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**The Symbolic Deviation of Rural Women Characters in
Lauretta Ngcobo's Novel: And They Didn't Die.**

BY

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Social Sciences. Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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*The symbolic
deviation of rural*



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DECLARATION.

This project is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree or diploma in any other University.

FWA

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Date 4-09-2008

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

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Date 14th Oct. 2008.

DEDICATION.

I dedicate this work to: my dear father, the late Canon Elias Njiru Chandi; my mother Ruth Kaveti, for always supporting and encouraging me to do my best; to my husband, Julius Njeru; who has been consistently by my side; my daughters: Gisuku, Ruguru, Riimi and little Imani. They all have given me the spirit to soldier on.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Ngcobo in the novel And They Didn't Die (1999) depicts the rural women characters' digression from what was considered to be the norm. From our research, we found the '*normalcy*' to be the oppressive forces that impinge on the women's liberty. The forces include: the hostile climate, patriarchy and apartheid. The artistic portrayal of these forces through the use of symbolism was analysed.

The research found that the perceived normalcy is entrapping. Hence we have investigated how the rural women characters stretch their boundaries of social conventions in which they are confined. The assumption is that when entrapped, women can defy and act in defence of what they perceive to be their rights. In our supposition, we concur with Wieringa (1995) that women have been subverting the codes that undermine the spaces in which they move in more creative and Machiavellian ways.

The study employs four strands of feminist theory: the social eco-feminist, radical feminist, Marxist Feminist and African Feminist Theories. In engaging the social eco-feminist theory, the study portrays the relationship between the exploitation of women and that of nature. We also demonstrate the author's use of symbols, some of which are related to nature and to some extent they are a backup in highlighting the characters and the conflicts in the story. This makes the weaving of the text as clear as possible. In so doing, the study divulges the crucial role of symbols in portraying their totality in the work of art. The use of radical feminist theory helped in interpreting patriarchy as illustrated by apartheid and African culture. The Marxist Feminist perspective helped in analyzing the capitalistic nature of apartheid and highlighted how the women characters subverted the system's schemes. The African feminist perspective creates a fair gender rapport between females and males and attempts to appraise literature by using African's aesthetic standards, worldview and experience.

Apart from examining the deviation of rural women characters from the perceived norms of apartheid, patriarchy and environment, the study finally appraised the women's endeavours in overcoming the challenges.

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Operational Definition of Terms

Apartheid- For this study, we take Drenghson (2001) definition of apartheid as a South African government legalized form of racial discrimination at all levels of society on the basis of skin colour. Through it, South Africa was divided hierarchically into major population groups according to the different shades of skin colour. The whites occupied the top rank, followed by the Coloured and Indians in the middle, while Africans were at the bottom of the ladder.

Bantustans- These were African Reserves, which the apartheid regime created as permanent 'homelands' for the various ethnic groups of African people to perpetuate apartheid.

Black-In South Africa, the term '*black*' has been used as a protest term by non-white groups, who refused to recognize the racial differentiation imposed on them. They all saw themselves as collectively oppressed by the whites. The term further refers to those South Africans, who until 1994, were not enfranchised under apartheid legislation. In the study, the term was recognized to mean the black Africans.

Symbols-The study adopts Okpewho's (1983) definition of a symbol as a perceptible object used in reflecting or representing an abstract idea or a less perceptible object

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. Background to the Study.

Characterisation has been an important part in literary history. In classical times, only characters of high stratum were treated as subjects worthy of literary attention. The rest, the lay people, were treated as comic relievers or servants (Mugubi: 2003.) However, this changed with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the birth of the novel. The story included all members of the society regardless of social class. Again, any character, regardless of social status could be the hero/heroine, conveying the moral of the story.

However, some of the African protest writers have deviated from what they view as the bourgeoisie (capitalistic) novel. They have adopted a Marxist approach in their interpretation of the problems in Africa. Artists like Ousmane in the God's Bits of Wood and Ngugi's Petals of Blood employ many characters without concentrating on a single hero/heroine; showing the collective nature of the struggle. This way the characters and the episodes in the text bring out the realistic nature of the struggle.

Daymond in Ngcobo (1999) points out that Ngcobo's people's folklore always revolved around a story of an individual, an important person in their tradition. The plot is weaved around one character. This suggests that folkloric sensibility would accommodate Ngcobo's use of a single central character, Jezile Majola, to represent the history and the struggle of an entire community.

This background underscores the literary writer's employment of characterization as a deliberate enterprise to achieve certain goals. Therefore characters do not merely populate a text; they should be perceived as a medium through which an artist delivers the message. Iser (1980) stresses that good choice of characterization helps in the creation of gaps in a text. The gap provides an invitation for the readers to establish their own connection by bringing in their past cultural history and the present world. This gives the text a myriad of interpretation, making its horizon inexhaustible. All this is geared to

Influencing the reader. Wilson in Mugubi (2003) adds to this by presenting characters in a novel as hinged more or less on the elements of persuasion.

Aristotle in Olson (1965) also underscores characterization as fundamental material in literary works. He brings out the three dimensions that affect and help us to appraise a character as: physiological, sociological and psychological. The man's palpable first set of dimension is physiological. Here we look at elements such as sex, age and the physical make up. They all affect mental development and form basis for inferiority or superiority complexes. Ntalindwa (1988) adds that an artistic work can be viewed as an examination of conflict within an individual in a callous society. Such individuals work towards self- discovery and towards understanding of the society they live in.

On the sociological aspect, the study stresses that art is socially influenced. Wilson (1991) elaborates that social roles are general roles recognized by the society. Every culture expects definite types of behaviour from the people in those roles. Coyle and Peck (1984) add that novels are about relationship between individuals and society in which they live. They deal with protagonists who feel themselves to be at odds with the society in which they have been brought up.

Roberts (1978) also explains that literary characters become human by interacting with other characters and the surrounding environment. He further reveals that setting in the literary works can be the natural surroundings such as rivers, living creatures like cattle, times and seasons such as day and night or summer and winter. Also historical and cultural conditions and assumptions significantly figure in what characters do and say. Therefore, setting is a strong cue to characterization. It may intersect with a character as a means by which an author underscores the importance of a place, circumstance and time on human growth and change. Setting may also facilitate comprehension as environment may be a place of oppression and unrelieved joylessness. External forces of oppression and repression dwarf ones attempt towards individual and collective liberty and fulfillment. Such forces in our studies are hostile climate, patriarchy and racism.

The psychological element is the sum total of physiological and sociological aspects. Their combined influence affects the way a character responds and adjusts to the Setting, revealing their strengths or weaknesses. Weak characters cannot carry the burden of protracted conflict in a novel nor can they be protagonists. Characters that put up a fight for their conviction should have the strength and stamina to carry out the fight to its logical conclusion.

Ngcobo employs rural women characters in the book to express her message more forcefully: the repression of women was more forceful in the rural than the urban areas. The study thus seeks to investigate the role of the rural women characters in South Africa during the apartheid epoch.

1.1. Laretta Ngcobo: Profile.

Laretta Ngcobo was born in 1931 in Chabazi, in Mzimkhulu on the border of KwaZulu, Natal, to a Xhosa father and a Zulu mother, both parents were teachers. Unfortunately, the father died when Ngcobo was eight years old, leaving the mother to raise four children singly. The mother struggled against the customary and the Whiteman's law both which categorized married and widowed black women as legal minors. Hence the way Ngcobo grew up explains her strong desire to champion women's emancipation from the customary and apartheid laws that inhibited their development.

The South African novelist and essayist was educated in the Ixopo district of Southern Natal and at Fort Hare University College. She struggled against both the customary and the white man's law. Hence Ngcobo's experience in growing up explains her strong desire to champion women's calls for emancipation from the laws that inhibit their development.

Her influence extends beyond her formal education as she grew up knowing her people, the Zulu, had a history. This is despite the confusing, conflicting and biased presentation

magical fantasy tales. At school, she and her classmates spoke and wrote letters home in English. African music was not encouraged and very little Zulu was taught in school.

The oppression of her people profoundly affected Ngcobo's consciousness and work. Her involvement in political issues was coupled with her husband's involvement in the resistance movement. The husband, Abedgnigo Bheka-b-Bantu Ngcobo was engaged in politics for a long time. He worked with A.N.C leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. The husband's detention after the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 eventually led to the couple's flight into exile in England. It is then that Ngcobo started writing and thus getting engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle where she brought her experience to bear. After thirty-one years in exile, she returned to Natal in 1994.

Ngcobo narrates how she realized late in life that she had no identity. This is in spite of her involvement in politics of protest and struggle against apartheid. Her role was a cheering one in support of men who played the starring roles. Being voiceless, she could only concur and not contradict, nor offer opinions. Men had (and still have) the exclusive right to initiate ideas and were (are) provided with the forum of expression of those ideas. Ngcobo points out that the limitation placed on women has two sources. The older one is African patriarchal customs on which men rely; while the newer one is the racism in apartheid, of which men try to oppose but without releasing their women from a parallel predicament. (Ngcobo, L.1999.)

Ngcobo's rural background and her deep-seated rejection of the oppression of black South Africans under apartheid are primary sources of her creativity. In her first novel, Cross of Gold (1981), she laments the lack of options open to young black South Africans. Set in the 1960s, the narrative traces the progress of a young Zulu man, Mandla, through a chilling catalogue of institutionalized oppression towards his violent end as a freedom-fighter. The sequence of prisons, labour farms, and resettlement areas is relieved only by a brief, sensual glimpse of traditional rural life; Mandla's courtship of Nozipo is a pastoral idyll, a faint glimmer of life in rural South Africa.

In exile, Ngcobo published articles and spoke at conferences. She has also edited literary criticism such as: “My life and My Writing” in the Let It Be Told: Black Women Writers in Britain (1987) and Let it be Told: Black Women Writers in Britain (1988.) She has contributed other works of literary criticism such as “Bessie Head: A Thematic Approach”, an Anthology of Writing by Black Women Living in Great Britain, a book for children: Fikile Learns to like Other People (1994). Other contributions are in: the Perspectives in South African Literature (ed Mphahlele et al. 1982.) “African Women Writers” in Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women Writing (ed by Petersen H. (1986). Ngcobo’s literary biography is a source of significant and variable information regarding the circumstances and influences that formed the shaped the thrust of her artistry.

Ngcobo is noticeably influenced by her people’s folklore which always pivoted on the story of an individual, an important person of their traditions. So her plot is created around one single character, Jezile Majola, to represent the history and the struggle of an entire community. She gives a woman a central role. And They Didn't Die (1999) focuses on country women at the time of the women's rebellion in Natal in the late 1950s. Apartheid and customary laws cause Jezile unbearable physical and psychological suffering as she fends for herself and her children in rural Natal in the absence of her migrant labourer husband. Her survival is made possible only by the solidarity of the women around her. The novel records the sacrifices made by countless Black Country women. They are the stoic, unheard, unseen victims of apartheid's migrant labour system and the pass laws.

1.2 Literature Review.

The literature reviewed first is the criticism of Ngcobo's literary works. Thereafter we review what the critics and writers have said on the topic of deviation of the rural women characters in their noncompliance with the perceived normalcy. Some of the theories that support the women protest are also reviewed. In the process the research identifies the gaps the study is expected to fill.

Ngcobo in the Cross of Gold (1981), much as she wanted to work through a woman character, does not sustain Sindiswe Sikode, the heroine, in the central position. She dies early in the story while trying to escape from the atrocities in South Africa. The author admits giving limited scope for rural women to successfully resist the oppressive forces. This compels her to let the mother character die in her effort to escape South Africa after the first two chapters. The struggle mantle has to pass on to her son, Mandla. Though the latter brings out the institutionalized oppression as he moves from prisons, labour farms and resettlement areas, he has only a brief sensual glimpse of traditional rural life. Consequently, the author has given limited scope for rural women to successfully resist the oppressive forces. In the And They Didn't Die, we have investigated the expression of Ngcobo's growing consciousness which probably springs from the discovery of the sheer scale of women's involvement in the protest in Natal in the late 1950's.

Daymond, in Emenyonu (2004), comments that Ngcobo's use of rural women characters as protagonists radically revises the historical agency of women by placing them at the centre of an indigenous resistance to colonial and apartheid's regime's measures by which the land was appropriated and controlled. In our research we evaluate how the rural women overcome their other challenges such as the hostile environment and patriarchy.

The study concurred with Slovo, in Ngcobo (1999) in her description of And They Didn't Die as a harsh yet poignant novel that salvages the experience of so many, whose stories have remained untold. She comments on how the story brilliantly chronicles the untold

predicaments of women caught between customs, harsh environment, white law and the migrant labour system. We further concur with her explanation that much of the novel's power lies in Ngcobo's talent for complication and nuance. On the latter, the study examines the author's employment of the various symbols used to highlight the many forces that hinder the women's freedom. Besides, the study was in agreement with her exploration of what happens when women start asking questions about cattle and the land, about female power, traditions, violence, and about sex.

McClintock, (ibid) talks of Ngcobo writing with grace and compassion about one woman's suffering. She brings out how the author provides insights into village culture, the injustices of the legal system, the routines and atmosphere of black prisons, and the indomitable spirit of an oppressed people. This is further expounded on by Sechaba in the "Journal of the African National Congress" (Ngcobo: 1999) when she comments on the uniqueness and thoroughness of the novel in portraying the scourge of apartheid in South Africa. She further argues that the life of South African dispossessed rural people has never before been so precisely portrayed in literature. The research investigated the effect of this dispossession especially of husbands, land, cattle and liberty on the rural women.

The above views inspired the research to examine the validity of Senghor's assertion: "...contrary to what is often thought today, the African woman doesn't need to be liberated, she has been free for thousands of years!" (Senghor, L. S. 1965: 44) The study repudiated such a traditional stereotypical viewpoint and sought to examine the position of women, especially in the background of the racist regime, apartheid, a system that balkanises women in unproductive Bantustan takes and takes away their husbands to work in the cities.

Appiah in Ngcobo (1999) notes the tendency of invoking traditions as homogenous and harmonious as producing a way of life to which individual people have an uncomplicated relationship and which they feel smoothly contained and sustained them. Weighty symbols expressing a yearning for an "African" past have indeed been central to protest writing in South Africa. There has been a frequent invocation of "a chthonic mother

Africa" (Ngcobo, L.1999:256.) Since Ngcobo wrote And They Didn't Die at a time when her people needed to recreate their cultural identity, there must have been an increased cultural pull to glorify tradition in a similar spirit of nostalgia. In spite of this, Ngcobo has not sacrificed her critical insight. The novel comes directly out of her profound sympathy with the long struggle against apartheid and is shaped by a deep appreciation for Zulu culture. However, such sympathies do not obscure her understanding that the dictates of traditional patriarchal culture and political struggle often conflict with the needs of Jezile and other real women.

Ntalindwa's Master's Thesis on 'Images and Symbolism in Farah's novels' demonstrates how Farah effectively uses images and symbols to express ideas, hence the content of the text. He brings out the author's usage of images and symbols to relate to the characters and the conflicts so as to make the meaning of the text as clear as possible. In our study of the symbolic deviation of the rural women characters in Ngcobo's novel And They Didn't Die, we demonstrate the crucial role of symbols and how they bring out the totality of a work of art. The study sought to examine how in the course of communicating ideas, symbols maintain artistry hence balancing form and content.

Firestone, in Tony (1989) avers that the original class distinction is between men and women yet, it is the orthodox class distinction to which Marxists have paid little attention. To her, unlike Marxists, it is the relations of reproduction rather than of production which are the driving force in history. The argument goes on that if the woman's root of oppression is biological, then her liberation requires a biological revolution. This is as in the same way as Marxists conclude that essentially, the oppression of workers requires an economic revolution with proletariat seizing the means of production to eliminate economic class system.

Firestone further urges women to seize control of the means of the production in order to eliminate the sexual class system. She elucidates that just as the ultimate goal of communist revolution is to have a classless society to obliterate the bourgeoisie one; women must seize control of the means of reproduction in order to form an androgynous

society. According to Firestone, as soon as the biological realities of reproduction are overcome, the distinction between men and women will be overcome. In expounding masculinity and femininity, she is convinced that unless human beings abandon patriarchal reproduction as well as Capitalist production, nothing will change for women.

We partly agreed with Firestone especially when we examined the situation where a woman gets pregnant against her will or after subjection to the ordeal of rape. However, we researched on varied perception of motherhood by women especially those who are unable to conceive due to the absence of their husbands. We discussed how such women defy the forces that come between them and motherhood. For those with children, we examined how they work against all the odds to provide for their children. Their maternal instincts were manifested in their defence of their offspring, especially when attacked.

Some gender feminists such as Stein in Sommers (1994) disapproves of the lives of traditionally religious women such as Evangelicals, Catholic, Orthodox or Jewish women. Such women are regarded as being conditioned for highly restricted roles. The feminists consider such women as subjugated and the choices they make as inauthentic. This view is in agreement with Karl Marx in Crystal's (1994) description of religion as the opium of the masses. To some extent we concurred with the above views especially when we examined the dichotomy of religion and the oppressive government system. On the other hand, the study investigated religion as one of the sources of inspiration to the women's struggle. We also investigated whether the women made autonomous choices in religion.

Vandana Shiva in Ashworth's Diplomacy of the Oppressed (1995) details the link between ecological destruction and imperialism. We concur with her assertion that the western model of economic development is profoundly patriarchal. It is a process that turns sources whether forests, seed or women's bodies into resources which have value only when placed in a system that produces profit.

1.3 Statement of the Problem.

The South African rural women played a pivotal role in the struggle against the myriad oppressive forces which are: a hostile environment, patriarchal traditions and apartheid. However, this has not been adequately addressed and understood. As noted in the literature review, the study sought to investigate the rationale behind the employment of female characters in And They Didn't Die.

1.4 Objectives of the Study.

The objectives of this study were:

1. To identify ways in which rural women characters in Ngcobo's novel, And They Did Not Die, react to and subvert the reality of their environment.
2. To establish ways in which the rural women characters in the novel, react to and subvert the patriarchal ideology of their society.
3. To identify ways in which rural women characters in the novel react to and subvert the policy of apartheid.
4. Identify the source of strength and inspiration of the women characters in their struggle against the environment, patriarchy and apartheid.
5. To establish Ngcobo's vision of the way forward for the rural women in her novel.

1.5 Research Questions.

1. How do the rural women in the novel confront the hostile environment in which they live?
2. How do the rural women challenge and subvert patriarchy?
3. How do the rural women challenge and subvert apartheid?
4. What is the women character's source of strength and inspiration?
5. What is Ngcobo's vision of the way forward for the rural women?

1.6 Basic Assumptions.

1. The rural women characters confront the environment.
2. The rural women characters challenge patriarchy.
3. The rural women characters subvert apartheid.

4. The rural women in And They Didn't Die must have had sources of inspirations which enable them to soldier on in their struggle against environment, patriarchy and apartheid.
5. The author's vision for the liberation and the way forward for the rural women characters are not only in their perseverance and resilient spirit but also in the younger generation, children born during the struggle.

1.7 Scope and Limitation.

The textual analysis of And They Didn't Die was the primary method of study. It was supplemented by library research and information from the internet.

The study found that Ngcobo has assigned the rural women characters important and active challenging roles. The women struggle against the oppressive forces of hostile environment, patriarchy and apartheid. This furnished us with enough data to enable us to carry out the research.

1.8 Justification of the Study.

The research was aware of the increasing bibliography, theses and critical works analyzing the South African struggle against apartheid injustices. This indicated the topicality of gender politics in South Africa. Even so, most writers have neglected the plight of the rural women characters. For instance, several autobiographical works of women like Ellen Kuzwayo, Phyllis Ntantala and Sandiwe Maganu begin with scenes of rural childhood but the characters move with their narrator into the urban life. The portrait of the black woman character in South Africa has been representative of the image held by white and male writers.

Despite Ngcobo's consistency and enormous contribution to literature (as already shown), she has been excluded from serious literary appreciation. What are available are scattered acknowledgements and interviews. For instance Njabulo-Ndebele in The Re-Discovery of the Ordinary, comments in a paragraph that Ngcobo, in And They Didn't Die uses fiction to recognize that: "...even under the most oppressive conditions, people are struggling to maintain semblance to normal social order" (page 52.) In Olga Kenyon's Writing Women, Ngcobo only appears in the bibliography. The interviews carried out by H. Berstein in The Rift: the Exile Experience of South Africans and in E. Hunter and C. Mackenzie In Between Lines sought to know about her life and not her writing. We assume this to be lack of literary appreciation of Ngcobo's work.

In the scope and limitation of Kiiru's PhD Thesis, he says that his study leaves a virtually virgin area for advanced scholarship. In our study this is the portrayal of the subversive roles the rural women characters play in grappling with the repressive and subjugating forces of apartheid, patriarchy and the hostile environment in the reserves. This lacuna justified the study of Ngcobo's single text And They Didn't Die.

Daymond, in elucidating the South African literary development, argues that the trend has been from R.R.R Dhlomu's On African Tragedy (1928) onwards to focus on apartheid as an urban phenomenon and to work with male oriented: "*Jim comes to*

Jo'burg' themes" (Ngcobo, L.1999:252.) In this line of fiction, it is only when the rural male protagonist moves to the city as a job seeker that he feels the grip of apartheid's tyrannical policies on his daily life. Once in the city, his experiences are seldom shown to connect with the issue of the land. For instance, in Peter Abraham's Mine Boy, the author concentrates on the Xuma from the North's tribulations in gold mines. The women he leaves in the countryside are rarely mentioned. From this angle, rural life comes to the study as old age tradition, often seen by the protagonist in the gilded glow of nostalgia (Emenyonu: 2004.)

Finally the benefits to be accrued from the proposed study are that the study will provoke criticism not only of Ngcobo's other works, but other writers who have been ignored. With the researcher's awakened interest, a lot will be offered to the scholars unfamiliar with the rural women's role in the struggle against apartheid. Furthermore, there has been need to redress the imbalance in African literary criticism, which has been attributed to andocentric norms, by extending literary study to female writing which bear some literary value. Less known yet fine female writers like Laretta Ngcobo deserve appropriate academic attention. Hence the study was a rejoinder to Mugubi's (1994) desire for other hitherto ignored writers to be studied.

By evaluating the symbolic deviation of the rural female characters in And They Didn't Die, the study extends beyond the canonical female writings. This may offer a new perspective on gender issues, which has been one of the most recurrent themes in female writing. The knowledge of historical involvement in resistance movements can have empowering effect on the present day feminists (Wieringa: 1995.)

The study further aims at familiarizing Kenyans with Ngcobo's creativity. This is because women not only played a major role in the freedom struggle against the colonialists in this country but that they are still grappling with neo-colonialism, patriarchy and an occasionally hostile climate.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

Tony (1989) in Feminist Thought elucidates that feminist theory is not one but many theories; and that each brand attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. A more skillful feminist premise can combine description, explanation and prescription.

The tenets of these perspectives provided partial answers, which team up to lament the ways in which women have been subjugated; and also to celebrate the ways in which so many women have beaten the system. How they have taken charge of their own destiny and encouraged each other to live, love and laugh. In discussing the deviation of women characters in Lauretta Ngcobo's And They Didn't Die, we engaged four related critical theories: Eco- Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist Feminism and African Feminism.

1.9.1 Social Eco- Feminist Approach.

Social eco-feminism is based on acceptance of nature/ culture dichotomy. It views women as essentially closer to nature than men. The study is in agreement with Plumwood (1992) who states that both nature and women are susceptible to oppressive forces. These in our study are patriarchy and apartheid. Some of the proponents of eco-feminism are (ibid) Maria Miles, Vandana Shiva, and Ariel Salleh, Greta Gaard, Val Plumwood, Noel Sturgeon and Karen Warren. The diversity of proponents now crosses most continents and several disciplines. The following are some of the tenets of the theory:

- a) That the oppressed people tend to suffer more the consequences of ecological damage.
- b) Culture is treated as superior to 'untamed' environment and hence men subjugate both women and environment. Thus women and environment tend to share a common '*inferior*' status in society.
- c) As the oppression of woman and that of nature occur simultaneously, women have a responsibility to cease male domination over both.
- d) Eco-feminism and social work (in our case literary studies) are both immersed in egalitarian concerns and anti-oppression activism.

The theory was relevant in analyzing the symbolic deviation of rural women characters in Laretta Ngcobo's novel, And They Didn't Die. The story's setting is mainly in the countryside where there is a strong association between women and the environment.

Also central to the women's struggle is the hazardous and unpredictable environment. Where there is unfair distribution of resources and oppression, the image of destructive nature looms large on society.

1.9.2 Feminist Marxist Approach.

Many scholars who adopt the Feminist Marxist perspective have combined the Socialist and Marxist theoretical interests to produce an ideology of literature. Some of the proponents of the theory are: Mary Jacobus, Rosalind Coward, Michael Barret and Cora Kaplan (Kenyon: 1991). Some of the theory's tenets are:

- a) The belief in social existence is what determines consciousness.
- b) To understand why women are oppressed in more ways than men, there is need to analyze the links between women's work, status and women's self image.
- c) The root cause of the women's oppression is capitalism; for it gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women. Therefore, capitalism should be dismantled as a way of liberating women.
- d) Modern society and its constituents (law, religion, politics, art and the rest) are predominantly the products of males and therefore have a patriarchal character.

We assumed that apartheid policy had been exploitive and hence the deprived people (in our case women) were inhumanly exploited and debased. For this reason, these tenets enabled us to investigate the reasons that triggered the rural women characters to defy the system.

However, the theory may not explain all the factors that make the rural women subversive. Thus the theory has limitations. For instance, the fathers of Marxism did not take the liberation of women nearly as seriously as that of the workers. Karl Marx and Fredrick Angels (ibid) believed that proletarian women experienced less oppression than the bourgeoisie women.

Even contemporary Marxists seem to have little room for the questions that deal directly with woman's reproduction and sexual concerns such as prostitution, sexual harassment, rape and wife battering. Instead Marxist Feminists have tended to focus on women's work related issues. Our argument is in line with Alison Jaggar's (1988) view that Marxist Feminism says little about the oppression of women by men. They view the primary oppressors of women as capitalism while men are depicted only as secondary oppressors. The theory may not have enough room to express women's dissatisfaction with the issues that are related to nature and their work. The school rarely discusses issues related to sex and when they do, they tend to compare sex to work.

1.9.3 Radical Feminist Approach.

Some of the proponents of the theory are: Andrea Dworkin, Margaret Atwood, Gena Corea, Robblyn Rowland, Adrienne Rich, Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millet and Ellen Moers (Tony: 1989.) The perspective is still evolving in several directions at once and hence any attempt to define it is bound to stress some of its aspects more than others. So the research was confined to some of the following views:

- a) That women are historically the first oppressed group and their oppression is most widespread in virtually every known society.
- b) And that the patriarchal system, which is viewed as characterized by power dominance, hierarchy and competition, oppresses women. Hence the system cannot be reformed but only ripped away.
- c) Women's oppression is viewed as the hardest form of oppression to eradicate and cannot be removed by other social changes such as abolition of class.

- d) Women, who are victims of gender oppression, may suffer unnoticed, because of sexist prejudice of both the oppressor and the victim.
- e) Liberation of women will ultimately mean liberation of men from their distinctive role as oppressors.
- f) Women's oppression provides a conceptual model for the understanding of all other forms of oppression. For instance, Radical Feminism goes against the anti-feminist dictum that biology is the woman's unfortunate and unchanging destiny. It explains that the society should preserve this '*natural order*'; ensuring that its men remain manly (assertive, hard, rational, abstract and analytical) whereas women remain womanly (gentle, modest, humble, supportive and unselfish.)

The perspective enabled us to examine how rural women characters in Ngcobo's novel deviate from the perceived '*natural order*'. We investigated how different rural women view motherhood. However, the theory did not expose all aspects, which lead them to deviate from the oppressive forces. We concurred with Jaggar's (1988) critique of the theory from a socialist point of view: that the premise pays inadequate attention to issues of race and class. Hence it may not have much relevance for the women who are oppressed by apartheid.

Besides, separation from men is not all what oppressed African women may need. Most Radical Feminists are not particularly attentive to the concerns of colour and poverty. Also the woman's culture cannot liberate all women unless it is expansive enough to include those women who believe that at least for them, racism and '*classicism*' are more oppressive than sexism. Besides, Joan Cocks in Tony (1989) faults Radical Feminism for forever rebelling in glorifying the woman's '*otherness*', hence presenting itself as a counter culture, a place for the relatively privileged white women to celebrate themselves.

1.9.4. African Feminist Approach.

The above term has emerged from the debatable topic of 'Feminism' and 'Feminist'. Kohr-Amissah (2003) in a review of African feminism begins by elaborating the failure of Western Feminism to capture successfully the experiences of black women. She proposes that the reason for the failure is the masculinisation of the colonisers and feminization of the colonized people. She further contends that the white feminists generally ignore the differences between themselves and Third World women.

African women and other black women critiques are cautious about the term "*feminism*". This is due to the racist and narrow implication associated with mainstream feminism. As a result the debate concludes that African women have to modify the term feminism in order to articulate their concerns fully. Hence the use of concepts such as African/a feminism /womanism and Ogundipe-Leslie's most popular term "*Stiwanism*". KohrAmissah (ibid) has found out that the African woman, realizing the pitfalls of Western Feminism, is determined to formulate her own feminist theory.

Despite the controversy demonstrated, the study employed the term '*African Feminism*' as this was in agreement with other users of the term, who view the global oppression of women as important as oppression of the African the race. It is also satisfactory to broaden the Western definition of the term '*feminism*' in order to make it relevant to the struggle of Africans and other Third World women.

Some of the proponents of the theory are; Kohr-Amissah, Ogundipe-Leslie and Steady Philomena (Ogundipe: 1994.) Kohr-Amissah as she represents Molar Ogundipe-Leslie's points on the subject, elaborates on the tenets as:

- a) That African feminism need not be an opposition to men.
- b) While the issue of gender is the main reason African women see the reason to create their theory, she cautions that it is (only) one out of many issues.
- c) Consequently, an African feminist premise cannot only deal with the male-female problem because abolishing one of the oppressions will not solve the problem facing

African women. Achieving equality between African men and women will still leave the problems of neo-colonialism, racism and imperialism.

d) African women need not neglect their biological roles as motherhood is idealized and claimed as strength and seen as having a special manifestation in Africa.

e) The total configuration of the condition of women should be addressed rather than the fixation with sexual issues.

f) Certain aspects of women's reproductive rights take priority over others.

g) Women's conditions in Africa need to be addressed in context of total production and reproduction of their society. The scenario involves both men and children.

h) The ideology of women has to be cast in the context of the race and class struggle, which has been bedevilling the continent perennially.

The study's choice of African Feminism was based on its relative newness and the fact that it addresses adequately the African women's problems.

The study engaged all the above tenets in analyzing the various ways the rural women characters deviate from the oppressive roles.

1.10 Methodology of the Study.

We employed the descriptive analysis as our method of study as it was difficult to collect empirical data, which would have involved visiting the South African scene. The study firstly entailed the researcher's personal interpretation of the literary text: And They Didn't Die. Secondly, information was sought from relevant written records, books, articles in journals on characterization in literature and South African History. The primary source of the data in the study was Ngcobo's novel, And They Didn't Die.

To complement the text, several forms of secondary data were considered. First were literary journals, periodicals, books and publications written on Ngcobo's works and her general impact on the literary world. Her role in African writing today was taken into full consideration.

Another secondary data source was the history of South Africa which gave context to the meaning of apartheid policy and some aspects of Zulu traditions. The patriarchal nature of Zulu culture was examined as a hindrance to the women's struggle. However, the same culture was viewed a source of inspiration to the rural women. Books on South African geography helped in the depiction of the geographical aridity of the South African reserves. Hence we examined how the rural women characters struggled with the hostile environment.

The analysis of the symbolic deviation of the rural women characters in Lauretta Ngcobo's novel, And They Didn't Die was done on the basis of the author's background, the various roles of the characters, the display of unequal power relations and their striving towards liberation from the oppressive forces.

In Chapter Two, we presented the paradoxical nature of nature. We examined the hostile nature in terms of extreme weather conditions and how the rural women overcome the challenges. On the other hand, we analysed how nature is depicted as supportive to the women's cause.

CHAPTER TWO.

2.0. The Paradoxical Nature of Nature.

The story, And They Didn't Die, is primarily set in Sigageni, a village lying between Uzimkhulu and Ixopo, in Sabelweni District of Natal. It is against this rural locale we look at how the harsh geographical conditions of Sabelweni Bantustan add to the subjugation of the rural women characters. On the other hand we also examined how nature can be benevolent to the struggling women.

The author's use of cosmic images such as the sun, the rain, and darkness is analyzed to highlight the women's interaction with nature. Finally, we examine how the rural women characters adapt to or defy the harsh geographical realities of the African reserves.

Ngcobo's novel derives its initial impetus from an historical event, which the author lived through and experienced before leaving South Africa for Europe. Hence the plot may be called '*a memory space*'. It focuses on country women at the time of the women's rebellion in Natal in the late 1950s. Apartheid and customary laws cause Jezile, the heroine, unbearable physical and psychological suffering as she fends for herself and her children in rural Natal in the absence of her migrant labourer husband. Her survival is made possible only by the solidarity of the women around her. The novel records the sacrifice made by countless Black Country women. They are the stoic, unheard, unseen victims of apartheid's migrant labour system and the pass laws.

Ngcobo's key concern in her integration of images and symbols is to show how gender, race, class and imperialism are connected to ecological destruction. This not only enhances a work of artistic creativity, but it also enriches the subject matter through comparison and contrast.

The story's setting in Sigageni symbolises harsh geographical realities. The reserves are uneconomical units which are not meant to support the residents since the arid land cannot provide food or support the livestock, which is used to till the

land, provide milk or is sold in times of hardship. The White man's purpose for creating the Bantustans is to provide cheap labour for his agricultural, mining and industrial economies.

To force the African men to work, the white man creates deprivation by confining them to less land which is also less productive. Yet, the government does not assist the women who are left behind by husbands to raise the children who one day are destined to the city to help in creating wealth. Women are not allowed to go to the city to enjoy the wealth they have indirectly helped to create.

Men who get injured or are too old to work are sent back to the reserve without compensation or pension. Hence the reserves and Women are depicted as the dumping ground: the grave yards, whose purpose is to receive useless and spent men from the cities with whom the women have not lived.

In Sigageni, like other South African reserves, women are subjected to a tortured landscape. The land is exposed to soil erosion with wind and rain sweeping the good earth. For instance, in the school compound, trees hardly grow and any effort to plant them is thwarted by the roaming cows. However, women do not give up despite the lack of shade from the scorching sun. They lean against the building used as a church where they desperately try to shield themselves from the hot sun.

Carolyn Merchant in *Ramazonogla* (1989) shows that emergence of modern science entails a shift from a view of nature as organic and part of a cosmic whole to a view of nature as separate from humanity. It is likened to a machine and thus it can be exploitable. Scientific progress, by separating nature into parts, has contributed to the oppression of women. Merchant further proposes that the conjunction between the women's movement and ecological movement brings the issue of liberation into focus. Therefore, effective struggle against '*death of nature*' can only come through a reversal

of mainstream values and economic priorities, a reversal for which feminists are also fighting.

Women's engagement in ecological concerns comes from their varied experiences. The poor women are at the cutting edge of resistance to ecological destruction. Promotion of ecologically unsound agricultural practices impoverishes the rural people and adds enormously to their daily burden of work for survival. The Sigageni women are depicted as subsistence farmers who oppose development that is not sustainable. They struggle to maintain or initiate economically sound agricultural practices which are often drawn on long standing cultural tradition. When the white official arrogantly accuses the Africans of degrading the environment by creating the deep dongas and soil erosion due to poor ploughing; the women's defiance of the outrageous accusation is expressed in their making staccato clicking noises. The strength of this expression has been vividly captured by Ngcobo in Cross of Gold when she says: "...occasionally they growled and clicked in the language of sounds that South Africans use for the extremes of their feelings..." (Ngcobo, L. 1981.38.)

Ngcobo uses the four seasons to show how women grapple with the environment. The winter winds blow icily along the 300 miles corridor of the Drakensberg Mountains to the plains of Ixopo. The season in the Sigageni reserves heralds hunger and poverty as nothing grows in the harsh weather conditions. Each year is worse than the last. Animals before the onset of winter graze every field bare so that by the end of the spell they are down on their knees with starvation. Ngcobo's depiction of the weather in the reserves sets a mood of despair. The mornings are severely cold with biting wind. The ground is dusty with wind rising twistingly in whirls, flinging dust into people's eyes and driving them off course as it fights to topple loads off their heads. It pursues them into their houses and hounds them under their thin blankets, covering every dish, plate and cup.

The abused nature is ruthless on taking its revenge on humanity as the wind and sun combine to wipe out dry the last vestiges of natural oils on the women's bodies. The

skins stretch and crack under the stress. This is shown by the creased crossing lines network breaking on the women's faces, arms and legs. Lips crack and bleed and the soles of their feet harden and shine like well-worked leather. The fissured soles would bleed in the cold, sending shooting pains straight to the heart. The poverty of the women is depicted by the fact that they have no money to buy Vaseline to salve their pains nor do they have shoes to protect their feet. They cannot afford meat and fat to insulate their bodies against the ravages of the cold winter.

Jezile takes the brunt of the frost which lies thick on the ground when she wakes up to fetch water from the spring. Her hands and feet are numb even before she gets to the river. Winter invasion heralds poverty so that Jezile, like other women, experiences not only lack of warm clothing but has neither tea nor sugar for porridge. The hostile weather makes Jezile experience depression descending on her like a menacing bird of prey, making her feel afraid. To worsen the situation, even the dung smoke irritates and hurts the eyes.

Despite the handicaps, Jezile and other Sigageni women continue to defy these malevolent conditions by concocting remedies to fight off the bitter weather. For instance, they melt a candle and mix its wax with paraffin oil to make a warm soothing grease to spread over their cracked feet.

Ngcobo further depicts the women's toughness by portraying men as the ones who succumb more easily to nature's challenges than women. For instance without ploughing, Siyalo, the husband to Jezile, feels idle while the wife, though pregnant, works very hard by getting alternative chores. For instance, when not cooking, she is either fetching water or grazing cattle. When she lacks firewood for cooking, she creatively converts what nature offers by picking the cow dung cakes (which she turns into fuel) and keeps them from being soaked by the rain. However, Siyalo, despite being physically strong, lacks the initiative to fight off poverty, degrading himself into a milk thief. This again is contrasted with the wife's behaviour, who despite the burden of pregnancy sells her labour at Duma's home to earn an honest living.

On the above, we concur with Momsen (1995) in her assertion that women as household managers are the first to suffer when access to sustainable livelihood is unbalanced. When water becomes scarce, the food stores dry up, the trees disappear, the land becomes untenable and the climate changes, women are the ones who have to walk much further and work harder to ensure the families' survival. It has been found out that in times of economic crisis, it is women who are the first to go without provisions such as food, medicine and education. The women develop dual personality in resisting the ecological destruction by dominance of people over the non-human environment.

Darkness is considered synonymous to winter, a torturous season. Its description as quick, gathering and shielding homes and women may appear benign. But with the events of the day, (the women burning the passes) peace has eluded the village of Sigageni forever. The nights become the time for torture. The police, who are the agents of the cowardly regime, resort to exploitation of the gloom to stalk, terrorize and arrest the unarmed and unprotected rural women. For instance: Jezile opens the door to stare into dark mouth of a gun and blaze of a torch on her eyes. This is meant to intimidate her.

The women's protest is exposed by Mabiyele, Jezile's mother-in-law, when she authoritatively and defiantly screams at the bullies: "*...and who are you desecrating this place of our ancestors? What is it that you want that you won't find at daytime without noise and without guns*" (Ngcobo, 1999:80.) The daring act disarms the five black and white policemen, as they have been confronted by people who have no fear of their brutal force. The apartheid law enforcers realise that the people they are dealing with could be owing allegiance to another order.

Ironically, when the summer season comes, the sun gets hotter by day. There is a silvery cloud but no rain. The nature seems to be playing tantalizing tricks: a storm cloud would rise, giving hope of rain and then it would evaporate. Again the August winds would temper down and give way to dusty hot dry days. People sit and wait, chasing the shade round their houses round the clock. They watch the sun as it glows on the mountain tops and ride the sky at midday: "*...now [the sun would be] majestic and now [it would be]*

malicious and malevolent, sucking in every aroma of air like some willful super god of the skies..." (Page, 118.)

The people watch and wait till the sun relaxes its cruel grip on earth as it recedes over the mountains. Fields lie fallow and bare with the sun baking in it day by day. The sun licks the trickle of the previous year's rain in the steam. Ironically, all that is left for the stock is the salt water pool near the dipping tank. The pond never dries even when the drought is prolonged and severe.

To add to the women's stress, Ngcobo artistically brings out the contradictory nature of the South African seasons. For instance, despite the end of harvest celebrations, to 'single' women like Jezile, the season turns out to be a time for loneliness. The weather isolates women as they remain indoors with none to share their problems. The hours of darkness are long and dreary. Also, the daylight brings no relief as the sunshine is not enough. Instead of the stillness of the night bringing serenity to Jezile, it turns into an invasion of inner voices from the past with Siyalo, and their joyous laughter. She feels imprisoned in the house.

Summer season should be a season of incredible beauty that nature offers at the beginning of each day. But there are no hearts to receive nature's offerings as things have gone wrong. Life is not what nature has intended it to be. Even the resistance to carrying passes eventually fades out because the women realize the land is being consumed by drought. This collective resignation eventually forces Jezile to leave home to work as a domestic servant for a white family in Bloemfontein.

The mood of pessimism seems to be the incompatible companion of the Sigageni women. When the jailed mothers are released one beautiful spring morning, they do not derive pleasure from the warmth of spring. They have no one to welcome them. This further confirms the invisibility of the women's role in the struggle, however noble. The rejection makes them to wish for winter, the foul weather, to shield them from the public

eye and the stigma of incarceration. However, nature responds to the women's inner distress by availing the flaming aloe, which covers the Umkhwe Kazi hillside. The aloe plant symbolises healing. It is a needed reception for the unwelcome women fighters.

The stylish nature's reception rekindles the women's spirits which was nearly usurped by the unfair imprisonment. They pick up a feeling of freedom which gives them hope for what they are fighting for and how it will be when they eventually triumph. Their joyfulness is expressed in their crying and stopping, shaking of their hands and holding on to each other tightly as they part. This puts them back to a stimulating communal life where they have always shared and exchanged what they have. Ngcobo further uses the weather as an inspirational factor. The warmth from the sun makes the women to feel welcomed. The red sunset becomes a glowing crown of glory for their martyrdom. The sun again comes to the aid of the deprived women, who lack soap to wash their clothes. They ingeniously utilize their hands and the sun as bleach.

The judicious and regal nature of the sun is revealed when the Chief Counsellor Duma's, who is depicted as the stooge of the government, inveigles himself into the women's church meeting. He is viewed with suspicion by the congregation. The sun, as if prompted to express the women's inner feelings, glares at Duma where he stands like it wants to highlight him to all as a traitor. It is dramatic the way he squints and inclines his head this way and that way, but the sun pursues him as if like it is accusing him of his malicious intentions. Probably this is what makes him speak in a subdued voice: not the domineering voice of the most important man in the community. The sun, in its majesty subdues him.

Again Ngcobo highlights the sun, one of nature's manifestations, as an avenger of the oppressed. For instance, the sun deals harshly with the Potgeiter's papery dry skin. The white supervisor at the road construction site does not work at all in the sun. His main job is to merely stand or sit under an umbrella all day, ensuring that the workers do their job. Yet for this idling, he earns the heftiest pay (Ngcobo: 1999.)

The rain stands for hope as it cleans not only the earth, but the people's heavy hearts as well. The rain brings a miracle of friendship as it conquers the elements that have sought to divide and separate the people previously: apartheid and the environment. People talk in raised voices. The joy of the rain is marked by Mabiyela and Jezile becoming friends and talking again; they get reconciled. Rain has a mysterious way of bonding people and nature. It brings the need for cooperation in raising new crops for the year.

The rain miraculously exhumes Siyalo's and Jezile's buried ring which had gotten lost a long time ago. Happiness returns between the couples. The ring, which has survived the storms that have swept away so many heavy objects, symbolises togetherness of a marriage. Thus nature may destroy but restore as well. Siyalo gets filled with new hope and copious joy as he makes a new ceremony of the ring by slipping it in Jezile's finger. Though nature may destroy, it can restore as well.

The couple has found the ring waiting for them to discover it. Like their life it has been lost, yet ironically, it has been there all the time waiting for them to look carefully and find it. It is also ironical that Jezile has lost too much weight for the ring to fit her. The ring has to be shelved away till it can fit. This can be interpreted to mean that there are still many hurdles to be cleared before the victory is won. The current generation of the freedom fighters could be too bruised to complete the struggle. This is depicted by the way Jezile drops the ring slowly as though to preserve it for posterity. Her slow act could also symbolise fatigue and resignation.

The joy of finding the ring rekindles Siyalo's manhood so that night, the couple, who have gone for so many weeks without making love get fulfilled. The following morning, Siyalo bathes at the Umzimkhulu River and goes home feeling purified, furthering the cleansing of the night before (ibid, Page 124.) The cheerful gurgling of the river excites the women who had gone to wash their clothes.

The rocky hillside becomes a dark hideout, a recess, nature's own cavern, which is only known by the local people. It is from here that they operate the guerrilla warfare against the government forces of repression.

Thus the cruel hand of nature alternates with the hope that it brings during and soon after the rain. And also Ngcobo, through exploration of common images and symbols saves the reader from plunging into pessimism.

In the next chapter we deal with the varied faces of patriarchy such as apartheid and Zulu culture. We examine the varied tools employed by apartheid government to subjugate the rural women. On the other hand, we also discuss the roles played by women, both white and black, in perpetrating patriarchy. Finally, we examine the rural women's resistance to the oppressive forces.

CHAPTER THREE.

3.0. The Varied Faces of Patriarchy.

In this chapter, we analyse some of the symbols of apartheid such as the pass and the gun. They are tools employed to propagate patriarchy which in the process subjugate the rural women. We then examine patriarchy in white racism, the white man's perception of the African woman (and to some extent white woman) and the rural women's reaction to the perception. Patriarchy in Zulu traditional society is also examined.

We also examine the various roles played by the women, both white and black, as perpetrators of patriarchy. We not only discuss the rural women characters' deviation and defiance to some of the oppressive traditional norms but investigate their reaction to the white sexist attitude. Motherhood as a motivating factor is also analysed.

3.1. The Subjugative Tools.

The pass has been a legal document that has been given to the Africans in South Africa during the apartheid era to regulate their movement to the cities. After apartheid government created Bantustans for the Black Africans, they had to be interviewed to qualify to be given a pass to enable them to move to the city (Ngcobo: 1981.)

In Cross of Gold, Ngcobo further explains that the pass has been the Whiteman's weapon of suppression, which followed the last of the great battles of conquest of Africa. The Whiteman cannot be persuaded to take away the one weapon that burdens the Blackman and strips him of his manhood and his humanity. The document had apparently succeeded in covering very many of the great heroes and heroines of the African people. Those who fought against it would end up in brutal murder. As long as apartheid was operative, the pass had to remain since it was regarded as the greatest weapon to keep up the fight.

In the novel, the importance and the urgency of the pass are illustrated by Mrs. Potgeiter, who the story depicts as the custodian of apartheid. When her husband Mr. Potgeiter

brings Jezile to their house to work as a domestic servant, she relentlessly insists on seeing Jezile's pass. The issue of the pass has a devastating and humiliating effect on Jezile. She has bitter memories as she had burnt the abhorred document in defiance of police and apartheid. The pass is portrayed as an infernal book whose importance and the urgency to the white man are further confirmed by Mr. Potgeiter. When he goes for it at the place where they are issued, he quickly jumps the queue to get it. This act further reveals the corrupt nature of the white man. Besides, the white official who issues the pass is pleased as though Jezile has done him a personal favour. This further illustrates the security that the pass gives to the authority. It is a tool of subjugation.

The pass is further portrayed as a trap to put a woman on a treacherous ground. The ensnaring is revealed when a woman needs to visit her husband in the city. The ordeal of obtaining the pass at Bantu Affairs Department (BAD) is not only humiliating for a rural woman but it makes her feel cornered. BAD is presented as a burial ground for all human dignity. Women spend long hours on long static queues. When they finally succeed in getting into the office and encounter the White officer, they come out looking ashen grey. This is due to the shattering experience they undergo; especially from the humiliating questions they are asked. Others get embarrassed by the rejection of their request.

Jezile on her part undergoes the humiliating ordeal at Bantu Affairs Department (BAD). The white interviewing officer views her simply as a sexually starved woman. His immoral suggestion is for Jezile to get sexual gratification from any man in the village. To him even the doctor, who has signed her letter, would suffice to cure her '*malady*.' This lewd humour from the government officer depicts him and the government he represents as morally decadent. His arrogance and insensibility is further shown by the manner he explains how the African women cannot live in the cities with their husbands since the metropolis are meant for the white people. This brings him out as a racial bigot, who the rural women are justified to fight (Ngcobo: 1999.)

Through Jezile, Ngcobo brings out the determination needed by women to convert the humiliating pass into a pass to get a baby, new hope and a new beginning. She conquers the oppressive pass laws by forging the letter her husband should have written long ago, asking for medical attention in Durban. With the letter, she can get written authority to spend a month with her husband. Thus the letter gives her power to make the decision she would have made long ago.

However, the women eventually resolve not to go for the passes. The defiance bothers the authority. The worry is expressed by the White officer when he bites his lower lips as he glares at the women who stare at him obstinately.

Dr. Nosizwe, the lady doctor from the city who often visits the rural women of Sabelweni, is their great motivator. She inspires women into defying the taking of the passes. Those who had taken the passes resolve to burn them to ashes. Jezile, who has been suffering from guilt of betrayal for taking the pass against the other women's group decision, is relieved because she gets a chance of appeasing her conscience and being reconciled with the other women. The women are not cowed by the white official and the police walking towards them, instead they make a ring around Jezile and burn the abhorred tag, the pass.

The above subversive act is a great victory as expressed by the women's sudden cry of triumph. Some mingle and dance while others ululate and shout slogans. Further triumph for the women is expressed by the police's realisation of their defeat. However, the law enforcers are hesitant to charge for they get intimidated by the years of their own conditioning. They fear to shoot at a screaming mob of black women.

The other tool of oppression and intimidation is the white man's military might expressed in military tanks, helicopters and guns. He effectively uses them to quell any resistance to his rule. For instance, when the Sigageni people in a great fury lynch the imposed chiefs who are the government stooges, the whole community is harassed by the armed soldiers.

The people eventually rebel and resolve to set their government in the mountain but they are massacred with petrol bombs. The reduction of men leaves the rural women insecure and disheartened.

The apartheid soldiers use the gun not only to intimidate women but to rape them at will. This is demonstrated by the soldiers who are deployed at Sigageni to keep peace, law and order. Ironically, the “*disciplined force*” get engaged in looting food from the women and attempting to rape them at night. Towards the end of the story, a lone white soldier uses a gun to intimidate and attempt to rape S’naye, the first born daughter of Jezile. The latter, in a great rage, rescues the daughter from the heinous abuse by trying to use the same gun to kill the rapist.

3.2. Patriarchy in White Racism.

The Sigageni women for four consecutive weeks defy taking their cattle for dipping on Thursdays. They effectively empty the tank despite the constant threats from the authorities. The patriarchal nature of this authority is expressed in apartheid policies, which are executed and symbolized by the likes of Pienaar. He is the only white man in Sigageni, whose duties as dipping officer regularly bring him to the reserves. He is described as: “...*a lone white man who stands as a mounted spear on the earth of Sigageni*” (Ngcobo, L. 1999: 2.)

Pienaar is further portrayed as an alienated man who is perceptive of nothing about the people, the place or its problems. The abhorrence he has for the Africans is expressed by his growling at the women like a ferocious animal, a bully ready to subdue those resisting his maltreatment. His hisses bring out the image of a snake ready to attack.

The rural women’s insubordination has a provocative effect on Mr.Pienaar, which is a sign of victory. When the officer looks at the defiant group of women his irritated and fearful thoughts towards the women get exposed. His negative and racist attitude towards the Sigageni women is expressed through a repeated interior monologue. He bitterly

utters: "*Senseless, unthinking creatures!*" (Page, 1) According to his assessment, the women seem not to be disciplined by their husbands, hence the limited understanding of their "*real needs*" (Emenyonu, N. 2004:146.)

To the officer, the rural women only blindly resist measures that seem to be so obviously beneficial; it would only be a lunatic who can be capable of emptying a dipping tank. To satisfy his hurt ego, Pienaar opts to intimidate the women by driving towards them using his fifteen years old car which is described as: "*...rattling, bellowing and shaking*" (Ngcobo, L. 1999:2.) The use of the ramshackle jalopy symbolizes the desperate application of old tactics in handling women without realizing the challenges of the new age. His use of the vehicle to bully the women further brings out his nervousness, that he has nothing else to use to intimidate the defiant women. He exhibits insecurity by driving off from the rebellious women to the safety of the world of good roads and protection.

Apartheid to Pienaar and his type is a good system but the problem is the Africans' lack of understanding. His patriarchal perception makes him see the women as a potential threat, not only to his race, but to manhood. He correctly realizes the real root for protest in the country as the rural women, not their husbands in the cities. Hence he inadvertently acknowledges the women's important role in the struggle.

From Pienaar's racist and sexist training, he regards the defiant women as a strange breed of womanhood: "*...thin and rugged and not like women at all*" (Page 3.) To him, the women think they can rule the world because of being subversive, a trait perceived to be for men, yet they cannot do it properly. Pienaar's thinking carries an ironical tone, especially when he accepts that in the absence of their husbands, the rural women have lost respect and need for men. Hence there is an urgent need to stop them before they "*ruin*" (*ibid*) the country. However, Pienaar's chauvinist resolve cannot have a long term solution to the problem. The rural women are not the causes of the problem. The system he earnestly serves should allow couples to live together.

Pienaar is a man who is starting to fear the change in power relations, a pointer to what may happen to the future South African races.

According to the patriarchal thinking of Pienaar, manhood is equal to authority and hence it is abnormal to oppose masculine power. In this way, the officer's masculine assurance and his racial power are immediately posed as two factors the women will have to contend with. Jezile takes the lead as the group of women religiously empties the loathed dipping tanks on Tuesday night and Thursday morning every week. The spirit of solidarity of the community is revealed by the refusal to expose the identity of the culprit even when compelled to do so.

It is treacherous of Mr. Pienaar to further use the church to announce the meeting with the officials from Ixopo and the compulsory dipping of the Cattle. In the church, he craftily persuades and convinces the women to attend the meeting for there will be debate over contentious issues. However, instead of the officer arriving alone, he is accompanied by another car packed with white men. This has an intimidating effect on the women as they feel besieged. The sense of invasion is further revealed by the men in the car suspiciously stopping at a distance from the dipping area.

Pienaar gets out of his wreck of a car with an air of triumph for he envisions that he has succeeded in getting the women to dip the cattle. He has the audacity to order the women to drive the cattle into the enclosure. His security is boosted by the four burly white men in heavy boots from the BAD, who surround and push the people against the fence. Both the animals and the women do not only feel uncomfortable but they feel treacherously trapped as well.

To prove his insecurity, the white man only starts to speak when he is convinced that the people are securely penned in. This act symbolises the white man's desperate desire to unlawfully cling to power. This is further shown by his employment of treachery, and intimidation. It is absurd the way the debate which the officials are supposed to hold with

the women is concluded even before starting. Pienaar bites his lower lip as he looks at the women who stare at him obstinately. The non-verbal cue reveals that the subversive act of pouring out the dipping water has been bothering the government for a while. This worry is a great victory to the women.

The Whiteman's sexist, beastly and entrapping acts are not only meted on the African rural women. This is portrayed by the two victims of Mr. Potgeiter's atrocious and beastly acts; Jezile and her boss, Mrs. Potgeiter. Satirically, one morning both women are in tears, revealing their entrapment. The mistress of the house cries because the husband has battered her the previous night. This is evidenced by her swollen face with blood all over. Jezile on her part mourns because of the defilement of rape. All these crimes have been committed by Mr. Potgeiter. Fate has both women ensnared in the same room and they cannot escape. Ironically, Mrs. Potgeiter comes out as an insecure distressed woman, one who needs Jezile's pity. The incident symbolises the entrapment of South African woman irrespective of race. Hence South Africa is depicted as a hostile society especially for women where patriarchy in apartheid affects all.

3.3. Traditional Patriarchal Culture.

Ngcobo's voice is a contemporary feminist voice, but unlike other black women writers, she does not simply echo the socio-political criticism that Western feminists make. Instead she seeks to understand the contrast between her women's present plight and the diverse roles that they once enjoyed. What she shows is that the Zulu customs, the social structures that once afforded women a powerful role in the society, can actually impede the capacity to meet the demands of modern life (Ngcobo: 1999.)

Ngcobo wrote the novel at a time when her people most needed to recreate or recover their cultural identity. There must have been increased cultural pull. But in spite of this drag, Ngcobo has come out as one who has not sacrificed her critical insights into idolizing the African traditions. We further concur with Daymond's comments that unlike

her contemporary African protest writers, Ngcobo has avoided blaming women's woes solely on imperialism (in this case apartheid) without considering some aspects of African Zulu culture. Traditions have tended to be invoked as homogenous and harmonious, as producing a way of life to which individual people have an uncomplicated relationship and which they feel smoothly contained and sustained.

Other writers have been glorifying African culture using weighty symbols that express a yearning for Africa's past as the panacea of their woes against foreign tyranny. This has been the central approach to South African protest writing. Her novel comes directly out of her profound sympathy with the long struggle against apartheid and is shaped by a deep appreciation for Zulu culture. However, such sympathies do not obscure her understanding that the dictates of traditional patriarchal culture and political struggle often conflict with the needs of Jezile Majola and the other real-life women (*ibid.*)

We have delved into Zulu patriarchal society and evaluated how the traditional norms hinder the rural women's struggle against their many oppressive forces. In the world of racial segregation, women, carry a heavier burden than male characters belonging to the same race and class. For instance in the novel, the rural woman is under attack from all sides. This entrapment is expressed by Jezile in a quip: "*God, why are women so trapped?-are there ever any choices?*" (Page 14) She is reflecting on the way in which her determination to visit Siyalo in Durban has led to her betrayal of other village women's aspirations. She realises that her position between state law and custom is such that she cannot make right choices, she can only "*straddle*" (*ibid.*)

Ngcobo has portrayed some of the African customary expectations as not only contradictory but as a snare to the already oppressed rural women. This has been depicted through the contrasting desires of the two characters: Jezile and Zenzile. The two young women friends have husbands who work away in Durban. Through the women, Ngcobo has depicted the fulfillment of a woman's life as dependent on a successful marriage. The latter institution is reliant on hard work in order to provide food for the children.

Marriage turns out to be more of the relationships between two families than between the couple. Children are of paramount importance as marriage can either fall or stand on the question of children.

Children, to African customary expectations, are viewed as insurance to marriage. The customs are oblivious of the fact that apartheid, by separating the couples, denies women their husbands. Yet, a woman who fails to conceive is looked down upon as barren. Hence every married woman is expected to give birth to children. The women's paradox is expressed by the way the two friends Jezile and Zenzile cry: both of them have been married for six years. However, despite the years of marriage, Jezile is unable to conceive as a result, the society harshly judges as infertile. The condemnation does not consider that the couple has no ample time together. For instance, Siyalo had left Jezile a week after the wedding to go to work in Durban.

Besides the dictates of apartheid disallow a couple from deciding the suitable time a husband should go on leave. Jezile realizes that getting pregnant under apartheid system is not predictable but a game of chance as her husband comes home at the wrong time and date. Couples living apart cannot evade anxiety which has a corroding feeling. Jezile desperately wants to be a mother, to run away from her life as a water carrier, wood gatherer and road meander. She wants children to love, to save her from social torment and secure her for she sees far into the future.

On the other hand Zenzile, who like Jezile has been married for six years, conceives every time her husband comes for his annual leave. Already she has four children which cause her a lot of pain. Zenzile has had more than she wants as she gets babies against her desire. She becomes a captive in her house with whimpering babies who hang around her skirts. Everything around her is drab and she looks haggard and despondent. To her, motherhood is a burden, a social bind and fulfillment of other people's expectation of her. The unplanned maternity grieves and alienates her from her surroundings. She is a picture of a failed motherhood which is punitive so that her death after delivering a stillborn

child is viewed as relief to a woman who has experienced limitless suffering. Maternity under apartheid is burdensome as to conceive and deliver a normal baby is risky.

From Zenzile, motherhood is no longer a source of joy and comfort as shown by the stillborn in Zenzile's womb, which has been feeling like a stone. This further reveals that the burden of undesired motherhood can be oppressive. The dead child symbolizes a possibility of a failed freedom struggle if ill conceived and not well nurtured. Through the symbolism and the suggestiveness brought out in the death of Zenzile and her stillbirth, Ngcobo depicts the fragility of the black woman in South Africa under apartheid.

A mother dying due to hopelessness and resignation could also symbolize a vehicle of irony. Poverty and stressful maternity are inimical to the performance of responsible motherhood. This may suggest abortion and meaningless freedom struggle if there is poverty and no will to fight on. Jezile learns from her friend Zenzile that children are not a woman's panacea as the society may want to present them.

The contradiction in the society's expectation and perception is brought out by the fact that, if a woman gets children in quick succession, she is frowned upon as being "*...highly sexed*" (Page 61.) This is a cruel inversion of the truth for Zenzile is shelved by society because of her many closely born children. She is abandoned even by her mother-in-law, Magoba, to wallow in poverty, sickness and eventual death. The callous nature of the society is depicted in the interpretation of a woman dying of birth related complications. This is frowned at as it is taken that child's birth is not only natural to a woman but it is a test of her accomplishment. The greater the suffering, the more enhanced her womanhood. On this, the society is depicted as heartless

The above dilemma is also experienced by Jezile when she quickly conceives the second born; she paradoxically suffers the shame of pregnancy as she had suffered in childlessness. The two women's un-reconciled and conflicting objectives bring out the element of the disharmony, which can be an impingement to the struggle. Hence women

are caught in the web in different ways. On this, we are in agreement with Mary O'Brien in the Feminist Thought when she says that if a woman is to free herself from man's control, she has to understand that the source of her oppression is also the source of liberation. So despite the fact that the process of reproduction has been a "*bitter trap*" for women, it can also contain for her untapped possibilities and freedom.

Motherhood is not born but made. Again cultural construction of biological motherhood is a myth with oppressive purpose. For not wanting to be accused of selfishness and abnormality, women who would not have children at all become mothers. No wonder Oakley (ibid) notes that so many women are unhappy and gloomy, which is worsened by the fact that for a woman to admit any serious dissatisfaction with mothering is for her to admit failure as a person.

The society that nurtures a rural woman is depicted as cold and insensitive to her woes. The social order is aware of the apartheid's efforts to deny the rural woman her husband. The major fear for the rural women is to lose her husband to the city woman, whom she views as too sophisticated and "*will*". In spite of this, a woman's worst misfortune is the harsh verdict she gets if caught in adultery or gets pregnant in the absence of her itinerant husband.

The injustice and inhuman nature of customary law is brought out when Jezile is sent back to her parent's home because she has a child out of wedlock, out of rape by her white boss. Customs are indifferent about the circumstances that have led her to have a white baby. A victim of rape fails to get sympathy among her people. So like a villain, she has to go to exile, back at her mother's home and await her jailed husband's verdict.

Unfortunately Siyalo, who is depicted as a creation of customs, after leaving jail fails to visit or talk to Jezile, to hear her side of the story. Instead Jezile's children are taken from her; for the customs demand that the Majola should pick their own children now that their father is back. This act crushes the hope of Jezile ever re-uniting with her husband. Siyalo as a product of the customs may never attempt to understand Jezile's situation. Yet

ironically, all along Siyalo has been showing a lot of understanding and support to the women's course and woes in the struggle. For instance in Durban, he had joined the women's protest and has been a source of inspiration to his wife as he has been enlightening her on South African political reality.

Jezele in her expression of the authorial view questions the customs as she muses: "...*those are my children...*" (Page, 226.) The men take the children as if they have not seen their mother. They are oblivious to the pain they cause to their mother, who has been with them for the ten years their father has been serving the prison term. The harsh sentence has been passed without giving Jezele a chance to be heard. In her absence, without giving her chance to defend herself, the Mapanga and Majola judge, condemn and disown her. Both families ignore her presence for they do not even talk to her because: "...*custom was their guiding code, unyielding primeval adjudicator administering primordial laws*" (page, 227.)

Jezele is justified when she questions the whereabouts of the law when she was so mercilessly raped by Mr. Potgeiter and she was utterly alone. She further questions the whereabouts of the Majolas when she and the children were cruelly starved so that she had to leave them to slave for the white family, Potgeiters; slaving in their house and getting exposed to the abuse. The Majolas including Siyalo are strangers to her children. This is the irony of patriarchy. Jezele is treated as the vessel for carrying the Majolas and only the Majolas. Hence her own blood and flesh is crudely snatched from her. The experience is humiliating; making life seem to recede like the setting sun leaving a pool of darkness behind. Even Mabiyele, despite her realizing that it is wrong to take the children away from their mother, has to obediently bow down to the custom's demands.

The Partiality of patriarchy is further revealed by the society not condemning Mthebe, the irresponsible '*good for nothing*' husband of Jezele, who adversely contributes to her early death. Instead, the crowd attending Jezele's funeral overlooks his late arrival and get overwhelmed by his showing smart attire. The sun-glasses he wears not only

disguises his detached feelings but also points out his irresponsibility. Besides, the society is not sorry for the abandonment of and demise of young Zenzile and her baby but their main worry is the burden of raising her many children. The whole scene shows that emotional love and friendship could be hampered by absence of men on contractual labour but marriages survive because of children. So Zenzile, the traditions dictate, is the wife to Mthebe, despite the latter's negligence.

Further, patriarchal bondage is revealed by the way a woman with jailed or deserting husband is shelved by others despite her craving for human company. Such a woman has to learn to keep her own company and private feelings to herself as she cannot spend time at others' homes because it is strongly disapproved of. Hence she is condemned into social jail (Page 86.) A woman has to learn to keep her own company and private feelings to herself. This overt rejection crushes a woman. It empties her life as her task resorts to that of fulfilling the basic needs of searching for food, fire and craving for social acceptance.

To achieve social acceptance is difficult as society has already passed an irreversible verdict on the woman. A married woman is taken as the scapegoat for her husband's misfortunes. For instance, Jezile is blamed for wanting the best for her child and hence forcing the husband to steal milk and eventually getting Siyalo incarcerated. To the mother-in-law, MaBiyela, Jezile is the one guilty and responsible for her husband's imprisonment. It is unfair for the traditions to expect Jezile to remain a Majolas till death, irrespective of such hostile accusation. Ironically, Jezile cannot go back home with her caring mother as the latter advises her to stay and make peace with Mabiyele. This is a bondage born out of tradition.

The incongruity of the customs is further revealed by the way Zenzile's mother has to show deference to Magobo, her daughter's mother-in-law, the very woman who has contributed to her daughter's misery in marriage and death. It is the custom for Magoba

to be the chief mourner, not the mother who has lost a daughter. This is because Zenzile is married to a Shambala and has died a Shambala.

Jezile draws her inspiration from her difficult past. She has survived hardships and hence would survive anything in future. However, her dignity makes her feel jittery at the prospect of begging. This is expressed by her longing for the way of life that has systems built into it that would make survival possible without the stigma for begging being attached to it. But this way of thinking can be detrimental for it can plunge one into depression. However, this is altered by the intervention of Jezile's two friends, Gaba and Nomawa. They are of great help and encouragement to her especially when she delivers her second born daughter, Adondo, by herself. They help her realize that life is a shared experience and those who do not share become isolated. The two give her company and later accompany her to look for work. Jezile does not need a lot of conviction to leave the house for she has already witnessed confinement to the house killing her friend Zenzile (pg 86.)

Jezile undergoes personal growth that sets her apart from other women such as her own mother, mother-in-law and Zenzile. She realizes that she is the only one who can pull herself from the ditch into which others have cast her. Her resolution to move to Durban is to unearth her buried potential; to move from second class citizenship to first. This shows maturity into self-sufficiency. Jezile brings out the privacy of individual strength which, to achieve may often be difficult and lonely.

From the above discussion, we concur with Brown in Women Writers in Black Africa where she states that the road to individual strength is very private, often difficult and lonely. Individualism is always tempered by a deep and complex loyalty to indigenous culture and its own mystique of close community ties and sacred family obligations. Ngcobo's work can be seen as an examination of conflict within an individual in a callous society. An entity that works towards understanding of the society one lives in (Ntalindwa, R.1988: iiiv.)

The woman is placed in isolation as there is a conscious effort to distance her from her husband as well. The man is encouraged to keep the company of other men and not of his wife. The community does not condone a couple spending time together as the couple is teased for '*consuming*' each other. For instance when Siyalo comes home for leave, people keep on taking him away from their private moments with his wife. Such intrusion on the couple's privacy could be one of the reasons why Jezile cannot conceive. She aptly terms it as "*social conspiracy*" (Ngcobo: 1999.) and wonders when the social custom would alter to suit the practices of an industrial age.

Women are sidelined not only in family matters but also in the struggle against apartheid. For Patriarchal conditioning makes men assume the role of women. This is demonstrated by Siyalo and other men when they finally come home for annual leave. They hold secret political meetings leaving women out. Their meeting is understood to be men's affair as women should not be involved in politics. Yet the women are the rural veterans of the struggle as demonstrated by their active engagement with the dip inspector.

The women in the absence of their men have been defying the indirect culling of their cattle in the name of dipping. The men would have been expected to compare notes with the women who are on the ground. Ironically, men only open up to their women when they are sacked. For instance, Siyalo does not talk of his tribulations in the city even when he is there with Jezile. He opens up only when he is fired. Yet, his afflictions are due to his wife's allegedly subversive acts.

Ngcobo takes a gendered understanding of the rural issues into further dimension by arranging events so that Siyalo alternates with Jezile as the person who sustains the home and is responsible for the family. This is where the conventionally gendered responsibility of men and women are, as Bakhtan, in *Feminist Thought* puts it, mutually "*destabilized*" and where visionary possibilities really enter the narrative. This comes about when Jezile, after her political awakening in Durban, joins the women presenting a petition to officials in Ixopo, the nearest town to the Sabelweni valley.

Jezile is jailed for six months and Siyalo is dismissed by his employer in Durban due to political activities. He arrives home to do the wife's part.

Siyalo is lost in confusion as he takes up his wife's duties, especially child care. He realises how difficult it can be to wean a baby without the mother or a wet nurse. He cannot handle the crying baby, S'naye, for she wants tender and familiar hands. Paradoxically the baby grieves as the two adults, Siyalo and his mother, MaBiyela, watch helplessly. However, Mabiyele has to rescue the baby from the naïve and inept father. The scenario reveals Mabiyele as the one who had taken the patriarchal authority in the son's absence and hence yields her place to him. Thus reminding him of what the customs expect of him. It is ironical that even in his supposedly adult responsibilities; Siyalo requires the mother's guidance. It may be concluded that even the patriarchal roles has to be given to men by women.

Ngcobo further uses Siyalo's new and hollow authority to expose his full, feminized helplessness as he is unable to earn money to feed his child. In desperation he steals milk, gets caught and is sentenced to a lengthy term in jail. Again the husband and wife swap their gendered roles, meaning that Siyalo is taken away from home shortly after Jezile is released from jail. In this sequence of gendered exchanges, it is particularly interesting that it is the husband's legal defence which is conducted on political lines yet; these resources are not provided for the women.

The alternation in filling the gendered labour of the homestead indicates Ngcobo's wish not to represent the division between men and women as inescapable just as it indicates that gender is always what is performed rather than being a fixed entity (Tony, page, 150). Siyalo's despair when he is unable to act either as the customary hierarchy expected of a man (to earn money), or as a surrogate mother (providing milk) is being used to figure afresh the impossibility of a rural family functioning as an economic, let alone a cultural unit under apartheid.

Ngcobo brings out the difference between the man and woman in sorting out their problems. Siyalo's mind is befuddled when S'naye cries due to hunger. He loses his temper and goes out of the house only to come back late in the night when the wife has calmed the hungry baby. The depiction of Siyalo as an escapist helps to underscore Jezile's strength and perseverance.

3.4. Women as the propagators of patriarchy.

Ironically, patriarchy is propagated by women, the carriers of culture. In Zulu culture, the mother-in-law acts as a surrogate husband. She is patronizing as she has great powers, which carry authority through custom. Such a woman's vigilance is born out of her own embitterment, soured by her own outgrown life relationship with her own mother-in-law in her own past life. Women with such bitter background get conditioned to a resigned attitude to the struggle, and in our case, to apartheid and patriarchy.

A mother-in-law represents the contradictory nature of the customs. For instance MaBiyela, Jezile's mother-in-law collaborates with the "*social conspiracy*" to deny Jezile ample time with her husband. She would turn up at the couple's door three or four times a day. She would invent chores for Jezile to do, duties that would take her away from Siyalo for hours. Yet, MaBiyela is bitter about Jezile's failure to conceive. She relentlessly persecutes her as she talks about children and childless women and would wonder loudly to all and sundry what would happen if Jezile is barren. Her only son has to have children. The possibility of the daughter-in-law being barren makes her hold a grudge against her to the point of insulting her at will (Ngcobo. 1999.)

Mabiyela's hostility to Jezile is revealed when she blames her for driving her husband to steal milk for her so that he is jailed so that she could deliver her supposedly "*illegitimate*" child alone. Jezile is blamed as the source of the misfortune hence being viewed as the villain. Mabiyela's acquiescence is shown by her reprimanding Jezile for thinking that her child is special. Hence the image of motherhood brought out by Mabiyela is not only oppressive but retrogressive. MaBiyela takes it to be her duty to

patronize Jezile's movements to the extent of calling her a trollop, suggesting that she is unfaithful. In the absence of Siyalo, the mother should be told of the whereabouts of Jezile since it is the mother's role to look after the son's interests.

The moral law Mabiyele is attempting to validate does not make sense in a country of inhuman inequality. Such a law is depicted as blind and partial. This is further pointed by Jezile as she justifies the whole crime of the husband when she states that taking what is in excess is not a crime. This reveals her growing political awareness

Zenzile labouring for twenty four hours is torture. Magoba, her mother-in-law is depicted as cruel, cold and callous. To her, it is the woman who bears the child not the hospital nurses or doctor. Her main worry is the question of money to hire a car and pay the hospital bill. Going to the hospital is very expensive since Mthebe does not send money home. Zenzile, knowing her in-law's callous nature, decides to call Jezile to rescue her from the uncaring mother.

Being a mother should give a woman a formidable position of power in her marital home but patriarchal contradictory reality is revealed in that young mothers are truly powerless. A young wife has no central place in the home of her in-laws such as where to live, where to go or with whom to associate. Jezile's mother-in-law further symbolizes patriarchy as shown in a meeting where Mabiyele controls Jezile's speech by giving her a cautionary look. This is meant to frustrate her emerging leadership. Such mothers come out as stumbling blocks to the young women who are struggling to better their lives. In combating apartheid and other oppressive forces: "*An African woman has to fight out the clutches of a mother-in-law*" (Lauretis, T. 1986:237.) The mother-in-law's authority is an extension of male domination and conservative in function.

3.5. The Other Side of Motherhood.

In the natural state, a mother is the source of comfort and security to her children. The importance of one's mother is brought out by a woman like Zenzile, who with all her

fragility stands above her children like a tower of strength. She shields them from great suffering exemplified by Jezile, who without thinking of the consequences, shoots the rapist white soldier to rescue her daughter S'naye from the heinous abuse.

To a married woman, her mother's home is still her sanctuary. For instance, when Zenzile gets very ill, her children are taken to Malukazi. Zenzile is to go to the mother's place to give birth instead of going to Durban where the husband Mthebe works. The husband is irresponsible while the mother-in-law is insensitive.

When Jezile conceives, she goes back home to "*show off*" her success as a mother. The same home becomes her final refuge when she gets a child out of rape, out of wedlock. Jezile has to return to her mother's home to release Mabiyele of the responsibility and condemnation. At home she is comfortable. Her mother gives her a plot in which to raise food. A small house is also built for her. Later she gets her own plot and moves away from the mother. In a season of hunger, Lungu, the son born out of rape by Potgeiter, brings his mother meat and stew from the grandmother (Gogo.) It is only Gogo who can give things as rare as meat. "...*all good things come from Gogo*" (Ngcobo, L. 1999: 223.) This would be interpreted to mean that traditions still have good things to offer.

Despite the patriarchal portrayal of a mother-in-law, her woes, joy, expectations and frustrations as a woman in South African reserve cannot be dismissed. Such a woman is in many ways capable but also lonely. Where matriarchy figures generate brutality, it is a consequence of identifying themselves with patriarchal figures that rule the world (Ntalindwa, 1988.)

Some Mothers-in-law behave cruelly because they have been deprived of their own children either by the South African cities, prisons or death. With such bitterness, daughters-in-law are regarded as impositions. They are another woman's child. Hence the mother-in-laws project their own hurt on them. This is expressed by Mabiyele's bitter and unfounded accusation of Jezile of that she forced her son to steal so as to feed her

child. To Mabiyele, her son is being misused. After all women, including her, have raised their children single-handedly without a husband to steal milk to feed the babies. Such women portray a defeatist attitude and resigned motherhood.

The mothers-in-law in prison get very concerned about their daughters-in-law being called upon by prison guards supposedly for sexual favours. They have genuine worry of their sons' marriages getting jeopardized.

The uncertainty and the abusive nature of the apartheid system mould women to be afraid and hence become prone to being suspicious and to gossip about each other's failures and misfortune. Mabiyele symbolises such women. She is embittered by her own loneliness when she was young. She had to cope with the long absences of her husband. So she exercises her new-found freedom power with an element of retaliation against some malignant social order.

Life had been harsh to her what with little money to run the home and bring up children alone, tend stock, plough the land, raise crops, mend the broken fences and be a father to the growing children. She had then secretly attributed her agonizing existence to her weakling of a husband. Yet, her very son Siyalo, whom she expects to prove to the world a paragon of fine upbringing, turns out to be as docile as his father. This has been a source of secret agony to the mother.

Mabiyele's taking the daughter-in-law to hospital to deliver the baby should not be construed as mere patronizing for she is only ensuring that everything goes on well. She has equally been longing and anxious about the arrival of the son's baby. This is evidenced by her elation as she proudly exclaims what is to become the name of the baby: '*Wo, S'naye, S'naye nathi umtwana...*' (*We have her; we too have the baby...*) (Ngcobo, L.1999:7.)

In the background of the mood of laughter and hope exhibited by the cleanliness and efficiency of the hospital, Ngcobo uses Mabiyela to bring out the aesthetics of African culture. This is brought about by her apprehension over the method of delivering the baby and the disposal of the placenta. The latter is not supposed to be discarded by Strangers.

Her explanation of the symbolic importance of the placenta is not only illuminating, but it brings her out as a wise woman. She symbolises the unadulterated beauty of the African culture as she eloquently expounds on the bond between a mother, the baby and the earth. The cord draws the three to each other. It ties the baby to the place of her birth and hence will always draw her home.

Mabiyela's assertion that the whites in hospital burn the treasured placenta even of the dead babies has some symbolic meaning. She expresses thus: *'If you submit yourself to these people they destroy you. Give them a little chance and you are never the same again. They're butchers!'* (Page 74)

In her expressing the authorial view, she warns of the whites that they give small tokens in exchange for the most basic and indispensable aspects of the African lives and beliefs leaving them bereft of identity. She correctly points out that the baby with the misplaced cord starts off as a waif and the whole of the black South Africans are a nation of waifs. Mabiyela reveals the significance of losing the placenta as equal to losing a birthright. The hospital keeping the placenta for all mothers for the whole nation is in deference to people's beliefs. The white man is ignorant of African beliefs.

Mabiyela back home reverently buries the baby's umbilical cord to stump the relationship between the baby and the mother. The significance of the interment means that when all else fails, the cord becomes the anchor between the S'naye and her place, the land. It is buried in a secret place where it would always beckon to her no matter how far away she goes. It would always bring her back to her place of birth. This brings out

the importance of land in the lives of these people. MaBiyela represents motherhood that undergoes change. She allows her daughter-in-law to go and work at Bloemfontein city.

She wisely accepts that the responsibility of raising children single-handedly can take one through many unforeseen byways. She is very willing to take care of Jezile's children as she says: "*There is no virtue in staying with us here to preserve our ways of life and reputation and to lose these children through starvation*" (page 188.)

She comments that she has witnessed many descent wives leave their children behind in order to work in the cities. MaBiyela's changed stance shows the dynamism of culture, that even the apparent solid traditions have room for change so as to fit with the times.

3.6. Patriarchy and Woman's Identity.

The racist sexism expressed in apartheid together with the African patriarchy seem to collaborate in denying an African woman her identity. For instance, the rural women in prison cause a stir by refusing to answer to incorrect and mispronounced names that the white guards give them. The clerk writes their names incorrectly because he is not accustomed to them. To him, it does not matter if the names are right or wrong; one Kaffir maid is no different from another.

The women do not recognize the names called out and hence they do not answer to them. Even when the commandant barks at them in anger, they refuse to budge. Instead they exhibit subversion by talking among themselves. When the women's names were pronounced correctly, they beam with pleasure, which alarms the white guards. The country women eventually succeed in asserting their identity.

The lack of identity of the black woman is further depicted by Mrs. Potgeiter insisting on calling Jezile '*Annie*', the supposedly generic name for black servants. Interestingly, even Mr. Potgeiter, who has known Jezile for long, starts to call her by the imposed name. He knows that she is a mother whom he has persuaded to leave her children in the countryside and yet he sometimes calls her "*girl*". This hypocrisy is a way of erecting

barriers to map the servant-master relationship. This is one among the many impediments that mark the limits of Jezile's humanity in that household. To the white people's assumption, the rapport with their servant would formalise into a distant if not hostile exchange. The very imposition of the name 'Annie' by the white family strips Jezile of her life, her past, friends and relatives, language and initiative, leaving her "*just an empty shell of her real self*" (page 200.)

In Zulu culture, like other African traditions, a woman's identity is lost through the father or the children as she has to use their names but not hers. A married woman should not call the in-laws by name except the very young. Sometimes she cannot call her husband by his name but identifies him only as the brother to the younger brother or sister. After the birth of the first born, she can address the husband as the father of so and so.

The woman at her husband's home is not known by her name. She is either known by her father's or her child's name. The effect of the woman losing her name is to isolate her emotionally, further confirming her seclusion. The name would change when she gets her first born to be named by the name of her child like Nakajezile Nakadumazile. This means that the woman lives her life through the identity of either her father or child. Her adult identity is derived from her capacity to be a mother. To reinforce the woman's isolation, she has to observe myriads of taboos such as having her head covered in front of her in-laws, who are senior to her in age. This brings out the social entrapment of the woman.

Ngcobo employs satire and irony to further highlight her ideas. She uses Magasa to further elucidate a woman's identity hitch. The latter is a onetime prostitute, who gets confused when a priest, in a baptismal service, asks her Christian name. She amuses every one when she confesses that she does not remember the baptismal name. It is satirical the way she turns to men with the question "*who am I?*" The name they give her, "*Celestina*", sounds imposed (page 164.)

Through Jezile, Ngcobo brings out the patriarchal conditioning the girls undergo right from childhood. The training aims at finally subduing and subjugating the rural women.

They learn to expect little from life, which is early conditioning to pessimistic attitude and acquiescence. From Jezile's revelation, she had sworn that if Siyalo married her, he would change the course of her life for ever. That she would fall into the pattern of what was expected of her accordingly.

However, Jezile's two friends, Gaba and Nomawa, have a liberating effect on her. For instance, Gaba expresses the authorial view when she advises Jezile that love for one's husband should not be enslaving. For Siyalo is in prison for obeying his own conscience not because he loves his wife more or less. He has not considered her wishes as paramount. Jezile is further advised to take the separation as a release, to enable her to make her own judgment and her own wishes. Women should learn to make own their judgment. The two friends also counsel her not to allow her mother-in-law to oppress her since she has no money to offer. They encourage her to earn her own income even if it is a pittance from MaNgidi, the rich wife of the Chief Counsellor Duma, than to face poverty.

The ideas of the two friends are further expressed by de Beauvoir's argument in The Second Sex that woman is oppressed by the virtue of "*Otherness*". She is the other because she is not man. Man is the self, the free, determining being who defines the meaning of his existence and woman is the "*other*", the object whose meaning is determined for her. If a woman is to become a self, a subject, she must like man, transcend the definition, label and essences limiting her existence. She must make herself whatever she wants to be.

The prospect of creating change which opens a woman's thoughts of the future is not an easy step. Ngcobo's novel is the analysis of the present, which propels people to act. The author in detail presents ways in which Jezile negotiates the

complex structures of secular power in which interacting colonial and patriarchal constraints shape personal and social life as a woman, wife and daughter-in-law.

3.7. Jezile's Resolve.

When Jezile receives an unexpectedly short letter from her husband Siyalo, who works in the city of Durban, she gets a brain wave. Something inside her clicks as she realises that her husband could be starting to lose interest in her. This is in spite of the many reassuring letters he has been writing. She is resolute about making her own decisions about her life and sorting herself out, given that the husband who has the mandate to do so has failed. She realizes that she would have written the letter the husband should have written a long time ago. The letter is meant to come from her husband to a doctor, seeking for medical attention in Durban. She decides to take his assumed role. The two mothers, her own and the in-law should no longer hold power over her.

Jezile resolves to overcome all odds. This means going against the other women's collective struggle with apartheid in order to get an ample chance to be with her husband in order to conceive a baby. She makes up her mind to go for the abhorred pass to Durban. She realizes that resignation to the status quo and acceptance of the established restrictions may end up in her losing her husband to other women or dying miserably like her friend Zenzile.

She goes to Durban and eventually conceives. This is a great achievement. All the same, back home, this joy of accomplishment is soon watered down as Jezile is harshly judged as a betrayer and scolded in a women's prayer meeting. In Dr.Nosizwe's speech, she is reminded of the need to sacrifice personal needs for the common good. Jezile leaves the meeting hurt, afraid and confused. Her heart throbs with: "*...guilt and pain and conflict*" (Ngcobo, 1999: 42.)

What the women accusers of Jezile fail to realize is that for the so called 'common good' goals to be realized, private needs have to be met first without which the individual

would still be fettered. Ngcobo uses Jezile to explore the complex societal demands on rural women who engage in political resistance. To explain this further we deviate from Ousmane's Marxist stance in God's Bits of Wood that the liberation of women can only be achieved as a social group not as individuals. Our view is further reiterated by a Senegalese critic, M. Kane, who when debating on the role of women says that female emancipation brings a growing individual consciousness. However, this does not mean that group values should be cast aside (Murphy, D.2000:126-172.)

Jezile takes the resignation and the hopelessness of the other women as a challenge which propels her to move on. Her pregnancy symbolizes secure future, confidence, happiness and hope (Emenyonu, 2004: 52.) The conception and birth of the baby girl, S'naye, is a crowning victory for a woman who, powers beyond her would have condemned to "*barrenness.*"

From this time on, Jezile is more resolute in everything she does. She works hard at her knitting, sewing and in the fields. She takes in washing for a young couple in Umzimkhulu to earn a regular income. Her responsible spirit and independence of mind is shown by her thinking of taking her children to boarding school. She realises that she needs money for fees and books. This is despite the fact that the husband is working at Ixopo; she has realised that life is unpredictable and things can turn upside down. She has to ensure that her children: "*...never need to work for the Potgeiters of this world*" (Ngcobo, L .1999: 230.)

3.8. Jezile's Experiences in Durban.

It is paradoxical for Jezile to move mountains to be with her husband in Durban, only to get trapped. The Africans in the city live in Cato Manor slum in KwaMashu. The African quarter is described as a festering eyesore. It is a human reservoir of Durban as Africans provide labour to the white man in the beautiful city in which they cannot live. The sleeping conditions are not only dehumanizing but debasing. The sleeping place is austere and grim as the couples sleep in an open dormitory. Housing for the African workers is only such by name.

To Jezile, the Durban of her fantasy becomes different from that of reality. But Jezile resolves to fight for her dignity by refusing sex in a communal bedroom. She is determined to make the best of the new place. She positively appreciates the city as a place free from the inhibiting strictures of the customs. She appreciates that the place has a lot of water as compared to Sigageni.

Ngcobo gives her woman protagonist, Jezile Majola, an unprecedented role in instigating and leading armed resistance against the tyrannical rule. Initially, she lacks the understanding of the political matters of the day. But Ngcobo strategises to expose the heroine to the political struggle. In the house alone, Jezile gets exposure by reading News Papers such as *'Ilanga Lase Natal'* and collects the clippings from all the newspapers.

From her reading, Jezile realizes that the Sigageni women are not alone in challenging the system, she learns about a riot by the city women. They demand clinics instead of beer halls; as beer is a source of conflict to city families. People drink themselves to death and children share the parents' lethal concoctions for lack of milk. People die like flies. This is because the white man has robbed them of the chance to make a living by selling their home brewed beer. Making people drink is an act of aggression and if men continue to drink in the beer halls, this would mean that they are also against women and hence targets of aggression.

From the riots, Jezile learns that for the employers to pay their workers meager money to buy food is deemed as aggression against the black community. She is enraged and joins the protesting Durban women. The women command a following without stopping to enlist anyone. Men join women and Jezile is elated to witness the women chasing police men, who are armed with knobkerries. The latter is one of the symbols of apartheid's authority. The unlikely challenge from the women makes the authority nervous and uncertain. This insecurity from the oppressor gives the hope to Africans that one day they will manage to oust the callous regime despite its heavy armament.

In concert with her new found friend, Fakazile, it is the first time, for the two rural women to have their grievances so well articulated. Jezile realizes that women can influence the thinking of the white authority. In Jezile as in Sindiswe, the woman protagonist in Ngcobo's Cross of Gold, defiance begins to drill into her conscience and she starts to believe that: "*Violence is morally better than passive submission; that acquiescence is evil*" (Ngcobo, L. 1981: 2.)

In this chapter, we have discussed and concluded that despite the apartheid system's use of the vicious military might and other oppressive tools to subdue the women, the latter come out heroic. We have found out that the women's struggle is spontaneous and not engineered by the more politically 'advanced' women of the cities as it has often been assumed. Nor is it as a result of political manoeuvring on the part of the main national organization.

Absurdly, the success of the women is partly because the government has underestimated the rural woman's strength. The authority's assumption is that by issuing the passes to the rural women, they keep them away from the cities. And by so doing they would subdue the African population. The supposition being that the rural women, being apolitical, can only be dependant on the authority of their husbands who are away in the city. Therefore, the women would be their easy victims.

We have also discussed the suffering caused to the rural woman by the insensitive nature of some of the African customs. The rural woman's use of the same tools used to subjugate her to protect and liberate herself from oppression has been discussed. For instance, Jezile uses the abhorred pass to visit her husband to conceive the baby. We have also analysed how some women, who succumb to patriarchal oppression, turn out to be the perpetrators of patriarchy. This is irrespective of race or age. This has been brought

out by Jezile's white boss, Mrs. Potgeiter, who ensures that the racist laws are followed to the letter as regards the employment of Jezile. The two mothers-in-law for Jezile and

Zenzile, MaBiyela and Magoba have been discussed as custodians of some of the oppressive traditions.

However, despite the subjection of the women to the dual burden of the demands of apartheid system and dictates of traditions and customs perpetuated in the rural areas, they emerge victorious.

In chapter four, we discuss apartheid system's abusive and contradictory sense of justice and the varied ways in which the rural women characters defy and subvert the oppression. We examine the growing awareness of the rural women as they question the injustice in the apartheid's legal systems. We also discuss how the women react to the encroachment of apartheid on the Zulu traditional government. The corrosive moral effect of the apartheid on the rural women that has lead women to vices such as prostitution is discussed. We further examine the symbolic meaning and the consequences of rape on African women by white men. Finally, we look into how sometimes the church may smother the women's spirit of struggle.

CHAPTER FOUR.

4.0. Women Combat The Varied Faces of Apartheid.

In this chapter, we analyse the apartheid system's abusive and contradictory sense of justice and the varied ways in which the rural women characters defy and subvert the oppression. The encroachment and the effect of apartheid on the Zulu traditional government are discussed. We also examine factors that lead women to vices such as prostitution. The symbolic meaning and consequence of rape of African women by white men is discussed. Finally, we analyse how sometimes the church smothers the women's fighting spirit.

4.1. The Injustice of Apartheid.

To condemn the Sigageni women to the Pietmaritzburg prison for burning the passes is an unjust verdict. Six months jail term for mothers with children, farms to tend while some are the sole bread winners is not only too long but excessive. This reveals apartheid as an unfair and heartless system. The court officials handling the case are totally alienated from the lives of their convicts. For instance, they have not visited Sigageni so like the rest of the whites, they are ignorant of the rural African woman's plight.

Prison itself is anti- culture and hence a reversal of the flow of life as the whole concept is alien to African thought. The act of jailing the women has a humiliating effect which is expressed in the similarity of the uniform the women convicts wear. The identicalness kills their Individuality. Besides, compelling mothers of varied ages to strip and bathe communally in the open is not only debasing but immoral. It is a violation of a people's civilization. For women from the countryside, customs determine all forms of behaviour where the in-laws have a taboo of avoidance which is a sign of respect.

Nevertheless, prison is designed to quash any signs of resistance and trample on all traditions. The beastly and the immoral intent of the guards in parading the naked women

could be to choose the ones to sleep with. This is confirmed by the fact that some of the women become pregnant when serving their jail term. Nonetheless, the women resolve to defy the humiliation in different ways. For instance, the young ones march towards the bath with their heads high swinging their arms in defiance. But the older women, who are thin and emaciated, walk in half stoop with hands clasped in front of them in effort to cover their nudity. The elders are conscious of traditions and in the face of humiliation they still try to defend the dignity of the African woman. The elderly mothers stand for the sacred traditional society straining against the corroding immoral effect of the West.

The Sabelweni jailed women get inspired by the new courage they generate from the support from the demonstration they get in the court. Their protest elevates them to new levels as the crowd outside the court room terms them as "*heroines*" Their demonstration bears fruit immediately as they are joined by another group of women from the city. It is ironical that the assumed sophisticated city women are inspired to riot by the rural women. This is a great victory for the rural women who though not highly exposed like the urban women, suddenly become leaders. It is a great win for the spirit of the struggle to unite the city and the rural women as they realize that they have a common course. As they mingle, "*them- and- us' attitude died a natural death*" (Ngcobo, L.1999.104.) The unity is shown by their joining together to sing a victory song. The rural women get a chance to learn more from the city women who are more politicized. It is paradoxical the way the incarceration of the women has a positive side of freedom of uniting as well as motivating. The women get a ray of hope as they bring out the nobility of a political struggle which is determined to stop at nothing to achieve victory.

Splitting rocks is the manual labour the women prisoners are given as a penalty. This severe punishment is backbreaking. However, this does not mean that the Sigageni rural women are not used to hard conditions. They are used to "*hard work*" (page, 98) but not to hard labour. The work in the reserve is satisfying since it bears a sense of achievement for the work yields fruit in the end or carries hope of bearing fruits. In prison, the women feel ensnared and betrayed. The whole

experience leaves them with a rawness they have not anticipated because prison separates them from their ordered life.

It occurs to Jezile that it is not just the rocks that they are forced to shatter but the substance of their lives. The whole exercise of crushing stones is futile and a waste of physical strength. The aim of imprisoning them is to reduce them into timidity. The women's defiance of this debasement is expressed in their song: "*Pretoria- Vewoerd-you strike women, you strike the rock! We are the rock!*" (Page, 98.) The dramatic irony in the song is meant to jeer the jailers; for the women consider themselves as durable as rocks. So when their jailers attempt to break them by making them split rocks, the punishment has no effect on them.

The incarcerated women start to question justice. This is because according to the women, the term criminal has lost its meaning. They realise that there is no difference between the criminal and the innocent because the scales of justice are inverted. For instance, the women have been criminalised for defying the forced culling of their animals in the name of dipping. In the court of law, they have not been asked the reason why they are not for dipping their animals. They are assumed guilty and are quickly whisked to prison to serve their sentence.

Paradoxically, the home-coming for the women has a humiliating and alienating effect. This is symbolized in their creased and crumpled clothes. Their return is unnoticed and unheralded which could symbolise their unnoticed role in the struggle. No one meets them for none knows about their release. This further suggests that the women's role in the struggle is denigrated. Besides all this, the issue is that no matter how noble the course, imprisonment tints one with shame and stigma. But the women overcome the shame by talking loudly and excitedly to put the prison horrors behind them.

The callous nature of apartheid is further depicted by the jailing of Siyalo for ten years. This is a very long term which can lead to hopelessness and can also be translated to mean death to a marriage. This is further stressed by the way the reality of that incarceration dawns on the women left behind. To start with, the dust from the car that

speeds off with Siyalo symbolises defeat as expressed by the sadness written on the faces of the two women, the wife and the mother, who emerge from the dust. The despair is further underscored by the crowd of sympathizers at Jezile's home, who at the news of Siyalo's imprisonment wail as if he were dead. Indeed the effect of that imprisonment is death in many ways. It becomes the final blow to the mother's resilience. Suddenly, the strong MaBiyela starts to wear a look of depression, which is expressed by her wearing black as if her son has died. This symbolises resignation and hopelessness.

On the other hand, the unjust jailing not only makes the victim, Siyalo, a hero, but it gives the wife, Jezile, the determination to fight on. The political awareness that has been going on in Jezile emerges as evidenced by her further questioning the country's judicial system. The authorial view she expresses questions why the next of kin is often ignored when it comes to passing judgment. This is evidenced by the lawyers arguing about points of law but not about human beings. Jezile, who is expecting the second child, is left wondering what to do, with her husband in jail for ten years. She aptly terms the verdict as: "...*monstrous*" (Page 154.) However, she turns the husband's imprisonment into inspiration. She resolves to provide milk for her daughter, for it is the lack of milk that has led Siyalo to jail.

We concur with Dr. Nosizwe in referring to the case as political. She elucidates to the crowd at the court that Siyalo is jobless due to politics. That his cows, succumbing to drought is also political as Collet, the white farmer has a lot of land thanks to the unequal distribution of land. Under the apartheid system, the whites buy the land cheaply and get government's subsidies to maintain crops and market produce. Collet's land symbolizes exploitation and contradiction of the social inequality in Ixopo, South Coast of Natal.

4.2. Apartheid Violates Traditional Government.

The apartheid system is bent on eroding the credibility of the African leaders. This is done by corrupting, alienating and converting people who are initially good into their puppets. An example is the Chief Duma, who has served the community as a leader for

many years. He has been a credible leader and, a people's choice. However, the authorities shrewdly capitalise on his popularity and eventually manage to turn him into their stooge. They bestow to him the title of "*Chief Counsellor*" as an enticement to buy his loyalty.

The success of the impious scheme is depicted by, Duma gradually graduating into a double dealer and backbiter as indicated by his criticizing the new chief Siyapi, behind his back. His wicked character, especially his double dealing with the government does not endear him to the people. Eventually, people lose all the loyalty and respect they have for him. This is depicted by the women booing at him and refusing him to finish his message in the church in their Thursday prayer meeting. Despite the blatant rejection, the Counsellor has the audacity to warn the women that resisting changes (even when imposed on them) would not take them anywhere. Hence according to the Counsellor, the women's resistance is in vain. He has been infected by insensitivity by his masters.

Through the likes of chief Duma, Ngcobo portrays how the Apartheid regime's exploitative nature encroaches, exploits and spreads out into African Socialism. Work parties in African culture were never organized for pay. Initially, community gathering was designed to help the needy cases. The public would offer their help to one another without strings attached. This was not like employment. But Duma, the white man's stooge turns the situation round. He does not help the community to eradicate poverty therefore he is not different from the white capitalist employers.

The Chief Councillor, Duma, symbolises capitalistic exploitation. His new house proves that there is prosperity for those who collaborate with the government. They are well-paid and given favours. For instance, he buys wood from the white forester and barter it with human labour. His subjects do everything for him such as ploughing his land, planting, plastering and white-washing his big house. The cruel exploitation of Africa is depicted by the seven months pregnant Jezile going to toil at Duma's to earn fire wood.

The irony of the scenario is that the countryside should not lack the basics such as the firewood. This suggests unfair distribution of the resources.

The capitalistic nature of the White man's stooges is further depicted by Duma and his wife, MaNgidi. The couple hardly toils and moils as indicated by the way the latter is brought out as always clean, fresh and smiling. The Chief Counsellor Duma only idles contentedly around his expansive compound; supervising the varied teams of labourers and making malicious jokes about the new chief, Siyapi. In this scenario, Ngcobo seems to be warning the freedom fighters to be aware that the freedom they are struggling to attain can be hijacked by the puppets of the white man and thus water down the essence of the whole struggle.

Apartheid's exploitative nature encroaches on and subjugates the African traditional authority. In Zulu history, chiefs and kings were influential leaders who were revered and adored by their subjects. They always had had the people's mandate to rule. But the apartheid system in Sigageni has violated the age-old relationship between the people and their leaders. This is a deliberate destruction of the people's leadership. In the apartheid government, chiefs are not ordained by the people's will. Mostly they are appointed to serve the government's interests. No wonder the insurgence of deadly confrontation between the people and their chiefs under the Bantu Authorities Act (BAD).

Without the chiefs, the whole apartheid system would not work. The authority has placed all chiefs compliant or not under the control of BAD. Thus rather than exercise an agreed upon authority over their people, they are made to serve as extensions of apartheid bureaucracy. This has made the chiefs to become conscious of their new role and power. This usurping of ancient social roles leaves legitimate chiefs and their people bewildered.

The apartheid system further undermines the fabric of the rural society by deposing and exiling the people's leaders like chief Siyoka. The reason for the chief's deportation is his

failure to compromise by refusing to advise the women of Sigageni to co-operate in the apportionment and fencing of their farmland. The authority is very prompt in deposing, exiling and replacing people's legitimate leaders like chief Siyoka with the likes of chief Siyapi, a conformist.

To the authority, their best choice of a leader is the traitor people against his people. For instance, Siyapi qualifies to be the system's chief because of being a former policeman. Hence he knows the imperialist's law and that is what matters to the authority. To show appreciation for the favour bestowed, he is single-minded in demonstrating his authority to both his masters and his subjects. To please the latter, he threatens to refuse his people the right to plough their arable allotment the following spring. This is taken as an attack on the community's right. But the people's displeasure does not worry Siyapi since he has the support of the South African government. With his boss, a Mr. de Wet Nel, they fail to appreciate the depth of feeling of the Sabelweni people as they regurgitate the same old promises about changing the status of the local courts and the whole system of justice in the whole local area.

Probably due to the challenging struggles the women of Sigageni undergo, there has been gradual change in them similar to the weathering of rocks. They start to make decisions which previously they could not make. Previously, they had to write letters to their husbands or waited for their return to seek their approval. However, now they make and implement resolutions. The women are determined to rebel against the imposed government stooges. With the imminent threat on their land and cattle, the women resolve in a short notice to call their men from the city. The men come and join them in the war to stand by the community, to augment the numbers in defence of their land and their rights. The men come to stand with the rest of the community which for a long time has stood alone against the assault of their families. They provide a contingent of armed men throughout the ploughing season that accompanies the spans. Hence Siyapi's threats are not carried out.

The Sigageni community in their quest and love for peace decide to have a meeting between Siyapi and the minister of BAD, Mr. de Wet Wel. The agenda of the meeting is to express objection to the encroachment of their land. However, the assembly fails for Siyapi and his white master, in their arrogance and obstinacy, defy the people and refuse to attend the meeting. However, the people do not give up. Despite Siyapi's haughty and uncompromising attitude, they decide to have a meeting with him alone, to bring him to his senses so that he can see how the whole scheme would jeopardize his position. People want him to state if he is their chief or the government's stooge. For no matter how much a chief is elevated by the government, he still has to live in their community, sink or swim with it.

The people of Sigageni in their pursuit of diplomacy attend the meeting in great numbers. In the meeting place they remain as calm and orderly as in traditional meetings which are always marked by consensus. Nevertheless, the two community traitors, Siyapi and Chief Counsellor Duma, fail the people. They fail to attend the meeting for they have conspired to undermine the spirit of resistance by ignoring the masses of the people. Besides, Siyapi goes ahead and reports the private meeting to the authorities.

People in resoluteness decide to stand up for themselves for themselves. They are too tired of waiting in the hot sun, and too tired of authority that cares so little for their suffering and deaf to their pleas. They resolve that Siyapi is not part of them just like all those who abuse power. He has learned to despise his victims, his neighbours. The masses get inflamed for their patience is tried beyond endurance. In one accord, they move to burn Siyapi and all his wealth in his fortress shouting: *"Down with Siyapi, down with the traitor! White Man's stooge!"* (Page 173)

Women on their part become aware of their power and get charged. They move on to burn the house of Duma. They watch in satisfaction as: *"...another flaming, crumbling temple, the one they had built"* (ibid.) To the people of Sigageni the two houses, that of

Siyapi and Duma, symbolise temples of an unknown oppressive god. Besides the house of Duma depicts the masses' exploitation since it is the women who have built it for a pittance payment.

The fury of the community is shown by their refusal to bury the traitors. The white people have no alternative but to bury "*their own*" (page, 175.) The way the white people inter "*their own*" is not only a great insult to a people's culture but negates civilisation. Without any ceremony, a big digging machine mechanically makes a common grave. Here human beings, together with the animals, in one roaring swoop are buried. This proves that there is no gain in collaborating with the oppressor for the latter only values his victims when exploiting them.

4.3. The Vengeance of the White Man

The white traders are on the other side of the government, police and the army. To prove their pro- government stance, the white timber trader when he realizes that the women are buying wood to make coffins for their dead men up the mountains, he flatly refuses to sell any wood to the women. This act provokes the wrath of the women. They shout at him, questioning his loyalty to his neighbours and customers, the African community and the source of his livelihood and that of the whole White Dorp (An Afrikaner word for a village or country town). The women threaten to boycott their shops and withdraw their labour. The white man gives in only when he is threatened by the mass of women who walk towards him. In fear, he starts to defend himself by apportioning blame to others of his community who support the government at whatever cost. The unity of women is a great weapon for overcoming apartheid's tyranny.

The women defy the hurdles placed on their way by resolving to use without permission the piles of wooden poles that have been stocked by Siyapi and the authority for fencing to make the coffins. They lead the people in demonstration against the white dorps. They are ready to boycott the shops and abandon all jobs offered by the white people. Over two thousand people make a silent march. The women wear long black dresses and skirts.

They carry a big black flag without inscription. The five minutes silent walk to town creates a chilling spectacle for the whites. The white community gets scared as they watch fearfully through their windows and others come out cocking their guns, their weapon of defence. On the other hand, the silent-protest startles the whites for it denies them the necessary provocation, an excuse to be violent. The whole spectacle alarms the whites for they have not fathomed their blacks as able to come up with such organization. The agitation the whole scene causes to the white community is another great victory for the rural women.

4.4. Factors that Promote Prostitution.

Nomawa, one of Jezile's friends and motivator, is a victim of the imposed poverty. Her husband, who works in Johannesburg, has been taken by a city woman. One of the effects of the apartheid government is to dehumanize the black couples by separating them. But despite the misery, Nomawa uses her womanhood to liberate herself from the eminent dearth and depression. She resolves to defy the imposed neediness, by giving sex for money to a married man who works in the city. She justifies the act by the fact that rural women have been denied a chance to work in the cities. They have to depend on the city men with whom they exchange sex for money. However, she is very discreet about the affair because she would not want to cause pain to the wife of the man the way it has been done to her by the city woman, who has taken her husband. All she wants from the man is a little fun on the side and a little money to keep her alive.

In Sigageni, other factors that make prostitution thrive are that men without their wives are posted there to build the road, which joins Cape Town and Johannesburg. In exchange for money, the men easily get their sexual needs met by the many women who have been deprived of husbands by the city, prison or death. Prostitution may feature as a symbol of human community, degraded by a loss of moral conscience. This is further stressed by Stichter when he asserts: "*Prostitution exhibits the aberrant individualism fostered by social exploitation*" (Stichter, S.1984:103.) He brings out characters like Wanja in Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Penda in Ousmane's God's Bits of Wood as examples of

women, who redirect their rebellion against sexual inequality to the higher emancipation of an errant society.

Besides, prostitution can be considered as the use of womanhood to liberate: a way of survival. Again this is brought out by Nomawa when she advises Jezile to be careful with men (the road builders) who are away from their wives, suggesting that she should not allow sexual exploitation. To Nomawa, a woman can occasionally allow men: “...a touch here and a touch there; but nothing more” (Ngcobo, L.1999.184.)

Jezile and Nomawa come out as the bold women who, through hard experience, learn how to handle and manage to conquer the men’s sexual domination. This is shown by their ignoring the men making wolf calls. They assert themselves and boldly walk straight to the fire place. The act stuns the men who quickly gather round the fire and by so doing automatically let the women take charge of the situation. The duo boldly negotiates the terms of the work and at the end they strut away in dignity. It is only the bold women who manage to get jobs among the men. The work from the men is fulfilling as shown by Jezile’s children growing healthy and plump and her anxiety about money lessening.

4.5. Racial prejudice.

The worlds in which the two races, the white and the black, lived in apartheid South Africa are depicted as extremely different. The great contrast is brought out by Jezile when she counts the numberless sharp difference that mark Sigageni reserve and De Wit Pak, the Potgeiters’ city home. The house could be mediocre compared to others, but still it the best compared to the rural homes. The Potgeiters’ home depicts beauty and cleanliness. The floors and walls glitter: while at Sigageni there is no clean water. She marvels at: *Such abundance. Everything is inexhaustible*” (Ngcobo, L.1999: 202.) The two habitations are worlds apart not only in terms of distance but lifestyles. “*They are a whole world away like heaven and hell*” (Ibid.)

But after some time, she realises that there can be unhappiness in such beautiful places. She concludes that good living cannot in itself ensure love and happiness. Jezile realizes that even Mr. Potgeiter is not free from the yoke of apartheid. She notes that he would desire friendship with Jezile whom he has admired for long but the apartheid laws prohibits such a relationship. Mr. Potgeiter has to ensnare Jezile by showing her understanding and willingness to give her employment. Initially she is taken in by the friendliness that the White man has been exhibiting when he has been working in the countryside.

Soon Jezile, from her patriarchal training, realizes that Mr. Potgeiter is not in control of his home as the wife is the one who calls the shots. The alienated husband transfers his entrapment to Jezile, whom he initially ensnares with a table, light and radio. He shrewdly decides to spend time at home in order to get Jezile's attention. All this is a trap for his evil and dirty scheme of rape. May be he commits the hideous crime because he is also trapped in a loveless marriage. This is exhibited by his venting his frustration and loathing for his wife by battering her at night and later forcing himself on Jezile. These brutal acts show that the spectre of South Africa's apartheid haunts all, irrespective of race or gender.

In the Potgeiter's home, Jezile has to bear with the rudeness of the ill brought up children, who consider her as their parents' chattel. This is cultural shock as Jezile comes from a society where children are trained to respect adults. Still, she resolves to defy the humiliation by becoming close to the younger ones, who are not yet spoiled. She takes the advantage of their friendship and learns the Afrikaans language from them which gives her a means of communication. But still life for Jezile in this home is debasing. She has to eat poor food alone. Her meat is from the same bones put on order as "*dog's meat.*" This insulting act erodes her self-confidence deeper (Page 200.)

The insecurity of the white community is depicted by Mrs. Potgeiter, woman-carrier of their oppressive culture. Her insecurity is revealed by the way she walks round the house carrying with her a jingling bunch of keys as every lockable place in the house is locked. The lack of trust comes from the assumption that Jezile, by virtue of being an African, is automatically a thief.

The work is inhibiting. Jezile has no freedom to listen to the radio. She has to ask for permission to do the most trivial thing including eating in the kitchen when it is raining. She is even refused electricity in her room and this makes her to feel powerless. She is trapped in that home. From the word go Jezile is not welcomed in this home. On the first day she is neither offered proper food nor rest. The salary offered to her is meager yet the work is not specified. But Jezile does not take this the low wage offer kindly. Though she does not talk, she looks straight at Mr. Potgeiter's without blinking; a look she has given him on other occasions. She does not feel like an underling but a person offering a service. Jezile is aware of her human worth.

The relationship between her and the bosses is that of master and servant. Domestic service is the most notable form of employment which places men and women in the position of servant. This is despite Mr. Potgeiter assuring Jezile that the wife will be helping with the domestic chores. The work relationship goes against African tradition that Jezile is familiar with. Working for another woman for pay is not odd in the African context. Jezile and other women have been working for MaNgidi, the rich wife of the chief Counsellor Duma. However, when one black woman has worked for another, they both try to couch the relationship on word and deeds of sisterhood.

Mrs. Potgeiter is jolted to ask about Jezile's pass when she senses familiarity between her husband and Jezile. She becomes suspicious of the relationship. The question of the pass is meant to be a weapon to humiliate Jezile and remind her of her lowly status. The white woman is shocked that Jezile does not have a pass. However, in defiance Jezile correctly

answers her that she does not need one. This simple sounding answer has deeper implications. In normal life no citizen of a country should be carrying a pass around.

In Bloemfontein, the main languages are Sotho and Afrikaans. Jezile speaks only Zulu and English. She is linguistically alienated so that even when she has an off, she cannot socialise. She longs for human contact and recognition. However, she defies the boredom by learning to knit jumpers for herself and children. She decides to be writing long letters home and for language, she gets close to the boss's young children and learns Afrikaans.

Jezile notes some strangeness about the Afrikaans language for instance, when Mr. Potgeiter is speaking, his voice changes. The words come out as a deep guttural language, conveying a certain degree of gruffness. It lacks friendliness to Jezile's unaccustomed ears. She had noted this earlier when Mr. Potgeiter had spoken the language at the railway station and also at the taxi place. She notes lack of warmth between the couple as they communicate in the language. This portrays the unpredictability of the white man's power in the racist South Africa.

Jezile agonises a great deal about finding a 'safe' school for her son Lungu. He can only fit in Mansfield, a school for coloured boys at Ixopo. Here the young man has to learn to live like a coloured and escape the infernal pass. But it proves to be a difficult place due to the cultural gap. Lungu is an African brought up by an African mother. Teachers in the school initially are embarrassed of him because he betrays apart of them that they wish to forget: the African half. In South African hierarchy of races, it makes sense for many coloureds to identify with the side that has power.

However; racism can cause a rift between a child and mother. This fear is expressed by Lungu who as a student in the coloured school worries that the class privileges associated with the new life can create a rift between him and the mother. The Coloured are privileged as they do not carry the passes and their schools are peaceful compared to the purely African schools. But the love between the mother and the son is stronger than the

forces of prejudice. Lungu's brilliance and good upbringing enables him to overcome the forces of segregation. In school, he is bright, popular and happy. He eventually gains confidence and becomes an avid reader who is hungry for knowledge. He learns about South Africa as a country and his place in society and hence his identity.

4.6. The Symbolic Meaning and Effect of Rape.

With husband, father or son in the cities, jail or dead, the rural woman is deprived of man's security. She is aware that she is an easy target of rapists; the rapists are mainly the soldiers who are occasionally deployed in the rural areas to 'keep peace'. Aware of the danger, the women learn to move in groups. After all the precaution the rural woman takes to keep off the revolting rapist it is, ironic that Jezile is raped in the city by a white boss whom she trusts, Mr. Potgeiter.

The act of raping of an African woman by a White man symbolises a forceful penetration of foreigners to the African ways. Besides, on the part of Potgeiter, the act is not done on the spur of the moment. He has been harbouring the intent to commit the crime since his days in the Sigageni, when he lustfully kept on leering at her. Even after the hideous act, Potgeiter ingratiates himself to Jezile to prove that he is not a beast. He grants many little favours to put her into an invidious position, in conflict and contradiction.

The immediate aftermath of the hideous rape on Jezile is that she feels dirty and robbed. The experience is dehumanizing for rape becomes a burden to the victim. The next consequence is pregnancy; which is tragic as it places Jezile in deep physical fear and psychological turmoil. She is scared of the husband, the in-laws and the society at large. The truth is that the baby to be born is neither a Majola nor a Mapanga; thus it is not supposed to exist. Besides, the society treats the victim of rape with disdain as if she is the one who wished for it.

After the baby is born, the father, Mr. Potgeiter, is equally ashamed of the baby. This is shown by the way he restrains himself from looking at the baby, which indicates refusal

of responsibility. Under the apartheid laws, it is a crime to have a child of the two races (black and white). And so the police come to the hospital to investigate the 'crime'. They come to question Jezile about the paternity of her child yet, paradoxically; the father of the baby, Mr. Potgeiter is within the room. He is carefully monitoring the on goings to ensure that he is not implicated in the crime.

To further ridicule the apartheid system, Ngcobo depicts Mr. Potgeiter as one who changes careers from a road builder to a student of the apartheid law by correspondence. His corrupt nature could be probably the reason why he wants to be an attorney so as to be in a position where he can easily influence justice in his favour. For instance this is noted when Jezile is in maternity hospital. Potgeiter, working at the prosecutor's office, quietly and swiftly gets Jezile repatriated to Luve, her mother's home. The whole episode comes out as a mockery of the justice of the apartheid system. The victim is nearly persecuted by the villain!

Back at her maternal home, Luve, there is no jubilant welcome for Jezile. The gloominess of the situation is expressed by Masibiya, Jezile's mother, fainting at the sight of the daughter's white man's baby. In grief she hysterically screams: "*Jezile my child, what's that you've got in your arms... She screams at the sight 'It's white! It's white!'*" (Page 211) The sadness of the situation is expressed by the mother and the daughter crying. Relatives and friends are subdued. They pretend that the baby does not exist. In shame, Masibiya covers the baby and faces the wall throughout the relatives' visit. For a baby born out of wedlock and worse still a White man's baby, is a disgrace. It is deemed as a transgression of the customs for a baby of mixed race has no identity. In Jezile's case, her child is neither a Mapanga nor a Majola. This shows that in rape the wrong that a woman suffers heralds the spectre of social disruption (Stichters: 1984.)

Later when she goes back to her marital home, Jezile is received by the community as they would any of their many unavoidable natural disasters. Tea is served in silence.

Mabiyela, the mother-in-law, after looking at the baby, lets off a groan. She asks a question directed to destiny rather than Jezile: “*Why didn’t you just leave this child with the white man? The child doesn’t belong here...doesn’t belong anywhere. It will bring the white man’s law on us. Who will face them when they come? This [the baby] is not a Majola nor is it a Mapanga*” (Ngcobo, L.1999:213.) The whole effect of the baby is no longer a Jezile’s single misfortune but a communal catastrophe: people leave the home with bowed heads, due to shame. Everyone treats the baby as a curse, a thing to be discarded.

Jezile on her part has all along been administering to the baby’s needs mechanically, a sign of defeat. But by and by she realises that she is the only one who can make the child to be loved, accepted and to belong: so she decides to love it. She resolves to face the community with new determination and give her baby every chance to grow normally. Her decision to live is expressed by her raising her head and talking normally to people.

Despite the mother’s acceptance of her child, the circumstances of his birth become a big burden to his life. It is with immense pain that the young boy learns how he was born. The truth fills him with a burning pain and great rage. He experiences conflicting emotions as he is caught between the two warring worlds. But Jezile, the mother wisely cushions that discovery with love. Though Jezile names her son Mazwi, the name does not stick. Instead he is nicknamed Lungu, a derogatory racist name that associates him with his colour. His colour is mentioned often when playing with other boys. His nickname, Lungu, is appropriate. For he soon learns that by virtue of his birth, he has been disinherited from all sources of power that is; the white world and his place in the African male structure. Hence the boy’s name is a symbol of illegitimacy and injustice.

The youth suffers from loneliness in the absence of a father as the mother struggles. So the mother is determined to teach him the importance of justice and virtue because his very life has not known justice. To get justice, Lungu has to fight for it in the community in which he lives and in the politics of his country. Soon this opens his eyes to the needs

of others who are oppressed by power. Again Lungu symbolises the future of integrated South Africa. For him life at Luve is a training ground for the fight for justice.

Jezile's rape ordeal has also far reaching consequences on her two daughters. Their mother has found it difficult to explain to them that she was sexually violated. The dishonour has resulted into birth of their white brother, Lungu. The girls are too young to comprehend that it is because of this violation that they are separated from the warmth of their mother and taken to live with a stranger of a father.

4.7. The Betrayal of the Struggle.

While working in Bloemfontein, Jezile's letters are not replied to due to government's censorship. She starts to discern the grim future of the women's struggle out of oppression. But she refuses to give up. Instead she shuts her mind to the problems of Sabelweni and allows herself only a selective memory, which is revealed only in the love of her family, the laughter of her friends, and the security of a known past.

Towards the end of the novel, it is apparent that the women have eventually resigned.

This resignation's effect is noted and expressed by Jezile. The latter when she returns home with her distress (the baby fathered by her white boss), she is crushed unlike when she was going to Bloemfontein. She was full of hope but when she comes back, she faces a grim future for she is met by a bleeding Sabelweni as homesteads she knew stand in ruins. The state of emergency has been declared in Sabelweni district. Public meetings have been proscribed. Jezile realizes that the reality of the defeat has already dawned on the Sigageni women she had left behind. People have lost for they realize that the local uprising can only chip at the granite power of South Africa. But they are aware that in the long run, freedom will be won but in the short term people will have to suffer.

The government's desperate attempt to cling to power is shown by the tightening up of laws. Letters are censored and people fear to be locked up. Yet, the people attempt to defy the defeat by establishing an appeal court called Sabelweni High Court on the Ingwe

Hills. It becomes the headquarters of the African Movement which the people fully recognise. In it, those that Collaborate with the corrupt chiefs are fined and the money is used to pay for the legal expenses of those who have cases brought against them by the government.

But the government retaliates in an atrocious way. A state of emergency is declared in Sabelweni district and public meetings are banned. To enter and to leave the area, one has to get permission from the Bantu commissioner. Any one making subversive statement or undermining the authority of the Bantu commissioner or organizing a boycott of any kind or treating the chiefs and counsellors with contempt is guilty of an offence. Chiefs are empowered to deport people and do whatever they please with the immovable property of those they banish. Under the state of emergency, the situation becomes arbitrary. People are certain of nothing as they are insecure. The place again swims with young bored soldiers who are actually a security risk. Some of the youthful soldiers have participated in quashing urban uprising. They are brutal as shown by the way they strut arrogantly, licenced to do as they wish. People are arrested arbitrary and imprisoned without trial.

To scuttle the people's influence and dissipate their revolutionary zeal, the authorities throw people in prison throughout the province. They would be held in custody for indefinite periods. Some would be released briefly then would be rounded up again and be hurled back into prison. Others would be sentenced to death for simply participating in a revolt. As the authority has no way of gathering accurate intelligence, they rely on hearsay which ends up creating local rivalries.

Frustrations drive individuals and small groups to avenge their relatives by killing pro-government neighbours or suspects. Police support individual chiefs. Now and then, sporadic acts of intimidation occur out of the blue. Mobile army spotter planes nearly land on people's houses. Sabelweni people are not free to live without intrusion. The ultimate effect of this is that People's morale goes down and the heat of the struggle goes off. People are certain of nothing. Even natural act like relieving themselves in the open

Veldt becomes a source for fear of some prying eyes. The place swims with young bored soldiers who walk with the air of license that allows them to do as they please. Thousands of people are detained in prison without trial. To scuttle their influence and dissipate their revolutionary zeal, they are flung into prison in all corners of the province. Thousands are held in custody for indefinite periods. They would be released briefly and then thrown back in.

The final effect of all the above is that people's morale is worn down. People were sentenced to death for participating in the revolt. The authority has no way of getting accurate intelligence so they rely on hearsay. This increased local rivalries. Frustrations drive individual and smaller groups to avenge their relatives by killing pro-government neighbours or suspects.

Finally with time, the heat of the struggle cools off. Road blocks are reduced as police relax their vigilance along the highways. More police support the individual chiefs. Now and then sporadic acts of intimidation occur out of the blue. Mobile army spotter planes still land almost on the threshold of people's houses. The people of Sabelweni are not free to live without intrusion.

4.8. The Church and Women's Struggle.

The Christian church in Sigageni has sometimes been portrayed as compromised. It comes out as one of the arms of the oppressive government. This is brought out by the way the church is used by the traitors. For instance, the Chief Counsellor Duma uses its cover to screen the women; to know their stance on the culling of their livestock and their accepting to be moved to drier areas. He shields himself behind the church to carry out his hypocritical and selfish agenda; to please the authority, his bosses. He attempts to achieve this by exploiting the confidence of the assumed pacified Christians women. However, the women cut him short by challenging him with many questions (ibid.)

The masses' final dismissal of religion comes out the night the people resolve to burn the houses of the two government stooges, the Chief Councillor Duma and Chief Siyapi. During that night's destruction, God is rejected once and for all. In burning the houses, the people watch as "...*temple[s] of some unknown god*" (page, 174) crumble. The People have realised that their God could be different from that of the oppressors. This conflict of faith provokes a soul search in Jezile. She pleads with God to clean the world and get rid of the government that has poisoned the people's leaders. All this is because everything is tainted by the evil policies of the government.

Initially, the women have been taking the church as an institution for spiritual comfort and protection. However, the women represented by the leaders like Jezile, starts to question the institution's role in the oppressed society. For instance she questions the church's harshness to young single mothers. She starts to wonder if the church will accept her with the child born out of wedlock. Like Sindiswe in the Cross of Gold, to Jezile God no longer seems to be God the creator but God she has created herself for her manifold needs (Ngcobo: 1981.) The hypocritical nature of the church is portrayed when it is revealed that Jezile has a child out of wedlock. The institution comes out as a no solace for the women in turmoil. Jezile and Mabiyela avoid it as they are ridiculed in front of the congregation. The church treats Jezile's son as a curse. Mabiyela is banned from attending the church service since: "[she has] *condoned everything [the daughter-in-law] has done*" (Ngcobo, L.1999:215.) Everything done here is: getting a baby out of "sin". Interestingly the church does not bother to investigate the genesis of "that sin". Ironically, the Christians would have preferred that Mabiyela expel Jezile, the "sinner" from the home, back to her people. Yet, Jezile's relatives are not the ones responsible for the siring the baby.

In excommunicating the two, the institution comes out as unforgiving, an uncaring institution, judgmental and anti-Christian. We concur with Mabiyela when she philosophically sums up the religious complication as "...*God's ways are hard!*" (*ibid.*) Jezile is excommunicated for breaking a strict moral code. Again we deem the church's

harsh judgment as contradictory; for the church's life is supposed to be that of love for everyone in the community. It has been acting as a citadel for the women because when life is hard to bear, they have been going there for solace.

Again the harsh judgment by the church is like a life sentence. It gives no hope to the two vanquished women. Jezile's going back to her parent's home devastates Mabiyela as she suddenly starts to look grey and thin. This degeneration symbolises the disintegration of the traditional authority. However, Jezile unlike her mother-in-law courageously refuses to sink into destructive self-hatred. She defies the unjust condemnation of the church by absolving herself from any imposed guilt. She reasons that to God, she has not sinned, because God himself witnessed the defilement. Instead, she is the one who has been sinned against. We believe with her that it is illogical to punish innocent Mabiyela. One wonders if the father of the child is equally punished as no one even wants to know him.

In this chapter, we have analysed the apartheid system's abusive and contradictory sense of justice and the varied ways in which the rural women characters defy and subvert the oppression. Then we have discussed the encroachment and the effect of apartheid on the Zulu traditional government. We have also examined the factors that have lead women to vices such as prostitution. The symbolic meaning and consequence of rape of African women by white men has been discussed. Finally, we have analysed how sometimes the church derails the women's struggle spirit.

In the final chapter, we discuss other factors that inspire the rural women in their struggle against the forces that demean their lives. We appraise the success of the women and the future of the struggle. In examining the symbolic meaning of the title of the novel And They Didn't DIE, we examine the resilient spirit of the women characters. The chapter forms the summary and conclusion of the research's findings. It also gives possible areas for further studies on Laretta Ngcobo's novel.

CHAPTER FIVE.

5.0. Summary and Conclusion.

In this final chapter we summarise the research by analysing some of the sources of inspiration for the rural women. We have examined the women's solidarity, their role models and the role of religion. We here also evaluate the role of the children born during the struggle in carrying on the fight. In conclusion, we appraise the success of the struggle and the appropriateness of the title And They Didn't Die.

5.1 The Women's Sources of Inspiration.

Through out the novel, Ngcobo stresses the solidarity among the rural women as one of their sources of inspiration. Against all odds such as: loneliness, drought conditions, the starvation and the utter blindness of authorities and law towards the human misery their regulation and convictions, rural women have one remaining safety net: themselves. Their solidarity at times of desperate need or crisis is their sole factor which helps to ensure their survival. For instance, without the help of other women such as Gaba and Nomawa, Jezile's fate would have been similar to Sindiswe's, the woman principal character in Cross of Gold, who dies after the first two chapters of the story. Jezile learns from Nomawa to ask friends and neighbours for what she does not have. She knows she would soon pay back in kind. The rural life has systems built into it that make survival possible without the stigma of begging; for life is a shared experienced and those who do not share become isolated.

The unity of the women for instance is shown when Jezile's children were taken away by the dictates of custom. The act simply devastates Jezile. Women appear from nowhere as if they have sniffed the news in the air. They seem to be always there in her times of crisis. Their warmth is shown by the way they surge around her, forming a human wall to protect her. They murmur, caress and insist that life must go on no matter what. The women would not let anyone succumb for they depend on each other. They keep vigil both night and day, taking turns to give Jezile comfort, to see her through the harsh execution of the custom. They succeed because in two weeks Jezile rises from her

mourning mat with a new resolve filling her heart. She decides to discount the past and recreate her life afresh. Her daughters will always remain hers. By virtue of their age, the young girls may not be as devastated as her and this consoles her.

The past difficulties become a source of inspiration to many. Jezile's past difficulties inspire her to soldier on. For instance, when the stream dries up and no vegetable are available, she would look back to the difficult time in the past and tell herself if she had survived those times, she would survive anything in future. She believes in a great future with her jailed husband. She believes that he will understand the current circumstances and protect her against the worst pain.

For the rural women to succeed in the struggle there is need for political enlightenment to develop political consciousness through political education. This insight is provided by Dr. Nosizwe Morena, who becomes the women's political guiding spirit in the whole of Ixopo district. She is a friend to the rural women, a leader who is all encompassing. She shares with the community all the adversity that befalls them, thus becoming the people's heroine. For instance, she takes turn to visit various women groups from week to week.

The doctor not only understands the harsh extremes of the rural women's lives but also the merciless system of white oppression. The system has left the women cruelly exploited and defenceless. She acts as a bridge between the system of the oppressor and the harsh demands of the rural women's own lives.

Other women inspirer are educated people like Tokozile Zulu, whom Jezile hears of when in Durban. The woman works for a newspaper called 'Ezomhlabu'. She is depicted as one of the brilliant women who use history to inspire the women fighters. This comes out in her talk when she invokes the revolutionary struggles of the Algerian people against the French rule. She mentions the Mau Mau of Kenya where the masses united in their fight for land and freedom from British rule. The examples she gives show how the people in history have committed brave acts of insubordination to get their human dignity

and their human rights. She further stirs the people by invoking the unity of the Congo people under their great leader, Patrice Lumumba, against the Belgians. Kwame Nkrumah comes out as a great inspiration by being the first African leader to lead his people to winning the independence; hence opening the way for all the African freedom fighters. The effect of Tokozile's speech is that the women are enthused as they realize they have a lot in common with the rest of the world.

Through Jezile, Ngcobo portrays a futuristic vision. Jezile emerges as visionary character through which optimism is restored.

5.2 Religion as a Source of Inspiration.

Besides confronting the system physically, the women turn to religion as a source of inspiration. The women have an organized spiritual schedule. On Sundays they hold Bible classes and on Thursday afternoons, they gather to share their troubles. In their prayers they pour their troubles to God in loud prayers and vicariously to each other. They pray for communal needs such as lack of rain and crop failure caused by the frequent drought. Their other woes would be the dying of their children and childlessness. The women in communal prayer would remind God of their husbands or sons away in the cities. Some would be jobless while others even, if they are working, never send money home. However, they would privately pray about their sexual needs, daily longings and ever present temptations and the attendant disgrace (page 17.)

On Thursday prayers, the women meet to share and concentrate the mind of God on their needs and their struggles. They sing, pray and even cry. Then they discuss the cause behind their bereft lives. In their singing and witnessing to each other, women draw their inspiration from the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. "*Where you go, I will go, and your people shall be my people...*" (Page, 41.) The biblical symbolism is rich in interpretation as each woman views it from her own vantage point. The prayer time is like a confrontation between God and women as they pray together in loud screams and incoherent cries. The church plays an inspiring role for it is here that the daughters -in-

law have the same rights as the mothers-in-law. Both parties can pour out their hearts' burden of pain. It is the place of Christian equality in true biblical sense. The earthly sufferings are brought face to face with mercy. It is a place where one can hear about struggles of the Sabelweni against the government.

When in Bloemfontein, Jezile in her loneliness and home sickness joins the Zionist worshippers in their hymns, songs and dancing. The worshippers sing and pray, loudly commanding God to come down and save them. This is what Jezile needs, a God whom she can command. By the end of the service, her heart is lighter. The service has a healing effect on afflicted souls of the oppressed women.

Religious festivals give the rural women relief. They concentrate their minds on religious things so that political problems take a second place. For instance, the Easter Festival brings out the spirit of communalism. Women hold long meetings after the church service and the Thursday prayer to discuss plans and collect funds for the festivals. The whole village would be enlivened with joy and expectancy. They would talk of nothing else. The festival would circulate among all the villages of the district of Sabelweni. Each household would take as many people as they can accommodate and according to their means. The festival would re-awaken the spirit of sharing and renewal of their homes. Even the local chief Pungula would for once use his new found power to the advantage of the community by using his oxen and fetching water for the women. It is the time when Jezile makes a minor fortune by making clothes and hats for the women.

5.3. Hope for the Future Struggle: the Children.

Ndondo, the second child of Jezile, turns out to be more outgoing than her sister. Her independence is shown by her refusal to go to her sister's school, the famous Mnene Girls which is reputed as the best for African girls. The family is excited by the school but Ndondo rejects the school because she has been listening to N'saye's complaints not only of bad food but the autocratic authority. This act of rebellion depicts her as a broadminded character and a pursuer of liberty. She chooses Zotherni Girls, a school of

her taste as expressed in the good uniform. At seventeen she has blossomed into be a pretty, vivacious girl, who is quite outspoken. She has strong views on many things and has leadership qualities. She is very much like her mother, which makes the father to have a soft spot for her. This is demonstrated by his giving in easily to her demands.

In 1976 there is a lot of unrest in many schools throughout the country. The students are against the teaching in the medium of Afrikaans in schools which happen to be far away from Johannesburg. Some students in Transvaal and in Cape Town refuse to attend classes. What starts as a language problem becomes a sweeping rebellion against all injustices, not only in the school system but in all aspects of life in South Africa. There are clashes between the state and African children.

Defiance among the youth is best exemplified by the students at Zotheni, where Ndodo Majola is a student. Their revolt may appear as of no particular issue. It may look like a trivial argument in a class about the value of Bantu Education against the general background of oppression in South Africa. But the tension bubbles to the surface and the student body explodes without warning, causing great chaos in school. Windows are broken, books and desks are burned making even teachers be confused about which stance to take. The School authorities become a soft target for the angry army of youth. The latter are angry against a faceless, ruthless government and its racist policies. Teachers get implicated in situations not of their own making. Many are merely guilty by default if guilty at all.

Ndondo, like her mother is a student leader. She is conspicuous by her height and her remarkable ability to mobilise other students to attack. When the police open fire, she fights ruthlessly as if she had nothing to lose. In the first confrontation with the police, several students get wounded and a couple dies. The school is closed down and the hunt for the ring-leaders starts. Dondo is a suspect. In her, the inspiring role of a mother is portrayed by her decision to run to her mother, Jezile, for she is scared of facing her

father. The police look for Dondo everywhere with the intention of arresting her. This compels her to go on exile after artfully leaving her family stunned.

The Zotheni uprising has infectious effect on the whole region. The students' political movement finally reaches Mansfield. Here, the coloured students start to question their privileges. The students start to view their privileges as government's strategy to divide them from the majority of the African people. They resolve to abandon their privileged position and begin to identify with the masses of the struggling people.

Lungu, at sixteen, like his sister Dondo becomes a student leader. His life has been saddled with many experiences of oppression. The school's atmosphere becomes electrified. There is constant police presence that is trigger happy. They already have shot and killed nearly one thousand students in various parts of the country. However, the demonstrations at Mansfield are short-lived. Police through violence eventually bring the rioters under control. Lungu is shot on the leg and gets paralysed from the waist down. But he continues to excel in school thanks to the supportive mother. He goes to a private school for the disabled where he wins a scholarship to university to undertake studies in medicine. This is of great joy to the family as they are going to have a doctor of their own. Lungu is a living proof that nothing is impossible. Jezile aptly calls Lungu "*her miracle*" (page 239.) Her children are doing well and this is a great reward for her. S'naye also qualifies as a nurse and returns from Durban to work near Clydesdale Hospital. Lungu decides to do his internship near his sister.

5.4. Conclusion.

The successful outcome of the South African struggle is not something to which Ngcobo could allude to even if she had wanted to. For she wrote her novel from exile in the years before the lifting of the banned opposition movement was announced in 1990. Instead she only conveys her faith in an eventual success. This is expressed from the outset in the wording of her title And They Didn't Die which can be understood to be indirectly reassuring response to the cry of a woman, who was influenced by Drum Magazine during the Natal 1959 Natal disturbance. She

said: *‘We don’t get enough food. Our husbands pay more than two pounds in taxes. Employers don’t pay them anything. Our husbands are not at home...of these things we are dying’* (Quoted in Walker, 1991: 23.)

The inclusiveness of *‘They’* in the title indicates the extent to which Jezile’s final act of resistance can be read as signaling the eventual triumph of all. The title, referring to the black rural women, can be viewed as a deviant statement of the fact that although Sindiswe of the Cross of Gold keeps on dying, women of her power and fortitude; the likes of Jezile Majola of And They Didn’t Die still struggle against all odds in the apartheid country side.

Even the strong advocates of patriarchy eventually change. For instance Mabiyele learns to believe in Jezile. She takes every opportunity to make amends with the daughter-in-law. She writes to Jezile about her daughters’ progress and health. When they meet in the public gathering, they spend time talking like long lost friends. From her, she learns that her husband is not ready to divorce and remarry. Siyalo had moved to the mother’s house because his house with Jezile looks dead without her.

Ndondo comes back in disguise to start political her work in her home area. She is the only one who knows the area well. Ironically her mother, of all people, is not impressed by the daughter’s political adventures because she feels that they have given everything to politics. But Ndondo does not give up for she has given her life to politics which has become her life. She is now a well trained soldier. Her reuniting with the mother and sister is a happy ending and a crown to the struggle. She comes home as a woman of unfathomable experience. Ndondo and not the women in her mother’s generation becomes the symbol of hope for liberation of South Africa.

The story ends with Jezile killing the white soldier who attempts to rape her daughter, N’saye. The killing of the rapist is justified. This makes And They Didn’t Die to be analogous to Richard Wright’s Native Son. Here, Bigger a disadvantaged Black boy kills Mary, a daughter of the privileged white family to avenge for the injustice done to his

race. Likewise, Jezile's killing of the white rapist is a victory as it can be considered to be a purge for the undesirable tyrant. The rapist in the name of a white soldier reminds Jezile of her own struggle with Mr. Potgeiter. The memory strikes her into action.

The raping of an African woman by the White man symbolises the raping of Africa which has and it has to be stopped. Jezile dramatically tries to use the mighty instrument of subjugation, the gun, which is: "...*carelessly abandoned in careless abandon in reckless moment of misplaced power...*" (Ngcobo, L.1999: 242.) Unfortunately, Jezile does not know how to use the gun on the depraved soldier; so she quickly decides to use the knife that is near her. She is determined to do justice that she has been denied as a victim of rape herself.

The novel ends on an upbeat. Jezile is reunited with her husband and she is sure that her children are safe. This makes her face the future with hope. The climactic ending allows her to recover the agency for which she has struggled for so long. In this way the final scene bears witness to the inclusive claim of courage to the title And They Didn't Die. The reference of the 'They' runs from the Majola to the whole community and back to the heroic agency of Jezile and the daughters (ibid.)

The killing of the white rapist in the morning symbolises a new dawn. It is not only revenge but a final blow to apartheid and all that it stands for. The dead body of the rapist is aptly described as: "...*the towering symbol of power lay sprawled and dying on the Jezile's floor*" (ibid.) This satisfies Jezile as she has always anticipated it. She is very calm and at peace with herself. At last the denied justice has been achieved: "*Something akin to peace settled on her face*" (ibid.) She sits dry eyed, with an air of accomplishment about her. She does not cry because she has cried all her life and tears have not changed a thing. She decides to take the bold step which her husband has failed to take; she visits him. The couple had separated for close to twenty years. Jezile wants to tell her husband the truth herself because he had failed to go to her to learn the truth. Surprisingly, he still wears her marriage ring.

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