possible, Zenzile produces children until she dies.

The Migrant Labor System further causes suffering for the women of Sigageni because in the absence of their husbands, they are “confronted by fears about their sexual needs...and the ever-present attendant disgrace” (13) of committing adultery. Elaborating on this phenomenon in her essay anthology *Let it be Told*, Ngcobo remarks, “the migrant labor system not only destroys family life, but it is harsh on mothers” (137). The effects of the migrant labor system are not only felt by the women but also by the men working in the cities. They are poorly remunerated and this makes it difficult for them to send money to their wives back home. Frustrated by their inability to provide for their families, the men become hostile towards their wives as noted by Nozizwe in one of their meetings: “When our men have failed to provide for us, they have taken their frustration on us; when they have been put into prisons for a thousand possible infringements of the law, we have suffered” (10). To further disenfranchise the women of Sigageni, apartheid

deprives them of minimum rights such as land ownership, compelling them to be completely dependent to their husbands.

Ngcobo further depicts that the apartheid system itself was an institution founded on patriarchal ideologies. Given its patriarchal nature, apartheid enforced gender roles through its creation of separate spheres for both men and women. For instance, it necessitated that men should go and work in the cities in order to be breadwinners in their families. On the other hand, it confined women to the rural reserves where they were expected to perform only domestic duties. Through Siyalo and Jezile, Ngcobo demonstrates that these established gender roles oppressed both men and women. For example, because of his involvement in the anti-apartheid protests in Durban, Siyalo loses his job and is forced to return home. His unemployment renders him unable to provide for his family. As a result, Jezile resents him and their marriage suffers. Embarrassed by his inability to provide for his family, Siyalo starts stealing milk from his neighboring white farmer. Eventually, he gets caught and is arrested. Through his arrest, apartheid causes Siyalo and Jezile's separation again and which leaves Jezile in a position of single-motherhood.

Ngcobo further illustrates the interaction between apartheid and patriarchy in oppressing women through Jezile's rape by her employer, Mr. Potgieter. This incident also demonstrates the vulnerability and powerlessness of black domestic workers in their workstations. It further illustrates the predicament of many black women who worked as domestic workers and were sexually exploited by their employers. Mr. Potgieter represents the many white employers in South Africa who were agents of oppression of

black women. However, the apartheid government often ignored such cases and treated them lightly as interracial misconduct on the part of a man who violated a black woman. Through this incident, therefore, Ngcobo's portrays Jezile as a victim of both, male patriarchal attitudes and white oppression. Commenting about the same incident, Margaret Daymond asserts, "Ngcobo shows extraordinary insight in depicting this man's cringing abuse of a helpless domestic servant and his wife's complicity in covering up a union which was – in terms of the laws governing interracial sexual relations – a crime" (270). Daymond notes that Mrs. Potgieter's conspicuous silence on the matter illustrates the fact that some white women were in support of their husband's acts of sexual violation towards their black servants. This resonates with Carole Boyce Davies' assertion that "white women are often partners in the oppression of both African women and men, South Africa as the most overt example" (564).

However, when Jezile returns to Sigageni with her illegitimate son, Lungu, the community acting under the heavy influence of patriarchal customs, does not accept them. Not only does the people of Sigageni ostracize Jezile, but they also excommunicate her mother-in-law MaBiyela from the women's prayer group for accepting Jezile and Lungu. The people of Sigageni view Jezile and Lungu as an embarrassment to the community. They choose to ignore Jezile's traumatic experience and instead focus on the disgrace that she has brought to her marital family and in extension, the community. The church is also portrayed as unsympathetic in its judgments as it also bans Jezile from its services and MaBiyela for being willing to shelter her daughter-in-law. To make matters worse for Jezile, when Siyalo is released from prison, he immediately sends a delegation

to go and remove his children from Jezile, as custom dictates that children belong to their father. Therefore, the interrelationship between these difficult situations that Jezile finds herself in depict the multilayered oppression that women experienced during apartheid in South Africa. While apartheid places her on a vulnerable position of being raped by a white man, customary law punishes her for being raped. It further empowers her husband to take away her two daughters from her, depriving her the opportunity to raise her own children. Ngcobo, therefore, demonstrates the adverse effects of apartheid policies and patriarchal customs on black families.

*And They Didn't Die* does not only depict the dual oppression that black South African women suffered during the apartheid era. The novel further depicts the long-standing history of women's involvement in the anti-apartheid movement. Ngcobo carefully demonstrates how black South African women responded to the oppressive forces that worked against them. The novel depicts women's resistance to oppression particularly through Jezile, Nozizwe Morena, the local doctor and political activist, and Ndondo, Jezile's youngest daughter who chooses political activism as her career while still at high school. Ngcobo opens the novel with non-violent women's resistance against apartheid and patriarchy. However, echoing Marxist scholar Franz Fanon's ideas on the importance of violent action in the struggle for liberation, she ends it with violent action, suggesting that passive and peaceful action alone is not enough in the struggle against oppression. Therefore, women must also take the struggle to another level by incorporating violent as a means to achieve emancipation. Barbara Harlow furthers

Fanon's argument by stating that both rhetorical skills and violence must be used by colonized people in the struggle for liberation from their colonizer (1).

Ngcobo uses protest action as a vehicle that her female characters use to resist apartheid. However, as they resist apartheid, simultaneously they also resist patriarchal domination because these two forces work in tandem to oppress them. The plot opens with an account of the women's act of defiance towards the apartheid government. As an act of defiance, they have once again dumped the chemical mixture left by the white dipping officer, Mr. Pienaar for dipping their cattle to prevent the spread of livestock diseases. To vent his anger at the women's action, Mr. Pienaar runs his truck toward a group of women, causing them to celebrate that their small protest has finally yielded results. Mr. Pienaar considers the women's action not only an act of defiance to the apartheid government but also a sign of disrespect to manhood, demonstrating that when the women resist apartheid, they simultaneously resist patriarchy. He asserts that the apartheid government's major opposition comes from these women as opposed to the men of Sigageni. His remarks express his racist and misogynistic attitude:

Senseless, unthinking creatures... These women, this strange breed of womanhood, thin and ragged and not acting like women at all – they think they rule the world, they spill men's beers, they herd cattle, they plough fields, they run this community. That's what it is; that why this defiance – they've lost respect for manhood, for all authority...if nobody stops them they're going to ruin this country. In spite of what others think, it is these women we've got to deal with, not those far away men in the cities. (2)

By calling them “senseless, unthinking creatures” (1), Mr. Pienaar demonstrates his deep-seated hatred of these black women. His words further express the patriarchal attitude that is responsible for the perpetual oppression of women. He further implies that apartheid ideology regards African women as low-class citizens who the government has no reason to take seriously. His assertion that “these women do not act like women at all” (2) demonstrates his gender stereotype, expressing that apartheid ideology expects Black women to act in a certain way. Therefore, it surprises him to see women in the forefront of the battle against the culling of their cattle as such should be done by men. Instead, he expects women to be passive and submissive wives.

On the other hand, in his very same speech, Mr. Pienaar acknowledges that the apartheid government has been making a huge mistake by taking lightly this “strange breed of womanhood...who *run the country* (2; my emphasis). Therefore, from his misogynistic statements about the rural women, Mr. Pienaar changes his tune and admits that these women are strong and should not be taken lightly because they are capable of “ruining the country” (2). This means that he now realizes that these women can be agents of political change by bringing down apartheid. Ngcobo’s depiction of this radical action by the women of Sigageni resonates with Carole Boyce Davies’ assertion that, “Third World women ought not to wait for a revolution initiated by men to institute certain changes in women’s lives” (563). The sudden change of mindset by Mr. Pienaar about the women of Sigageni illustrates Ngcobo’s keenness to challenge colonial views about African women, showing that even though for so long they have been marginalized, they are capable of initiating change. This underscores Mohanty’s ideas

about grass-root activism. She argues that feminism is localized and reflects the specific concerns and issues most pertinent to a group of women, rather than on broad ideas that unite all women in a shared struggle:

The discursively consensual homogeneity of “women” as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women. This results in an assumption of women as an always-already constituted group, one which has been labelled “powerless,” “exploited,” “sexually harassed,” etc., by feminist scientific, economic, legal and sociological discourses. (338)

Carole Boyce Davies furthers Mohanty’s assertion by stating that while an obvious connection exists between African and Western feminism there are also, “differences which point to the specific types of oppression African women face in various cultures” (564). Ngcobo’s novel, therefore, provides different angles from which to explore women’s individual circumstances.

The women’s resistance to apartheid is inculcated in their Thursday afternoon meetings where they gather, not only to pray but also to mobilize a women’s resistance. It is in these meetings that their leader, Nozizwe influences them to resist apartheid policies such as Pass Laws, and “the merciless system of white oppression that left them cruelly exploited and defenseless” (40). Nozizwe is a good example of women’s determination to stand for what they believe in and resist all forms of oppression. She demonstrates dedication to stand with and help empower the uneducated women of Sigageni. Her

influence transcends Sigageni throughout the entire district of Ixopo where she is “hero-worshipped” (40) by the women.

Nozizwe further leads the women in a mass demonstration against passes, which results in the imprisonment of about six hundred women. This depicts her selflessness in that she is willing to suffer ill-treatment and incarceration for the cause of the struggle. Shortly after their imprisonment, the prison guards determine that she is the leader of the women and isolate her into her own cell. However, despite her ill-treatment, Nozizwe demonstrates a positive mindset and an unwavering attitude. Even in her isolation, her influence still transcends to her fellow women in the communal cells through the political songs that she sings in her cell. The narrator states that during one of their days in prison, the women were morally down, but upon hearing her sing, they were inspired to continue with their struggle against apartheid:

Then suddenly somewhere in the deepest part of that jail, they heard a different kind of song. It pierced the prison air and shattered the silence in the vast corridors. The women in the cells listened for a few moments. Then they knew it was Nozizwe. They picked up it up with gusto. Her song was not a hymn, it was a political song that throbbed in the gut. Their voices returned to them full of strength and defiance. They grew stronger as women in other cells joined in. (100)

Just like Jezile, Ngcobo portrays Nozizwe as an assertive and influential leader who tirelessly leads and inspires the women in their campaigns against apartheid.

Jezile's younger daughter, Ndondo is also another character in the novel that plays a noticeable role in the women's resistance to apartheid. Even though her participation in the struggle within South Africa is short-lived as she is forced into exile in her teenage years, her political activism is significant in the story. As a young activist, Ndondo represents the young South African women who were ready to take up the baton from their parents and advance the cause for black people's liberation from apartheid. Young as she is, Ndondo already possesses "remarkable ability to mobilize the other students" (234) in the school riots against the Bantu Education. When word spreads that the police are searching for her in relation to the school's protests, she goes into exile where she joins other comrades in the "underground" operations of the African National Congress. Her role is therefore significant in the story because she also represents the women who actively participated as disguised activists in the anti-apartheid movement.

The highlight of Jezile's resistance to apartheid and patriarchal oppression is demonstrated when she stabs and kills the white soldier who attempts to rape her daughter, Sinaye. Jezile, who has felt powerless for a long period, takes matters into her own hands to resist sexual manifestations of white power. This time around, she does what she could not do for herself when Mr. Potgieter raped her. Jezile knows that since apartheid is unjust, the white soldier will not be charged for raping Sinaye. Therefore, she understands that she has to stand-up for herself and fight against this representative of white oppression as she tells Siyalo:

I had to kill him. They've destroyed us, Siyalo. They broke our marriage, they broke our life here at Sabelweni, and they've broken all our

children's lives and killed many. He was raping our daughter. I had to defend her. We have to defend ourselves. (245)

Jezile's words express her realization that if women do not stand up and fight for themselves in the struggle for emancipation, no one will. This is her final redemption, which is also her own death sentence. She understands that she will either be incarcerated or executed because of this murder; however, she goes ahead and demonstrates courage by risking her own life to protect her daughter. By fiercely defending her daughter, Jezile plays the role of protector for her family, a role that is supposed to have been played by Siyalo, demonstrating that women too can play the roles that for long have been reserved only for the men.

In her essay anthology, *Let it Be Told*, Ngcobo states that from her childhood, she has constantly been concerned with issues of gender inequality. She points out that as a result, in her works she deliberately assign prominent roles to female characters in order to challenge the stereotypes that "put all decision-making positions in the hands of men" (137). Notably, *And They Didn't Die* portrays a number of strong and assertive female characters such as Jezile, Nozizwe, MaBiyela and Ndondo. These strong-willed and influential characters play a significant role in the struggle against oppression. Through them, Ngcobo creates a positive image for African women by depicting their strengths to stand up for themselves and overcome their marginalized status.

*And They Didn't Die* does not only depict women's participation in the struggle against oppressive forces at individual level, but also emphasizes the collective participation of women's role in the anti-apartheid movement. Ngcobo blends history and

fiction to illustrate the many ways in which women contributed to the collective activities against the apartheid regime. One such example is her dramatization of the historic 1956 women's march against Pass Laws. She depicts how women fiercely resisted this oppressive law, risking their lives since the apartheid police were known to often opening fire against demonstrators even when those demonstrations were peaceful.

The depiction of women's full participation in the protest and defiance campaigns against apartheid contributes towards a notable recognition of women's crucial function in the struggle against apartheid. In advocating for the recognition of the contribution made by rural women in the struggle against apartheid, Ngcobo places her narrative in a complex relationship to not only the cultural traditions within which Jezile and her family live but also the more recent representations of such African culture. She depicts women's determination to participate in the country's politics, an arena that for so long had been traditionally reserved for men. From passive resistance to violent action, these rural women demonstrate relentlessness fight their struggle against apartheid and everything that it stands for. Ngcobo's detailed description of events depicts that women were so passionate about resisting apartheid to the point that, when a need arises, can use any available tool to fight oppression. For instance, when she finds a white soldier about to rape her daughter, Jezile uses a table knife to stab and kill him:

Right there on the side, lying on the floor was the mighty instrument, carelessly abandoned in a reckless moment of misplaced power. Another look at the gun and Jezile knew she could not use it. She had no clue how it worked. Her eyes landed on the knives on the table that had not been

used for the meal that night and in an instant, she had plunged the sharpest one deep into the left side of the depraved soldier. (242)

This incident demonstrates the role, which African women had to play in resisting apartheid and patriarchal oppressions. This act seems to suggest an unapologetic justification for armed resistance against colonial oppression as suggested by Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* where he argues:

The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives, which emanates from it. For if, the last shall be first, this will only happen after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the end of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well-known which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course violence. (36)

It may seem that Ngcobo embraces Fanon's assertion as she ends *And They Didn't Die* with an endorsement to violence as a means to ending apartheid. Radical means in the struggle against apartheid are explored in depth in Kagiso Molohe's *Dancing in the Dust*, which is examined in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### Radicalization of the Struggle against Apartheid in the Townships in Kagiso

#### Molope's *Dancing in the Dust*

Having discussed rural women's political activism against apartheid through examining Laretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on women's struggles and activism against apartheid in the townships. This will help to establish the fact that place or geographical location was a factor in determining the oppressions of women by apartheid and how they responded to those oppressions. In other words, the ways in which women in the rural areas were oppressed were distinct from the oppression suffered by those who lived in the townships.

Kagiso Molope's *Dancing in the Dust* clearly depicts the unique challenges faced by women living in the townships during the apartheid era in South Africa. The text further explores the remarkable ways in which women, particularly young girls, responded to the oppression by putting on hold their schooling and engaging in full-time political activism against apartheid. Some of Molope's female activists lose their lives in the battlefield, which highlights women's sacrifices to the cause for liberation in South Africa. The chapter further discusses how Molope has portrayed the radical approach that women in the townships engaged in their activism against apartheid. The people in the townships are portrayed as being very radical in their resistance to apartheid. Molope depicts this phenomenon through her character's actions to use petrol bombs, burn car tires on public roads, and pelt the police with stones as a method for demonstrating their

dissatisfaction with apartheid. Historically, the South African townships have a significant role in the anti-apartheid movement because the most radical and violent protests against the apartheid system took place in the townships. For instance, the two major violent events in the history of the struggle against apartheid, the Sharpeville Massacre, and the Soweto Uprising occurred in two Black townships, Sharpeville near Vereeniging and Soweto in Johannesburg. Commenting about the significance of these two events to the anti-apartheid history, Brian Lapping states that the “Sharpeville Massacre signaled the start of armed resistance in South Africa, and prompted worldwide condemnation of Apartheid’s policies” (5). The Sharpeville Massacre occurred on 21 March 1960. On this day, the apartheid police opened fire, killing or wounding hundreds of peaceful protestors who had marched to a local police station to protest against pass laws. Likewise, the Soweto Uprising took place on 16 June 1976, where Black students protesting against the implementation of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools staged a mass demonstration in which police shot and killed hundreds of students. More broadly, the protests were also about the whole inferior Bantu education system. What began as a one-day march grew into an uprising that spread throughout the country. It then culminated to widespread protests against all areas of life under apartheid such as pass laws, overcrowding, racial inequalities, and repression. Most importantly, it all started in a township

Kagiso Molope’s *Dancing in the Dust* fictionalizes the Soweto uprising. By fictionalizing this event, Molope underscores the full participation of women in the protests and defiance actions against apartheid, which elicits their determination to play a

role in the political transformation of South Africa, a realm traditionally reserved for men. Her personal knowledge of South African politics, and her convincing portrayal of township women, establishes her as a realist writer. Judith Inggs argues that Molope depicts the events in her text in such a compelling style that the reader might believe that the work is an autobiography (421). A good example of this is when Tihelo reflects: “My earliest memory is of feet in black shoes and black socks running, bodies in black and white diving, school bags dropping on the ground in the middle of the streets” (105).

The novel opens with the heroine and narrator, fourteen year old Tihelo, who lives with her mother Kgomotso, and her older sister, seventeen year old Keitumetse, tanning herself in the sun because she wishes to look darker like the rest of her family members. Mabopane, a black township outside Pretoria and the setting of the events, is in turmoil. The black population is rebelling against the status quo and the youth, South African Student’s Organization (SASO) members mainly, are leading the struggle. Tihelo’s mother, Kgomotso, who works as a domestic servant in the white suburbs of Pretoria, leaves home early each morning and returns late in the evening tired. Hence, her daughters spend a lot of time on their own. This is especially so as schooling has been disrupted in Mabopane, like in many other black townships, as most of the school-going youths are involved in the political struggle characterizing the eighties. Because of the dangerous times, each day the girls spend anxious moments as they wait for their mother’s return.

One day their mother does not return home and they later learn that she has been detained by the police, together with many other workers. In the process, they have also

been heavily assaulted with whips, batons, and back-ends of guns. Up to this point, Tihelo is not involved in the struggle, as she prefers to go to school in order to ensure her success in her chosen future career of journalism. As a result, she is disturbed by the political unrest, which disrupts her schooling and diminishes her chances of success. However, after her mother's unjust arrest, assault and humiliation, Tihelo decides to join the struggle. She helps with preparing pamphlets, and making T-shirts and flyers for political demonstrations.

Meantime, Keitumetse falls pregnant with her boyfriend, Mohau's child. Soon after, however, Mohau disappears when the youth stages a 'black Christmas' demonstration. Not knowing whether he has been killed or detained, Keitumetse is depressed at the prospect of raising a baby alone and decides to have an abortion with the help of Tihelo and her friend Lebo. She then develops complications and is admitted to hospital. Meanwhile, SASO decides to march to the police station to demand the release of their comrades. The police respond with shooting them and many die, but Tihelo is among those who escape. She is later arrested, tortured, and humiliated in detention. She is released after six months. Tihelo whom we see tanning herself in order to look dark like her mother and sister subsequently discovers her true identity through a series of events. She discovers that she is the daughter of Kgomotso's brother, Setshiro, and his white girlfriend, Diana, who gave her up to Kgomotso on the day she was born. That solves for her the mystery of her white skin. The novel ends with Tihelo trying to contact Diana who had fled to Canada soon after giving birth to her.

Molope's narrative uses an African feminist perspective to filter the events that unfold in the novel. In *The Dynamics of African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African Feminist*, Susan Arndt criticizes African-American feminists for speaking around the world, including claiming authority over African women, with whose conditions such writers are not familiar. Arndt's assertion resonates with Chandra Mohanty's claim, where she also criticizes the tendency by western feminism and its discursive construction of the category of the "Third World Women" as a generic, homogenous, victimized stereotype that western feminists must save. Carole Boyce Davies furthers this assertion by arguing that "the social and historical realities of African women's lives must be considered in any meaningful examination of women in African literature by African women writers" (561). What stands out from these arguments is that stories about the situation of African women are best told and more accurate when articulated by African women themselves. This transformation is already taking place as more African women such as emerging writers like Kagiso Molope are beginning to write their own stories. Davies contends that, "such works will contribute to the African feminist theory" (561). Judith Inggs argues that, "the contribution made by Molope's experience makes this work far more credible than those by white writers...in which events are generally described from a distance" (421). Molope's writing is both a form of political and literary activism. She understands the struggle in South Africa because, she also grew up in the townships which make her work a fictionalized reality as she recounts on some experiences that she has experienced herself.

Drawing from her own personal experiences of growing up in the township, Moloape uses her characters to articulate how apartheid affected the lives of black women in the townships in South Africa. First, there is Kgomotso, Tihelo's mother. In her portrayal, we see the struggles of women who earn a living as single mothers living in the townships. Kgomotso works seven days a week; thus, she is away from home virtually all day leaving her two daughters unattended. The apartheid government enacts the dawn-to-dusk hours, which stipulate that the segregated black townships have to be on the outskirts of the city, far from the suburbs where domestic jobs are found. Furthermore, Kgomotso is a single mother, not by choice but because she is a deserted wife. Tihelo explains that their father "was swallowed by the City of Gold or Gauteng and never returned home" (14). Therefore, Kgomotso has no one to help raise her children.

Through Kgomotso's single motherhood, Moloape explores gender issues and deals with attitudes towards gender. Tihelo's father deserted the family but a story that he died of a heart disease has been fabricated to "maintain our respect for him" (14). This demonstrates the fact that neither the author nor the narrator are "anti-men," an attribute of African feminism, as Suzan Arndt asserts that African feminism is known for its "idea of a cooperation or complementarity with men" (32). Therefore, even though Kgomotso's husband deserted her, she protects his image for the children. Men are highly respected in this community, as most of the community members believe that "a house with no men is missing something essential" (34).

Through Kgomotso's portrayal, Moloape also expands and advances the theme of identity. Chris Kortright argues that the imposition of colonialism on Africa resulted in

identity crises. He asserts that “the colonizer stripped off our identity and gave us new ones, much lost, intertwined and influenced by their philosophies” (18). Molope depicts this loss of identity through Kgomotso’s portrayal, to which she first refers in passing when she portrays Tihelo worried about her light skin color. Black women who work in white suburbs are not called by their African names but are forced by their white ‘madams’ to assume English names. For instance, Kgomotso is known as “Gladys” in the Pretoria suburbs. On the evening when she fails to return home, Tihelo has to use the English name when asking about Kgomotso’s whereabouts. This is when Kgomotso’s white madam responds thus to Keitumetse’s use of her mother’s African name: “This is an English household. There is no one by that name here. Goodbye” (57). The rude response reminds the girls to switch to Gladys, to which the white woman responds: “Gladys doesn’t work at night, she leaves very early” (57).

Not only is Kgomotso expected to maintain a double identity (among her people and family she is Kgomotso, and in the suburbs she is Gladys), she is also to abide by certain rules that belittles and make her look like an irresponsible child, such as being barred from using the phone. It also shows that some of the white people had no respect for the Africans who worked for them because, as William Nolde elaborates on the working conditions of black servants in white households: “a female was deemed a perpetual minor in law and had no independent powers in her own right” (209). Nolde further states that Black domestic workers “had no provision for contracts of employment, negotiating procedures, sickness benefits or pension rights” (209). These conditions were necessitated by the fact that the apartheid government did not care about

Black people, making them vulnerable to abuse and ill-treatment by their white bosses. A point to note is that this did not only happen to the domestic servants only but to all blacks who were working in various white controlled establishments.

Kgomotso's portrayal further illustrates that during the apartheid period, black South Africans crammed into townships and shantytowns were victims of police harassment and brutality regardless of gender. This often led to spontaneous riots and protests. On the day Kgomotso fails to return home at the usual time, she is humiliated and assaulted by police together with many black workers. The reason for the arrest is not stated, meaning anytime the police feel-like, they arrest the black people and disturb their lives. The workers, it is stated, all have their passbooks with them but despite that, the police want to exercise their powers over them. Tihelo remarks on her mother's condition on the day of the arrest: "My eyes met my mother's with difficulty. She was pulling her shirt together with one hand and covering her left eye with another. Her shirt was torn at her breasts and ripped in the back in long neat stripes, and her eye was about three colors different" (64). The torn and discolored eye indicates the severity of the police brutality to which Kgomotso has been subjected. This is the kind of life that has led to the rise of black struggles in the townships in South Africa. It further highlights the inherent reality of both physical and sexual harassment against Black women and girls at the hands of the apartheid police. Kgomotso's shirt has been ripped because the police wanted to gain easy access to touching her breasts, which underscores the fact that Black female bodies were sites of trauma, always vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. This also suggests a

deliberate attempt by the police to shame and dehumanize her by exposing her private body parts.

Seeing their parents' suffering and their oppressed and deprived lives in the townships, the youth like Tihelo, have resorted to join the struggle and put their education on hold. With Tihelo, it is her mother's unjust arrest, which inspires her to fight the overall oppression. Thus, we hear her remarking: "I often prefer not to remember seeing our people in that space, all bruised and their clothes torn like that. They looked humiliated and afraid" (64). Tihelo makes this observation just before her own arrest when she goes to see her mother at the police station. After this experience, she becomes zealous about fighting for change in South Africa in order to help others and realize her own dreams.

Apart from being deprived of a normal life, Tihelo is deprived of her schooling because of the political turmoil. During the struggle, classes are disturbed more especially in the black township schools. Even as she tries to stick to the routine of attending school, she finds learning difficult as she and her schoolmates regularly hear gunshots and smell tear-gas. When the novel opens, the reader meets her and witnesses her anxiety about her dream of becoming a journalist being shattered because of the unrest. Only those black youth attending 'multi-racial' schools in the city are spared the trauma of the times. The multiracial schools were established in direct opposition to the apartheid regime. However, their fees were much higher than those in the public schools. As a result, the children of the rich black people, such as Thato, were able to enroll in these schools along

with white students. Thus, Tihelo remarks on her friend Thato's boast about her multi-racial experience:

I also tired of hearing about the perks of being in the so-called "multi-racial" schools. It made me feel small. I said nothing about how our school's windows were broken, how we cleaned our own classrooms, or how the constant boycotts kept us at home. Unlike the "multi-racial" schools, we still had corporal punishment. I had got used to hearing the sound of gunshots in the middle of the day and was constantly terrified – that, and I could smell tear gas miles away. (44)

Tihelo also reflects on certain nights with her family when she and her sister, Keitumetse, would tell their mother about their future dreams: "Those nights were calm and tender. If they were summer nights we would be sitting on our front *stoep* to escape the indoor heat. Keitumetse and I would tell our mother who we would become. Keitumetse would become a nurse, just like Mama wanted to be, and I would speak of being a journalist" (31). This passage gives the reader a glimpse of a normal life, which, however, does not last as the times are dominated by political unrest.

With her schooling disrupted, Tihelo decides to join the struggle as she declares: "I wanted something to do that would bring results, having had no homework to do" (44). When the story begins, Tihelo feels detached from the struggle, only hearing news from neighbors and friends and wishing they could watch events "from a distance, the way I preferred to" (30). Even when she eventually agrees to help produce fliers and organize meetings, she reiterates her lack of involvement: "At this point I felt no strong

connection with the comrades, even if I was working with them daily. Instead, I resented their zeal” (67). When her mother is beaten by the police and imprisoned for a night, the violence comes closer, and Tihelo gradually becomes more directly involved in the events and her sense of confidence grows. At the same time, she continues to experience extreme fear and terror, as she explains: “So we just grew into hopelessness because we were constantly running and hiding from danger. I watched in horror as students vandalized people’s property, making it look as though we were in control when in fact we were terrified” (78). Tihelo’s words illustrate that there is an increasing feeling of oppression and this causes her to realize that she has no choice but to protest. This indicates that the fighting for political change is often accompanied with fear, even when that change is necessary. Realizing that she really has to participate in the struggle, Tihelo joins as she remarks: “This is what I had been born into and there was no escape - I could either sit at home and be afraid alone, or I could be on the front lines and be afraid with everyone else” (127). Finally, it dawns on her that her only option concerning the struggle is to be involved. If she is passive and does nothing to resist apartheid, the status quo may never change.

Subsequently, Tihelo is arrested for her involvement in SASO (South African Student’s Organization) activities. This happens when she participates in a protest march to the police station to demand the release of their comrades (SASO members) who have been detained. However, they are met with rudeness, shots are fired, then tear gas; and when police vehicles drive at the crowds, they respond by throwing stones and the police open fire. Many students die in the incident; Tihelo is amongst those who manage to

escape unhurt, but she is later imprisoned. In prison, she endures horrible conditions including being fed rotten food, and sexual abuse by police. She reflects about her imprisonment:

One day a police came to our cell and told me he had something for me. I was hopeful, thinking maybe I could see my family. But in fact he took me to another interrogation room and told me to take off my clothes. I was horrified and afraid, but there were two of them, and they kept me in there for a long time, touching my breasts as they asked me questions. I was made to sit naked on a chair. I tried to cover myself with my arms, but one of them kept pulling my arms away from my chest so that he could have access to my breasts. (11)

This reveals the unbearable conditions that women and girls were subjected to in prisons, just because they were females. The reader can therefore deduce that during apartheid, female bodies were viewed as objects of sexual gratification. These stereotypes dehumanized and exploited young girls even before they could reach puberty. The police officers who sexually violate Tihelo do not think they are sexually harassing a teenage girl but a “black woman” and believe their actions are justified. Gunne Sorcha argues that, “tactical use of sexual violence against woman activists was a ploy by the apartheid police to deny the women a sense of self and a place in the resistance movement” (173). This is resonant with the words of the Chairperson of South African Gender Commission, Thenjiwe Mthintso:

When they interrogated, they usually started by reducing your role as an activist. They weighed you according to their own concepts of womanhood. And they said you are in custody because you are not the right kind of woman – you are irresponsible, you are a whore, you are fat and ugly, or single and thirty and you are looking for man. And whatever you stood for was reduced to prostitution, unpaid prostitution, the license for sexual abuse was created. Your sexuality was used to strip away your dignity, to undermine your sense of self. (Sorcha 173)

Molopo further depicts this element of dehumanization as, in prison, Tihelo does not have access to bathing facilities and she is placed in isolation in a cold, dirty, and stinking cell. She is also tortured in order to give information about SASO. These incidents have a lasting psychological damage on her, for long after her release from prison, she does not feel clean even after taking a bath. However, in spite of the torture Tihelo remains courageous to persevere in her activism against apartheid. The torture she has been subjected to has turned her into a brave girl who “had no tears. Nor did I wish I would cry. My body had reverted to that state where all the hard emotions were tied up in a knot inside it” (141). Though young, Tihelo’s contribution to the liberation movement is very impactful as she plays a leading role in the student’s demonstrations. Tihelo, like Molopo, is an image of an African woman who refuses to be silenced by the oppressive forces of the apartheid system.

The racist laws of apartheid, which penetrate into family life in the townships, also have a profound impact to Tihelo’s suffering. She is deprived of a normal family

life: that of getting love from her biological parents. As per apartheid laws, Tihelo's father Setshiro had to be imprisoned for breaking the Immorality Act, which forbade intimate relationships across the color line. Setshiro's whereabouts remains a mystery as he is said to have committed suicide in prison. Tihelo's biological mother, Diana, fled to Canada. Tihelo has a tragic history of a father whose whereabouts are unknown and her white mother who was forced to abandon her at birth. In an attempt to protect her and make her believe she is her biological child, Kgomotso has kept Tihelo's true identity hidden, despite her white skin. This has kept her wondering all this time until the mystery is solved by Mma Kleintjie.

Molope continues to depict the contributions made by women towards the struggle against apartheid through her portrayal of Dikeledi, a teenage political activist who guards the headquarters of the revolutionary movement despite the danger of it being invaded by the apartheid's military forces. Dikeledi's courage is clearly depicted in her active participation in the confrontation between students and the police where she unfortunately dies. Her death in the battlefield highlights the fact that young women were so keen and passionate to resist apartheid that they were prepared to die for the cause of the struggle (39). Her portrayal draws the reader's attention to women's strength and determination in the fight against apartheid. Through Dikeledi, Molope also allows her readers to celebrate the lives of women who died in the battlefield and the sacrifices that they made to further the anti-apartheid struggle.

Therefore, Dikeledi's death cannot be seen as a defeat. Instead, Molope uses her characters' victim position to eulogize women's courage. Obioma Nnameka argues that

such depictions are, “fundamental to feminist scholarship by foregrounding females as agents of insurrection and change operating within an oppressive situation. What is important is not whether these agents survive their insurrection or crashed by it; what is crucial is the fact that they choose to act” (4). Dikeledi, represents the many young South Africans who were brave and willing to sacrifice in the fight against apartheid at an early.

Molope’s account of the Soweto uprising where Dikeledi dies shows equal gender participation in the struggle. In fact, the text illustrates that women (young and old) transcended their traditional social roles to participate in the struggle against apartheid. Molope seems to infer that without the involvement of women, the anti-apartheid movement would not have been as successful as it was. The group of students who marched to the Orlando stadium to protest against the imposition of Afrikaans as the official medium of instruction in schools would have been much smaller and weaker without the involvement of women as it is estimated that 20 000 students participated in the protests. In *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Sifiso Ndlovu states that the official death toll in the Soweto uprising stood at 576 – including 75 colored, two whites, two Indians and 496 African people of which 124 were women (350). The reader can deduce that *Dancing in the Dust* appreciates women’s joint participation with men in the struggle against apartheid in reaction to the fact that “African women and men face similar forms of social oppression, African feminists frequently assume that men and women should form an alliance in the fight against this phenomena” (Arndt 73). Arndt further argues that African feminism aims at what is called *complementarity*, “the need for women and men to complement one another and build one another up” (Arndt 74).

The understanding of complementarity is implied in *Dancing in the Dust* as Molopo's comrades have equal gender roles in the struggle.

Keitumetse, Tihelo's sister, is also portrayed as a victim of the apartheid system. Through her, Molope also portrays the theme of teenage pregnancy in the townships as she becomes pregnant at the age of seventeen. She is impregnated by Mohau, a high school learner like herself who is still too young to shoulder the responsibility of fatherhood or being a husband. Though not directly stated in the text, it is obvious that Keitumetse's pregnancy, the same as her mother's, is directly linked to lack of proper parental supervision which is necessitated by the fact that her mother has to work seven days a week because of the unjust and oppressive laws of apartheid. This applies to all the youth in the black townships. The problem is worsened when the supposed family head, the father, abandons the family. In such cases, the mother has to go out and work to support the family, as it happens with Kgomotso.

What makes matters worse for Keitumetse is that, due to the political unrest Mohau disappears, leaving her to face the pregnancy by herself. His whereabouts remain unknown – whether he is underground or in detention. Intimidated by the prospect of single motherhood, she decides to abort the pregnancy without, however, her mother's knowledge. Kgomotso only learns about this sad episode when Keitumetse develops serious complications and has to be hospitalized. Teenage pregnancy is portrayed as a “killer of dreams” in the novel and we get this from Tihelo's remarks: “I had never heard about a man and woman loving each other. All you heard about a man and a woman was how, when they encountered each other, they found a way to sabotage each other's

future” (47). Apparently, Tihelo bases her comments on the experiences of two members of her family. First, there is Kgomotso whose dream to become a nurse came to nothing when she fell pregnant and gave birth to Keitumetse. Then there is Keitumetse herself. This helps the reader to grasp the fact that sex has serious consequences for women than it has for men. The fact that Mohau has impregnated Keitumetse does not stop him from continuing with his life as he carries on with his activism against apartheid. However, Keitumetse’s situation is different. Her body carries the child and she will have to quit school in order to focus on raising her child.

Besides having little time with the children, Tihelo points out that their mother has never discussed intimate relationships because it is not the practice among Africans to discuss such subjects with children, and that if done, it would amount to encouraging the children to seek such relationships. Such fear to open up to the children seemingly worsens the situation. Keitumetse’s pregnancy allows Molohe to address issues such as the lack of sex education and the community’s view of abortion. This suggests that Molohe puts the blame of teenage pregnancy on colonialism as missionaries eliminated sex education from the African school’s curriculum, arguing that it was immoral.

Molopo continues to portray how apartheid impacted black women in the townships during apartheid in South Africa through Lebo who is depicted as living under an extremely challenging situation at home. She lives alone with her father. First, her father is very harsh towards her, but even worse than that, it is hinted in the text that Lebo is a victim of sexual abuse by her father. Lebo is also well-informed about pregnancy and abortion. Because of her “know-how on sexual matters,” Tihelo goes to her to seek help

for Keitumetse's abortion. In response, Lebo tells Tihelo: "I heard you can use javel or dettol. You drink it, and the baby comes out" (78). She offers to contact a woman who makes the concoctions for aborting. When Keitumetse takes it, she bleeds continuously and has to be hospitalized. Lebo herself is rumored to have aborted two pregnancies, which might have been caused by her incestuous relationship with her father.

Lebo's sexual abuse is also hinted at by Ausi Martha who states: "The only thing he let that child keep was her dancing. He took away everything else" (52). Tihelo also observes that Lebo never talks about her father. For example, on the day Tihelo fetches the concoction, she remarks about the visit: "At her home, Lebo and I sat at the kitchen talking about everything but her father. I did not ask if he was home, I thought that she would not have invited me if he was. She was loud and relaxed like she always was at school" (97). Finally, Tihelo sees Lebo's father by sheer chance as it is clear that Lebo's attitude towards her father is that he is her well-kept secret. It is all these hints that lead to the reader's perceiving that Lebo is an abused girl. At school she is intelligent and entertaining, but all that is a mask to hide the pain and nightmare of her life. Lebo's sexual abuse by her father can be tied to apartheid, which enforced the oppression of black workers. Apartheid turned her father into the monster that he is because he lost his arm in a steel factory. Consequently, he lost his job, without even paid compensation. Thus, he is an angry man who drinks and sexually abuses his daughter. The sexual abuse that Lebo is subjected to highlights the necessity of female involvement in the anti-apartheid movement.

Lebo's portrayal depicts women's vulnerability during the apartheid era in South Africa. The reader sees that women were the most vulnerable people through whom frustrated men would vent out their anger with the country's prevailing status quo. Even when they were not the ones who had been victimized by apartheid, still they suffered as the victim (usually a man), would "revenge" on them. With all its devastating effects on the status of women, women understood the fact that meaningful change for them could never be achieved through reform only but through the total destruction of the apartheid system.

The negative impact of apartheid on women who lived in the township is also illustrated through the portrayal of Grandma Diile. She is an elderly woman who makes a living by selling vegetables along the streets. When she was younger, she was unhappily married to an unfaithful husband who cheated on her. He was also irresponsible towards their children, not supporting them. When he died, he left her with nothing. Hence, both as a married woman and a widow she struggled to support herself and her children. This shows the extent of suffering of the women in general

Molope further depicts the inherent racism of apartheid in the townships through her portrayal of Mma Kleintjie, a 'colored' woman who lives in the township, and is a lonely woman. Mma Kleintjie is portrayed as 'colored' - a term used for people of mixed racial origin in South Africa. According to the narrator, Tihelo, Mma Kleintjie is a victim of the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act and the Mixed Marriages Act (183). As a triple victim (or violator) of the apartheid laws, Mma Kleintjie lost her white husband and her near-white child because of the three Acts. Through Mma Kleintjie's situation,

Molope illustrates how the apartheid government teared families apart. She had broken all three laws because she had married a white man, had a child with him, and lived with them both. When they were discovered, the government declared that they were not supposed to be married or live in the same area. Her child looked White according to the government officials, and so they had to be separated. Because she looked 'Colored,' she was the one who had to move away from the white area and far from her family. Her eviction from her home further demonstrates the fact that the apartheid regime did not care about non-White families. They separated Mma Kleintjie from her son and husband, because race was their number one priority. Thus, they did not concern themselves with mother-child relationships.

During apartheid in South Africa, the Immorality Act barred relationships across the color bar; the Mixed Marriages Act outlawed marriages of mixed couples and the Group Areas Act enforced segregated residential areas in the cities. That is how Mma Kleintjie found herself losing her family when she was found out to have married a white man and had produced a 'colored' child. Her child looked white according to the government officials and so they had to be separated. What makes matters worse is that she is discriminated in the township. From the beginning, she is drawn towards Tihelo because she reminds her of her lost daughter. This is the reason she also insists that Tihelo must be told her true identity. Mma Kleintjie's loneliness is further intensified by the hostility of the black community as she is taken for a witch. Even children are warned to keep their distance from her. They all fear her to the extent that if accidentally their playing ball falls onto her yard, no one will go inside to fetch it. Her discrimination

reveals that, if a woman did not fit in to the socially constructed standards of a community, she was easily ostracized.

On the other side of these images of pain are Thato and her family. Thato is Tihelo's estranged schoolmate and friend who now attends a multi-racial school in the city. Her father is a businessman and her mother is a nurse. Because of the Group Areas Act, the family lives in Mabopane despite their economic status. The family's interaction with the Mabopane community is mainly through freely giving help each time it is asked, such as transport. However, their child Thato is now alienated from her former schoolmates whom she views as 'disruptive' and 'unwilling' to go to school. Thato represents the youth whose parents are helping them to suppress their identity as Black South Africans.

Molope, in her novel, *Dancing in the Dust*, mirrors the struggles faced by mostly female characters in different dimensions. Women such as Kgomotso work as domestic servants and suffer unjust arrests. They are hardly ever home because they have to travel far to and from work. Meantime, their unsupervised children end up misbehaving. Some girls are victims of incest. As a group, the youth reacts to the oppressive environment by joining the struggle for freedom. Many are killed as a result, or remain unaccounted for. Most of the women are bringing up children without the help of their husbands who have deserted them. Some are victims of racist laws, which enforce segregation. Molope has also portrayed police brutality to the black South Africans. The black township is shown as a hive of student and police surveillance.

Just like Lauretta Ngcobo and Njabulo Ndebele, whose texts have been examined in this thesis, Molope's *Dancing in the Dust* clearly articulates the contributions of women towards the struggle against apartheid. The text serves as a moving tribute paid to women's resilience and courage in the long battle against racial oppression in South Africa. *Dancing in the Dust* also deviates from the tendency of depicting women as perpetual victims. Instead, Molope portrays women as agents of social and political transformation in apartheid South Africa. Her female characters, most of them very young in age, are depicted as resilient and courageous young girls who are determined to vigorously resist apartheid.

## CHAPTER 4

### Waiting Women in Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*

The theme of waiting explored in many African literary works can be traced to the enduring history of colonialism in Africa. Colonial forces brought hardship and exploitation to the colonized African states. In South Africa, racial segregation and oppression arrived first with the British and the Dutch colonists of the nineteenth century. Apartheid made more rigid existing policies of racial segregation, forcing the black subaltern into submission. However, beneath this submission was a yearning for change and freedom - a waiting, as Remi Akujobi declares:

The theme of 'waiting' in South African novels stems from the passive attitude of the people towards the brutal forces milking them dry of their resources, both material and human, and, later on, developed into the awareness that there is a limit to man's passivity; aggression, exploitation, and neo-colonialism by any means available. (20)

Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* is among the South African novels that explore the theme of waiting. The novel brings the reader into the lives of four women struggling for survival and identity after having been deserted by their husbands. Ndebele juxtaposes these four women's stories with the narrative of a fictionalized Winnie Mandela, wife to internationally recognized anti-apartheid activist, Nelson Mandela, who was incarcerated for twenty-seven years in Robben Island. As a public figure and a famed beauty, Winnie Mandela became symbolic of the rest of the

South African women who, for one reason or another but mainly due to the prevailing political status quo, had to wait for their absent husbands. The novel also contains the story of Penelope, Odysseus's wife who waited eighteen years for her husband's return. Penelope's story serves as a framing device to the stories of the five women, and whose presence serves as a reminder that under patriarchy women are expected to wait chastely for their husbands, no matter how long the wait. Thus in the novel, Ndebele ultimately interrogates patriarchy.

Intertwined and embedded within Ndebele's theme of waiting are the themes of loneliness, longing, infidelity, vulnerability, loyalty, self-sacrifice, degradation, and betrayal, all of which Ndebele's characters experience. For Mannete Mofolo, whose husband, Lejone has left her and their children in rural Lesotho to work in the mines of South Africa, her waiting turns into betrayal when he deserts her and the family. Delisile Skhosana, whose husband left her to study to be a doctor in Scotland, is divorced when her husband returns after fourteen years to discover she had a four-year-old child in his absence. Mamello Molete, whose husband left for Cuba to join the armed resistance movement against the apartheid status quo, too, is divorced after ten years of waiting in order for him to marry another woman. Marara Baloyi, married to a cheating husband, is abandoned without being granted a divorce.

In the novel, Ndebele cites a combination of factors which impact on his female characters. One factor, brought about by European colonialism in Africa, is modernity,

which ushered in the practice of wage employment throughout Africa due to the introduction of mining, commercial agriculture, and manufacturing. Other factors include natural disasters such as prolonged drought, to which the whole Southern African region is prone, forcing men to leave their homes to seek employment in the mines of South Africa in order to feed their families. In addition, modernity brought with it western education, which resulted in the desire for higher education among South Africans, mainly to improve their social standard. As agitation about the unequal social standards grew, many black South Africans, mainly men, and a few white South Africans were imprisoned for publicly opposing the apartheid system. These factors combine to operate within a mainly patriarchal African society, leading husbands to leave their wives behind with the expectation that their wives would wait for their return; hence, the dominant theme of waiting advanced in the novel. Being forced to wait, then, is a central aspect of Ndebele's theme, and he demonstrates through his descriptions of his women characters' situations how being left behind by their husbands negatively impacted women's lives during the apartheid era in South Africa. Ndebele's text depicts a two-fold waiting: the women waiting for their husbands to return, and South Africa waiting for apartheid to end. The two are brought together in the figure of Winnie Mandela, who, in waiting for her husband who represents the anti-apartheid movement, combines these two states of being.

*The Cry of Winnie Mandela* also explores the direct and indirect roles played by women in the struggle against apartheid. Ndebele's four female characters are portrayed as support systems for their absent men and families, presenting women in a secondary

role. Yet, in the absence of their husbands, these women raised their children and maintained their households, filling in during their husbands' absences from the home and community. Winnie Mandela's portrayal by Ndebele reveals that some women did not merely play a secondary role as supports to their husbands, but that these women in fact, actively sustained the resistance to political oppression and segregation during periods when their husbands were away. While waiting for the release of her husband from prison, Winnie Mandela relentlessly spearheaded the struggle against apartheid. Ndebele's depiction of Winnie's resistance clearly illustrates the types of actions undertaken by women to challenge the apartheid regime in South Africa. Therefore, "waiting" represented by Ndebele's characters is not passive, but instead is an active, busy and demanding period in their lives.

The novel is divided into two parts, with the first part serving as an introduction to the first four women, their respective situations, and the reasons for the departure of their husbands. In the second part of the novel, Ndebele brings all four characters under one roof, in Delisile's house, to drink tea and talk. They call themselves *Ibandla Labafazi Abalindile* - a Gathering of Women who are Waiting. Ndebele gives more details on the challenges the four women faced. He also introduces the fifth woman, Winnie Mandela, as he blends fact and fiction through weaving Winnie's real life experiences with the fiction of these four women. They approach her with a considerable level of respect owing to her esteemed social status – "Mother of the Nation." They assert that she is the best person to share with or to understand their plight because she also went through a similar situation. In their gathering, they ask her several questions concerning her

experiences of waiting for her husband's release from prison. They also share their own experiences with her: the pain of waiting, loneliness, betrayal by their husbands, and the sexual indiscretion some of them committed out of loneliness. Winnie joins the conversation and responds to the women's questions. Ndebele's Winnie possesses traits that resembles the real Winnie Mandela. She is bold, charismatic and eloquent. She narrates the hardships she endured during her husband's absence: her imprisonment, torture, and the spontaneous police raids at her home and banishment to Brandfort.

At the end of the novel, all four women and Winnie take a voyage to Durban. Along the way, they give a ride to a hiker, a tall woman with reddish hair, who turns out to be Penelope. Penelope reveals to them that she is setting out to places where women have known about her, endeavoring to free them from the weight of unrestricted devotion that has been set on their shoulders.

Ndebele assumes an African feminist approach to explore the predicament of women left, not just alone, but rather in vulnerability. He depicts the hardships faced by these women, such as ensuring the survival of their families, the yearning for the missing husband and the powerlessness to plan for the future. He also notes the additional weight of the societal expectation that these women should be faithful to their absent husbands. While feminism is broadly understood as addressing issues of sexism and gender inequality, more specifically African articulations of feminism address issues affecting women such socio-economic and class factors which contribute to African women's oppression, economic exploitation, and marginalization (Steady 562). Carole Boyce Davies argues that the challenges faced by African women are different from those

encountered by western women. She lists some of the challenges as: “lack of choice in motherhood and marriage, oppression of barren women, genital mutilation, enforced silence, and a variety of other forms of oppression intrinsic to various societies which still plague African women’s lives” (561). All these are illustrated through the women characters in Ndebele’s novel as “not only are they robbed of voice, they are also robbed of identity, a sense of self and sense of worth” (Akujobi 23). Thus, without their husbands, they cannot even consider representing themselves.

In “Perspectives on African Feminism: Defining and Clarifying African Feminist Literatures,” Suzan Arndt provides insight into Ndebele’s feminist critique by first of all stating that African feminism is a movement which gets to the bottom of African gender relations and the problems of African women – illuminating their causes and consequences, and criticizing them. Arndt further argues that African feminism has three distinct attributes: First, the idea of a cooperation or complementarity with men, the affirmation of motherhood and the family. Second, the concern to criticize patriarchal manifestations in African societies in a differentiated way, weighing precisely which traditional institutions are agreeable and positive to women and which disadvantage women so severely that their abolition seems imperative. Third, African feminism aims at discussing gender roles in the context of other oppressive systems such as racism, neocolonialism, financial prohibition and abuse and additionally domineering as well as generally settled and completely new degrees and choices for women, which would be commensurate to overcoming their oppression. Ndebele’s text gives insight into all these concerns of African feminism through delineating the actual ways in which women were

oppressed during the apartheid era in South Africa. The text also reveals the socially enacted patriarchal practices that turns a married woman into “a target of gossip and exclusion” (Akujobi 26), and how women like Winnie Mandela declined to be intimidated by these forces and instead, confronted them.

Throughout the novel, Ndebele stirs the reader to analyze the realities of the hardships that women encounter and how they respond to those hardships. He compels the reader to examine the reasons that make a woman to stay in her marriage even when the husband mistreats or has deserted her. Ndebele’s depiction of women demonstrates his determination to represent them positively, showing that they are independent and brave. He shifts his narrative focus from women as victims of oppression to women as actors in history.

Van Dyke contextualizes the impacts of colonialism particularly to South Africa. She argues that, “colonialism and imperialism resulted in a total subversion of black people’s role in society. They were rendered ‘invisible’ and ‘silent’ by their domination and subjugation” (28). Remarking about this intangibility of blacks in a white man’s reality, Ralph Ellison notes “when they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me” (64). This ‘imperceptibility’ was even worse for Black women who, under colonial misrule, suffered severely, as specified already, since they endured subjugation both by their own particular culture and by racial domination.

Consequent to the introduction of the capitalist colonial economy, the marginalization of women came in several ways. Firstly, the advent of title deeds made

men the sole owners of land. As a result, women lost access and control of land and they became increasingly economically dependent on men; in turn, this led to an intensification of domestic patriarchy, reinforced by colonial social institutions. Secondly, colonialism caused the introduction of wage labor, which forced men to migrate from the villages to work in urban areas, causing profound negative economic and social impact on women. Ndebele depicts this phenomenon through his first character, Mannete Mofolo. Her husband, Lejone, leaves her with their children and goes to Johannesburg, South Africa where he works as miner. Lejone quickly forgets about his family and starts a new family in Johannesburg. Ndebele also indicates that there were other factors that were behind this departure and eventual desertion as he remarks: “Forced off the land by colonial laws, designed to satisfy the imperialist hunger for labor, men from all parts of Southern Africa left on voyages of discovery to Kimberly, the Diamond City and Johannesburg, the Golden City” (6). Through Lejone’s desertion of his family, Ndebele, just like Ngcobo, portrays how the migrant labor system destroyed black families especially because, migrant workers were not allowed to bring their families to their workstations with them. Living on their own, away from their wives, caused the men to be vulnerable to infidelity as most of them ended up having multiple sexual partners from the nearby villages.

Ndebele also depicts how the migrant labor system promoted gender inequality by prohibiting the women from going into the cities. David Medalie argues that this policy “turned women *into those who wait* while others travel and do which reduced them to forced passivity” (58; my emphasis). Mannete complains in one of their gatherings, “we

always have to respond to something, others begin and we respond” (39). This reveals the gender biases that consistently overrate men and underrate women, as explored in Simone De Beauvoir’s essay “The Second Sex,” which challenges these social constrictions. Even though De Beauvoir was a white Western feminist, her ideas can be contextualized and made applicable to African societies. De Beauvoir argues that men fundamentally oppress women in many ways. She points out that men are regarded as more important species than women. A man can pursue his desires and become what he wants to be. Yet the woman is expected to function only as an appendage to the man. Ndebele illustrates this appalling phenomenon in his text as only the male goes to look for employment in the mines, can pursue a medical career, or be noticeably engaged with political activities and business. The women are subjected to an inferior status wherein in their “waiting” the primary concern to anticipate is the return of their husbands.

Remi Akujobi points out that society bestows upon the woman the status of being the ‘Other’ who is not expected to tell her story, cannot define herself; rather she must submit to the descriptions assigned to her by the dominant group. Ndebele depicts how these exclusionary practices of the apartheid system meant that a “waiting” woman could not even plan her life and make permanent decisions, as Mannete remarks:

When endurance becomes its own end, with nothing beyond it, when a women caught in waiting no longer requires the return of a companion who departed so long ago he has become a memory that is no longer evoked by guilt, only to die out immediately? In time, waiting brews

terrible dilemmas of its own. Why shouldn't a woman-in-waiting begin to make permanent plans, without her man? (8).

As modernity took firm hold and the South African economy expanded from mining and agriculture, there was "the growth of the professions" (Ndebele 6). The quest for higher education, for example, took Delisile Skhosana's husband away. Her husband left South Africa to go and pursue medical studies in Scotland. Ndebele presents Delisile as a hardworking domestic science teacher who worked herself to the bone to ensure that she accumulates enough money to financially support her husband in Scotland. The narrator remarks, "when he fails one year, and loses his scholarship, Delisile borrows money from wherever she can find it. She even has to sell off furniture to help pay his fees until he passes his examinations and his scholarship is restored" (18). This speaks to the heavy burden placed upon "waiting" women during apartheid in South Africa. Not only does she work hard in order to pay for her husband's tuition fees in Scotland, Delisile also single-handedly raises her two children over a period of fourteen years.

However, while still waiting for him, as he took so long to return, Delisile succumbed to feelings of loneliness and abandonment, and slept with her son's friend, a local businessman who impregnated her. When her husband eventually returned home, after fourteen years, he found her with a four-year-old child by another man and divorced her without hesitation: "In a rage, he accuses her of infidelity and abandons her and her 'spoilt children', now teenagers, who side with her. Six months after his return, he marries a nurse" (18). Through Delisile's infidelity, Ndebele examines the sexual frustrations that "waiting" women had to endure. The novel's narrator declares, "when

you are waiting, you know the meaning of desire...the desire for secrecy and pleasure and remaining uncaught even in an illicit relationship” (44). While some women like Penelope, Mannete and Marara were able to suppress their need for sexual intimacy, Delisile failed and succumbed to her sexual desires. It may seem that she did not involve herself in illicit relationships because she was promiscuous but because of the loneliness that comes with being a “waiting” woman as Delisile herself explains:

Sometimes, of course, a woman desires to have sex. I have sometimes felt that I used my fantasies of being in love to justify the real desire for sex. It comes from a deep feeling of disconnectedness. Perhaps many women, who wait, know this feeling. (53)

Ndebele’s point is that the need for intimacy is human, not confined to one gender over another; yet the patriarchal conventions placed the burden only on women to suppress their needs for intimacy, labelling women who could not as promiscuous or immoral.

Ngugi wa Thiongo, an African writer who has likewise been credited for seeing the struggle of women as a multi-layered battle affirms that “women are the most exploited and oppressed section of the entire working class, exploited as workers and at home, and also by backyard elements in the culture, remnants of feudalism” (565).

Ndebele examines this exploitation through Delisile’s story by way of his advancement of themes of betrayal, degradation, spousal exploitation, and double standards. The themes of betrayal and spousal exploitation are depicted through her husband’s action to immediately divorce her on his arrival yet she had been the one supporting him financially while he was in Scotland. He exploited her by demanding money from her,

making her incur debts through the loans she took and the furniture she sold to obtain money and then send it to him. The theme of double standards is illustrated through the fact that her husband has the guts to divorce her because of infidelity while he himself was busy sleeping with Scottish girls who would be forced to abort when he impregnated them. His hypocrisy is also socially sanctioned, as men who are “guilty of adultery or desertion, or cruelty,” as Lauretta Ngcobo points out, “suffer no severe punishment.” In fact, “they are often accepted back by their families, chastened, wiser, but forgiven” (540). Delisile is not just betrayed and abandoned by her husband, she is socially ostracized for doing the very thing that her husband has done (many times over). She has not ‘waited’ hard enough and must pay the price.

Ndebele portrays the self-centeredness of men, as all the husbands of the four female characters in the novel are utterly selfish with no care at all for the feelings of their wives. The issue of man’s selfishness is also demonstrated through the third woman, Mamello Molete. Her husband left for Cuba to join the armed resistance against the apartheid regime. However, he did not tell his wife about his plans to leave South Africa as Mamello mentions: “Twelve months later I received a postcard with a Cuban stamp. My husband had fled into exile. He had succeeded in keeping his political activities from me” (25). He left her alone to look after his elderly parents, whom she dutifully cared for during the entire duration of his absence. However, upon his return from Cuba, he was immediately arrested and handed fifteen years imprisonment on Robben Island for military incursion where Mamello faithfully visited him.

On his release from prison, Mamello's husband did not bother to return home because he had fallen in love with another woman. She had great hope that they would re-unite after his release from prison. However, she soon realized that this was not to be, as she explains: "I should have known that things would not turn out that way... Women are prisoners of the dream of romance. His release from prison was not to be my release from waiting" (26). After being released from prison, Mamello's husband becomes an important figure in the anti-apartheid movement. He abandons her and their children to marry another woman, leaving Mamello "dumb with shock and suffering from a repeated nervous breakdown" (26). She resorted to desperate measures to get her man back, such as going to witch doctors. She wrote him numerous letters, pleading for his return. However, after ignoring all of them, he finally responded to one, cautioning her to stop writing him letters. Part of it reads as follows: "Please, now stay away from my life. There is nothing left between us. It's all over and done with!" (31). His words and action show that Mamello's husband views his own feelings and future as more important than Mamello's feelings, and rather than acknowledge and thank her for her loyalty and sacrifice, he insists on going away. In addition, his behavior demonstrates just a basic lack of empathy. His basic humanity is lacking and this is striking given that he sought to undo apartheid and even went to jail for his anti-apartheid activities.

Ndebele then brings all four characters under one roof. They call themselves a Gathering of Women – *Iibandla Labafazi Abalindile*. It is in this section of the novel that he introduces the fifth woman who waited for her husband, who actually waited the longest, Winnie Mandela. Winnie was the public image of Nelson Mandela during his

twenty-seven year imprisonment. She is “seen as distinct from the other four in that she refused to dance to the tune of society, respecting what is the ‘norm’ for the typical African woman” (Akujobi 27). Winnie Mandela is portrayed as being more significant than the other four waiting women are because “she waited in public while the other women waited in the privacy of their homes, suffering in the silence of their bedrooms” (39). Because of her publicity, Winnie Mandela, became a “visible sign for the invisible women in South Africa - a waiting whose visibility may make their invisibility slightly easier to bear” (62), hence Mamello calls her “the ultimate symbol of waiting” (61).

Ndebele compares Winnie Mandela to the Homeric Penelope, who also waited in Ithaca for the return of her husband, Odysseus. Ndebele uses Greek Mythology to capture the attention of his readers and highlight the predicament faced by women in South Africa. Robbe Grillet argues that “myth is key to comprehending a story” (65). Therefore, through his insertion of Penelope into the story, Ndebele entices his readers to interact with the text through Penelope’s plight while he comments on the relentless oppression of women both in South Africa and globally. Penelope was accused of being ‘fickle’ after the public wrongly thought she had married someone else after waiting eighteen years for her husband (Ndebele 2). Winnie Mandela was also faced with numerous accusations amid her husband’s twenty-seven year absence. Janine Van Rooyen argues that “by overtly linking Madikizela-Mandela to Penelope, Ndebele critiques the ‘unfair judgements’ imposed on her” (62). Both Winnie Mandela and Penelope are depicted as the ultimate symbol of a waiting wife who is subjected to a constant public scrutiny in the

absence of the husband. What makes Winnie and Penelope unmistakable in their waiting and different from the other four characters is their public visibility.

However, unlike Penelope, Winnie did not wait in solemn loneliness. Instead, she took advantage of her publicity and her husband's name to fight against the apartheid government. In addition, Penelope did not have to deal with an oppressive system of racism like Winnie. Winnie is even more public because of apartheid, though Penelope, as a queen, was a highly public figure herself. Most importantly, Winnie's waiting became a turning point of her activism as she literally became the face of the anti-apartheid movement. Ndebele portrays her as a fearless 'warrior' who "radiated unnerving strangeness, power, and energy" (103), a "carrier and instrument of the revolution" (102). This came with a heavy price because she was constantly subjected to the brutality of the apartheid police who spontaneously raided her home, as Winnie explains:

They would come just before dawn and bang on our front door. They would then begin what they said was searching for illegal things. They always left our house looking as if elephants had been fighting in it. The coarse Boer policemen thumbing through our personal belongings, pulling books off shelves, turning drawers upside down, reading our letters, rough handling our possessions and all the time passing derogatory and derisory remarks about *kaffirs*. It was horrible. (107)

Besides the house raids, Winnie also suffered "countless arrests, charges, courtroom dramas, interrogation and torture, imprisonments, detentions, restrictions, bannings,

banishment, and the continued absence of her husband” (60). However, despite all these hardships, she continued with her activism against the apartheid regime.

Winnie defied the stereotypical portrayal of a waiting woman that portrays her as a “lonely, single and stoic figure” (Van Rooyen 62). Her activism against the apartheid regime was so impactful and relentless that the apartheid government decided to banish her to a small, isolated town in the Free-State Province called Brandfort. By forcing her to Brandfort, the apartheid government was forcing her into the role of a passive, ‘waiting’ woman. Winnie, however, did not comply with this plan as she continued with her activism. It was in this town, therefore, that she made a huge impact in the struggle against apartheid. In the narrator’s words:

“In Brandfort, I stood out so much...Until I came and defied all the civil laws enshrined in the memory of Brandfort. I breezed into stores where blacks were not allowed and watched in consternation on the faces of unbelieving white customers” (123).

Ndebele’s portrayal of Winnie illustrates that he acknowledges women’s political activism during the apartheid period. He illustrates that while waiting for her husband, Winnie was not passive, but she was engaged in a political onslaught against the apartheid government, bulldozing her way into a realm that was generally restrictive for the men. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* further shows that Winnie’s activism flourished during her husband’s absence – her waiting. This suggests that waiting does not have to be a “sentence” but can be used productively, it can be a source of empowerment.

Through the theme of “waiting”, Ndebele depicts the hardships that women in South Africa encountered during the apartheid era. He illustrates how apartheid laws and

social rules controlled women's lives. Society expects a woman to be morally virtuous and tolerant, paying little heed to how her husband treats her. The public constantly scrutinizes her life and actions, and she is judged according to the pre-determined cultural norms of her time. Therefore, a woman's identity is constructed by the external world. Throughout the novel, the women remark about the vigilant eye of society. This shows that women's identities are shaped by patriarchal norms, which dictate for them what is regarded as acceptable or unacceptable. Winnie emphasizes that her "waiting" was not simply existential, but proceeded also from her status as a woman and a wife:

Waiting! It empties out your life. Your thoughts are more with your husband than with yourself. You become your own afterthought. Your inner life squeezed out by a relentless public concern on his behalf. The emptying began even before Nelson was arrested. It started with the systematic invasion of whatever dreams we had of family life. I wanted to make a home for Nelson. Winnie, a housewife! Of course. Strange to say, I sought to be that at the time. What woman wouldn't? (106)

*The Cry of Winnie Mandela* depicts that separation was a dominant feature of many South African people, especially because of the apartheid system, whether the men left in search of employment opportunities, or because of prevailing political conditions, the truth is that these often led to the separation of families. Ndebele has portrayed all the effects of these separations on the women. In the absence of their husbands, they were confronted with serious challenges such as hunger, loneliness, and desire. However, societal expectations, backed by patriarchal stereotypes dictated that these women should

remain faithful to their absent husbands. They were also expected to deny themselves, disregard personal needs, and further pay the bills for their husband's desertions. In addition, they were not expected to enter into new relationship, even when it was clear that their husbands had permanently deserted them.

The novel further illustrates how the ingrained gender roles established by colonial forces forced women into passivity. Only the man can aspire to do something meaningful with his life, like studying to be a doctor, or getting involved in politics, while the woman remains behind to look after the home and raise children. African feminists insist that women should transcend these passive roles and be able to realize and define themselves beyond wife and motherhood.

*The Cry of Winnie Mandela* also portrays Winnie Mandela as a remarkable figure to focus on, both for her decades of waiting for her husband and her courageous and relentless activism against the apartheid system, which earned her the title of "Mother of the Nation." Winnie also serves as a model for women who have been beaten into submission and passivity, as she demonstrates a call to action – rebel against the passivity. She demonstrates that in order to be emancipated from any form of oppression, women should become relentlessly aggressive in resisting those forces that oppress them. Finally, Winnie's portrayal also shows that women should not look up to the men for their emancipation, but should stand up and fight for themselves as they have the same intelligence and bravery as the men. Much the same as Kagiso Molope's protagonist, Tihelo, who endured torment in the hands of the apartheid police for her involvement with the South African Students' Organization (SASO), Ndebele's Winnie also refused to

be intimidated by police brutality. Rather, being brutalized by the police, transformed her into a hard-core anti-apartheid activist who spent her entire twenty-seven year “waiting” period fighting against apartheid.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

The investigations of the different authors' depictions of women's lives in their rural, township and urban circles demonstrate that during the apartheid period in South Africa, women living in these distinct settings were subjected to various challenges and oppressions synonymous with each setting. While there were similarities in the ways in which women were oppressed during apartheid, there were also contrasts, which pointed to the particular forms of oppression black South African women faced in different societies and areas.

Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* mainly focuses on rural South Africa and delineates a variety of rural women oppressed by apartheid laws and patriarchal traditional customs, which predominantly dictated life in the rural areas. The novel shows the extent to which apartheid paired itself with African patriarchy to oppress African women more than African men in the rural areas. For example, Ngcobo probes the austerity of certain apartheid policies such as the migrant labor system pass laws. She likewise investigates the patriarchal stereotypes in African societies, which hinders women's development, by emphasizing motherhood and marriage as the only socially acceptable actions for women, the only ways in which they have value in their culture. Through her portrayal of Jezile and Zenzile, Ngcobo illustrates ambivalent, binary idea of motherhood and marriage. Jezile is mistreated, first for her inability to conceive and become a mother. Zenzile, who has given birth to five children, experiences debilitation

because of the constant pregnancies and inevitably dies as a result. The examples provided by their stories demonstrate that, in motherhood, women encountered two oppositional, yet similarly unsavory and risky options: the avoidance of the one guaranteed experiencing the harm of the other. This mirrors the difficult position women found themselves in because of apartheid. They were forced to choose between two equally unpleasant courses of action, to submit to apartheid meant to engage in a kind of cultural self-harm, yet not to submit to apartheid was to place one's individual life in jeopardy, as forfeit.

Ngcobo further illustrates how residential isolation and segregation because of apartheid made women's lives all the more difficult during the apartheid era in South Africa. For example, just because she is a woman, Jezile is denied easy access to the urban areas; furthermore, as a woman, she is subjected to patriarchal systems which work in tandem with apartheid to oppress women. Jezile's portrayal illustrates the challenges that were encountered by Black South Africans who endured the outcomes of regulated estrangement because of apartheid.

Notwithstanding, Ngcobo portrays the steady pace of cultural transformation in the rural areas when compared to the townships and urban areas. This cultural transformation is illustrated through the women's grassroots resistance to apartheid. The women's demonstrations and defiance campaigns against apartheid start off as only limited to Sigageni. Their political discussions, initiated by the local doctor, Nozizwe Morena, initially begin small. However, after some time, their activism gradually gains momentum as the women participate in a mass demonstration at Ixopo, their small

provincial town, where hordes of women have gathered to protest against Pass Laws. It is during this mass demonstration that approximately six hundred women are arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment. Even though they are largely disenfranchised, Ngcobo's female characters strongly protest against apartheid. Her portrayal of characters such as Jezile, Nozizwe and Nondo, speaks unequivocally to the necessity of women's activism and political involvement.

Contrastingly, Kagiso Molope's *Dancing in the Dust* portrays women in a space of dynamic change, change synonymous with the disintegration of cultural practices. Molope's novel does not depict much influence of patriarchy in the oppression of women in the townships. However, unlike in the rural areas where police only show up when a need arises, in the townships, there is imminent police surveillance, harassment, and brutality against women. This is demonstrated through the spontaneous arrests of black workers by the police and, in addition, the physical and sexual infringement and dehumanization that they are subjected to at the hands of the police.

In light of these conditions, the women in the townships utilize significantly radical approaches to oppose apartheid: For instance, they use petrol bombs, burn car tires, and vandalize shops owned by white people, to vent their frustrations with apartheid. They also have a fully established and organized anti-apartheid movement, which has its central station at the heart of the township of Mabopane. Molope's outline of these fearless young women's commitment to the struggle against apartheid demonstrates that in spite of the considerable hardships that female activists were

subjected to, they showed bravery and versatility. The women in the townships appear not to allow dread or police brutality to crush their determination to oppose apartheid.

Apartheid's strategy of using steady police surveillance and brutality on women activists is also reflected in Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, especially through the portrayal of Winnie. For her activism, Winnie turned into the target of the police as they frequently conducted night house raids in her home. On the other hand, Winnie and all the other female characters in the novel are further subjected to patriarchal scrutiny, as their communities keep a closer eye on them in the absence of their husbands. The expectation is that, like Penelope, they should remain faithful to their absent spouses even though, in reality, they have been deserted by them. This demonstrates that Ndebele's characters are subjected moreover to a complex variety of challenges, the complexity of which occurs and is upheld through the combined systems of apartheid and patriarchy.

*The Cry of Winnie Mandela* also depicts that separation was conspicuous in Black South African families, particularly in view of apartheid as most Black men were compelled to abandon their families to go and search for employment opportunities. The separation of Black families is also explored in *And They Didn't Die* and *Dancing in the Dust*. For instance, *And They Didn't Die* and *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* both illustrate that the migrant labor system was the main way through which apartheid caused family separations. In addition, Molope's *Dancing in the Dust* illustrates how racial segregation tore families apart. The novel's protagonist, Tihelo, is deprived of the opportunity to grow under her biological parents' care and tutelage because her father; Setshiro was

black and her mother Diana, white. As per apartheid laws, her father had to be imprisoned for breaking the Immorality Act. He then committed suicide while in prison. On the other hand, Diana was forced to abandon her at birth as she fled to Canada. Furthermore, both Ngcobo and Ndebele demonstrate how the imprisonment of activists caused family separations. In *And They Didn't Die*, Jezile is imprisoned for five months after participating in the demonstrations against Pass Laws at Ixopo. Shortly after her release, her husband, Siyalo, is imprisoned for stealing milk at a White neighbor's farm. However, under an apartheid jury, he is unfairly tried and convicted for a more serious crime, stock theft, and is sentenced to ten years imprisonment. His imprisonment leads to the disintegration of his marriage with Jezile. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* also reflects the same situation as Nelson Mandela's twenty-seven year imprisonment leads to the breakdown of his marriage to Winnie Mandela, rendering her a waiting wife.

The apartheid system not only caused the separation of black families. As per the meaning of the term "apartheid" – apartness of separation - the system schematized racial isolation, constraining non-white South Africans to live in separate areas from whites and to use separate facilities, and in addition, to limit, as much as could reasonably be expected, contact between these two groups. The climax of its endeavor to separate South Africans was the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in all schools in South Africa. By so doing, apartheid used language as a means to separate school-going South Africans.

Activists such Winnie Mandela relentlessly resisted these exclusionary practices. Her portrayal in Ndebele's text also serves as a model for women who have been

oppressed and marginalized, as she shows the necessity for such women to take action and defy their oppressors. Mamello Majola comments about Winnie's influence over other women activists: "You became courage. You became a possible life for hundreds of people who associated you with what they wanted: freedom" (49). Winnie's portrayal exhibits that for women to attain liberation from any type of abuse, they have to be resolute in defying those forces that would seek to suppress them.

Ndebele's examination of the ways in which apartheid and patriarchy oppressed women is striking because he is a male writer and, for a long time, African male writers have been known for underrepresenting or misrepresenting women in their texts. For instance, Biodun Jeyifo argues that in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, "there is only one direct, substantive mention of Okonkwo's mother" (847), which underscores Carole Boyce Davies' assertion that in African literary works by men, the primary concern is "women's place within larger social and political forces" (247), which are spheres of exclusive male control and authority.

However, Ndebele's depiction of a character such as Winnie Mandela transcends these long standing propensities by insisting upon seeing women as subjects of history, demonstrating that even without the assistance of men, women effectively participated in the cause for liberation. Rather than depicting women in marginalized and exploited positions, Ndebele portrays the distinctive ways in which women opposed socio-political oppression by assuming the responsibility to lead in the wake of being abandoned or left behind by their husbands. In addition to the illustration of Winnie Mandela's gallant resistance to apartheid, Ndebele's other four women characters are depicted as being

strong, independent, and able to provide for their families in the absences of their husbands.

The recurrent characteristic in the three authors' delineation of women's involvement in the struggle against apartheid is the courage they bestow to their female characters, particularly the protagonists, through vivid depictions of women's strength in confronting unfavorable and oppressive forces. All the texts uncover that the apartheid regime chiefly utilized its police force to intimidate, silence, and crush activism and defiance campaigns against it. Those activists who determined to continue with the struggle despite cautions by the police not only risked police torture but also death. This is illustrated through the death of Dikeledi and Thabang in the battlefield in Molope's *Dancing in the Dust*. It is implied that since they were known political activists in the township of Mabopane, the police targeted them. Hence, when they opened fire against the protesting crowd of students, Dikeledi and Thabang were amongst the casualties.

Such portrayals of women's contributions in the struggle against apartheid are imperative since history has downplayed women's participation in the anti-apartheid movement. The contention of this study has been that the anti-apartheid movement was molded as much by women as it was by men like Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, and Walter Sisulu, who served as faces for the anti-apartheid movement. Kagiso Molope comments about the propensity by most writers to lessen the significant role that women played in the struggle against apartheid:

It was not hard to understand why men's efforts were better documented.

They had a way of taking over and making it look like it was only them

fighting for women and children, when in reality no one person held a role more important than the other...I read about women like Albertina Sisulu and Winnie Mandela, who were made to look like they were targeted only because their husbands were so prominent in the ANC, but who in fact, were comrades in their own right. I also knew without having to read about it that many women I had grown up around were detained and had been tortured. (121)

This study therefore situates itself within the scholarship that appreciates and recognizes the efforts and sacrifices that were made by women towards the cause for liberation in South Africa. The study acknowledges women's contribution to the anti-apartheid movement in all three settings, (rural, townships, and urban). Focusing on the rural and township women is noteworthy because people who live in these settings are often overlooked and marginalized, and this is even more true for women. M.J Daymond argues that fictional representations of the ways in which apartheid affected women in the rural areas are rare. Instead, the common trend by most writers is often to focus on apartheid as an urban phenomenon (257). Thus, it is when the rural male protagonist migrates to the urban areas, searching for employment, that he experiences the impact of apartheid's policies in daily living. Actually, the limited depictions of the impact of apartheid in the rural areas enforces misleading notions that apartheid did not affect life in the rural areas, and that women in the rural areas did not participate in the struggle against apartheid, when in fact apartheid had adverse effects on both men and women in the rural areas. The women's situation was made worse by the fact that while the men

could go in the cities to look for employment, the women were not allowed to, forcing them to rely on the men for their livelihood. This study therefore positions itself among the voices that call for the recognition of the struggles and responses of women towards apartheid.

Over the span of this study, I have noticed in my primary texts for this thesis the inclination by these novelists to deviate from the stereotypical portrayal of black women as the perpetually weak and oppressed wives who heavily relied upon their husbands. Instead, these authors depict women characters as strong, independent, and capable. They further depict women fulfilling roles traditionally reserved for men. By examining these novelists' portrayal of women as comrades in their own right and not as mere appendages to men, this study promotes the reformulation of Black women's roles in African fictional narratives. This kind of reframing is already taking place, though at a moderate pace. This reformulation forms a criticism to systems which would subvert the realities of African women's lives and deny them their agency and participation in the struggle against apartheid

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akujobi, Remi. "Waiting and the Legacy of Apartheid: Constructing the Family in Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*." *Federal University P*, 2016. pp. 19-32.
- Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Changes: A Love Story*. Feminist Press, 1993.
- Arndt, Susan. "Perspectives in African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African Feminist Literatures." *Agenda Feminist Media*, no. 54, 2002, pp. 31-44. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/4548071](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4548071).
- . *The Dynamics of African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African-Feminist Literatures*. African World Press, 2002.
- Boyce Davies, Carole. "Some Notes on African Feminism." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Temujola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson, 2007, pp. 561-69.
- Daymond, Margaret. "Women and Orality in African Writing: The Southern Region." *Feminist Press*, 2004, pp. 6-13.
- . "Afterword" in Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*. Natal UP, 1998, pp. 247-73.
- Dubow, Saul. *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36*. St Martin's P, 1989.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove P, 1968.
- Farred, Grant. "Not Like Women at All: Black Female Subjectivity in Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*." *Genders 16*, 1993, 94-112.

Goodman, Ralph. "History, Memory and Reconciliation: Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's *A Human Being Died that Night*." *Literator*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2006, pp. 1-20.

Gunne, Sorcha. "Questioning Truth and Reconciliation: Writing Rape in Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* and Kagiso Molope's *Dancing in the Dust*." *Feminism, literature, and rape narratives: violence and violation*, 2010, pp. 164-180.

Hardwood, Ronald. *Mandela*. Plum Books, 1995.

Harrison, Nancy. *Winnie Mandela*. George Braziller, 1986.

History of Women's Struggle in South Africa/South African Outline.

[www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)

Hunter, Eva. "We have to Defend Ourselves": Women, Tradition, and Change in Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol.13, no.1, 1994. pp. 113-126. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/463859](http://www.jstor.org/stable/463859).

Harlow Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. Methuen, 1987.

Inggs, J.A. "Effacing Difference? The Multiple Images of South African Adolescents." *English in Africa*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2007, 2007.

Jeyifo, Biodun. "Okokwo and His Mother: Things Fall Apart and Issues of Gender in the Constitution of African Postcolonial Discourse." *Callaloo*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1993, pp. 847-858. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable2932213](http://www.jstor.org/stable2932213).

Krog, Antjie. "What the Hell is Penelope Doing in Winnie's Story?" *English in Africa*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2009, pp55-60.

Kortright, Chris. *Colonization and Identity*. The Anarchist Library, 2012.

- Lapping, Brian. *Apartheid: A History*. George Braziller, 1987.
- McLean, Barbara. *Fighting for Freedom in South Africa*. Africa World P, 2004.
- Medalie, David. "The Cry of Winnie Mandela: Njabulo Ndebele's Post-Apartheid Novel." *English Studies in Africa*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2006, pp. 51-65.
- Molope, Kagiso. *Dancing in the Dust*. TSAR, 2002.
- Mohanty, Chandra. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary 2*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1984, pp. 333-358.
- Miller, Margaret. "Forms of Resistance: South African Women's Writing during Apartheid." *Hecate*, vol.24. no1, 1998, pp. 1-20.
- Ndebele, Njabulo. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. Ayebia, 2003.
- . "Redefining Relevance: Rediscovery of the Ordinary, *COSAW*, 1991, pp. 58-73.
- Ngcobo Laurretta. *And They Didn't Die*. The Feminist P, 1999.
- . *Let it be Told: Black Women Writers in Britain*. Pluto P, 1987.
- . "African Motherhood – Myth and Reality." *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Temujola Olayan and Ato Quayson, 2007, pp. 533-41.
- Nnameka, Obioma. "The Politics of (M) Othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature, Routledge, pp. 1-25.
- Ngugi, Wa Thiong' O. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Curry, 1986.
- Schreiner, Olive. *The Story of an African Farm*. Ad Donker, 1986.

- Smit, Betine. "From Penelope to Winnie Mandela – Women Who Waited." *Journal of Classical Tradition*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2008, pp. 393-406.
- Steady, Filomina. *African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Mythologies and Paradigms*. CODESRIA, 2004.
- Stratton, Florence. "Periodic Embodiments: A Ubiquitous Trope in African Men's Writing." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1990, pp. 111-26.
- Van Dyke, Vanessa. *Gender, Games and Landscape in Njabulo Ndebele's The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. University of Natal P, 2004.
- Van Rooyen. *An Analysis of Representation of Winnie Mandela in Antjie Krog's Country of My Skull and Njabulo Ndebele's The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan UP, 2007.
- Walker, Cheryl. *Women and Resistance in South Africa*. New York Monthly Review P, 1991.
- Willoughby-Herard, Tiffany. "The only one who thought to know the pulse of the people: Black Women's Politics in the Era of Post-Racial Discourse." *Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2014, pp. 73-90.
- Wilmot, James. *The Collapse of Apartheid and the Dawn of Democracy in South Africa*. Reacting, 1993.

## VITA

Ntfonjeni S. Dlamini completed his high school education at Nhlanguano Central High in 2004. He then enrolled at the University of Swaziland in August 2005 and graduated in 2009 for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Humanities. Subsequently, he joined the University of South Africa for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, which he obtained in April 2013. In January 2016, he entered the Graduate School of Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas, and received the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature in December 2017.

Permanent Address:

Box 9081

Mbabane, Swaziland

Style Manual Design:

Modern Languages Association

This thesis was typed by Ntfonjeni S. Dlamini.