

**PERCEIVED OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN ZULU
FOLKLORE: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE**

by

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DECLARATION**

I declare that **PERCEIVED OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN ZULU FOLKLORE: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE** is my own work and that all the source that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

.....
SIGNATURE

.....
DATE

NORMA MASUKU

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother and father EDITH THAFILE KEKANA and MOSES HLATSHWAYO.

ABSTRACT

PERCEIVED OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN ZULU FOLKLORE: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE

In this thesis, the research focuses on the role and presentation of women in Zulu

traditional literature. Employing feminism as a literary canon, the research investigates whether the perceived oppression of Zulu women is reflected in such Zulu folklore. The research aims to establish whether or not folklore was used as a corrective measure or avenue of correcting gender imbalances.

This dissertation proceeds from the premise that the traditional Zulu society or culture attached to women certain stereo-typical images which projected them as witches, unfaithful people, unfit marriage partners on the other hand or brave care givers, loving mothers and upright members on the other hand. Using feminism as a scientific approach, the study investigates whether these projections were not oppressive on Zulu women.

The study is scientifically organised into various chapters dealing with various subjects e.g. the feminist theory (chapter 2), portrayal of Zulu women in folktales (chapter3), in proverbs (chapter 4) and praise-poetry (chapter 5).

The study concludes that the traditional Zulu woman felt depressed by this patriarchal discrimination especially in the marriage situation. In the day and age of African Renaissance, the study recommend that it is imperative for women to mould their children, especially their sons to adapt to the idea that women have changed, they have rights and priviledges which could intimidate their male ego.

KEY TERMS

Feminism, Womanism, Stiwanism, Africana Womanism, Zulu culture, folklore, folktales, proverbs, praises, baby praises (izangelo), marriage, rights, virtue, patriarchy, women, young girls, oppression, society, stereotypes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

Women have a life cycle that they have to adhere to in order to become the fully fledged members of the society. From birth through childhood, the girl is the little daughter or sister within the family, to be reared and trained for assumption of her future roles. Her puberty is noted as a signal for the role change; fairly soon thereafter she will marry. It is then that the woman assumes the major roles of her life. As a wife and mother she will enact the nurturing and training roles. Aging within the familial context brings the last stage as she plays the role of grandmother. Thus, each stage in the life of a woman provides her with a specific role to enact, and conversely her life history can be seen as the full succession of familial roles. In this study, we shall see how adherence to culture dictates how women and girls should behave in order to be held in high esteem by society.

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate the perceived oppression of women in Zulu folklore from a feminist approach. The study purports to analyse folktales, proverbs and praises in order to determine the extent in which the society expects women and girls to conduct themselves in order to be acceptable by the society. The study also aims to provide a traditional Zulu frame of reference.

Cobham (1988: 232) cites Davies as identifying four goals for African feminist criticism, one of which has a direct bearing on folklore:

These are the development of a literary canon of works by African

women writers; the re-examination of stereotypical images of women in African literature; the elaboration of a feminist aesthetic in the work of African women writers; and the examination of the role and presentation of women in African traditional literature.

Having enumerated these goals, she singles out the last goal as being particularly relevant to a study such as this and points to the futility of trying to examine feminism in African literature without paying attention to this goal.

I found Davies' fourth category goal for an African feminist literary criticism the most interesting and the least clearly defined: the re-evaluation or uncovering of women's functions and image within traditional African literature. This concern serves to remind us, as literary critics trained within a modern critical context that is limited for the most part to documents written in modern European languages, that dynamic oral traditions exist within most African societies, to which African women have had access for centuries. Without some understanding of such traditions, our attempts as critics to establish aesthetic categories for or lines of literary continuity between the works of African women writers and their historical antecedents become at best futile guessing games (Mtuzze, 1990:66).

It is in the light of the above argument that this study will provide the traditional Zulu background in order to enhance a better understanding of the Zulu culture as it would be a futile exercise and a leap in the dark to try and examine the roles of women in African traditional literature without providing their traditional background.

The study will analyse folktales. The analysis will focus on the images that are attached to women in folktales. The stereo-typical images attached to women, whether society depicts them as witches, unfaithful beings or as human beings full of courage and who can live a challenging life, will be highlighted. Women's reaction towards culture, whether or not they rebel against it will also be described.

In the analysis of folktales, the study aims to look at the attitude of women towards marriage, as well as what the society deems proper as far as marriage is concerned. Finally, the chapter on folktales will also give a superficial exposition of Levi Strauss's approach. The purpose is to show that this theory could be married to the Feminist

approach since they both highlight the inequalities that exist in our society.

The study aims to determine whether the proverbs in Zulu society reflect the philosophy of life of the people, especially when it relates to women and young girls. Do they contain wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views that women and girls should adhere to? Do proverbs, while ascribing the acceptable norms and values that women and children should conform to, serve as a catalyst to oppress or protect the young and mature Zulu woman?

Attention will also be paid to the praises of female commoners. These praises are personally composed. It may be interesting to see how these women praise themselves. Do they depict themselves as strong willed people or do they also succumb to the conventional roles assigned to women, that is, the role of a good mother, with acceptable virtues, a woman who is held in high esteem by the society?

Another aspect of praises to be explored is called *izangelo*. These are praises composed by mothers for their children. The study will determine whether the praises mothers have composed for their children shower them with affection and love, or if *izangelo* are used as a conduit to ventilate their aspirations, gratitude or voice their dissatisfactions?

It should be borne in mind that the aim of analyzing the *izibongo* is not to dwell on the structural features but to encapsulate the themes of the various *izibongo* of women cited in this study.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

It will be a cumbersome endeavour to embark on the analysis of folklore as a discipline since folklore covers a broad field. This study will confine itself to the analysis of folktales. The focus will be on the folktales that portray women as main characters. The discussion of this study will thus be based on the following folktales:

1. UMfazi nemamba.
2. UMkhwekazi namasi.
3. UDemane noDemazane.
4. UNyumbakatali.
5. UMamba kaMaquba.
6. UNanana Boselesele.
7. UMabhejane.
8. USiwelewele intokazi eyayiyogana.

The English translations of these folktales are provided in the appendix to this study.

This study will also confine itself to the analysis of proverbs where women and girls feature prominently. The examples used have been taken from Nyembezi's collection of *Zulu Proverbs*, and they have been classified into various themes for the sake of clarification.

This study will also focus on the praises of some of the royal women. These women are Mkabayi, Nandi, and Monase.

The praises of commoners will be paid attention to. These are the praises of

1. MaJele
2. MaCele
3. MaMsomi
4. Nomsa
5. MaKhuzwayo
6. UMhlengikazi wase King Edward.

Another sub-genre of praises to be analysed is *izangelo* (praises composed for children). The praises of the following children will be paid attention to:

1. Izangelo of Mphakamiseni Shandu
2. Izangelo of Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi
3. Izangelo of Princess Magogo

The examples of the praises of women to be analysed will be extracted from Gunner's collection, *Musho*, Cope and Turner.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As in any other research, it must be determined how the main hypothesis will be investigated or researched, therefore, an outline of the methodology will be given. In this particular instance, the Feminist approach will be employed and it will be used in a broader sense to accommodate other diverse feminist approaches that are derived from feminism. Feminism is a movement that aims to eradicate sexist domination, and thereby transforming society. Its aim is inclusive, any particular race or class of women is accommodated.

This movement is however, not accepted by all women without question. Afro-American women as well as African women have qualms about the Western Feminist movement. The bone of contention is that Western Feminism concentrates solely on the issue of gender, whereas African feminism views gender relationship in relation to other aspects such as culture, politics, economics, racism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Consequently, the failure of Western Feminism to address and accommodate the diverse needs of the Black sisters led to the formation of various schools of thought.

Afro-American movements like Black Feminism and Womanism (which was coined by Alice Walker), can be cited here. On the African continent, Feminism in an African context was propagated by Molaria Ongundipe Leslie. She named this STIWANISM, an acronym used to bypass the term feminism, that held negative connotations for African men and women. There is also Womanism by Kolawole and another African womanism by Chikwenye Ogunyemi. [More shall be said about the various schools of thought in

chapter 2, a chapter dedicated to theory].

This study will not confine itself to one theory only, but a multifaceted approach will be adopted to show the interrelationship that co-exists between the various theories. Although Western feminism is prone to a Eurocentric approach, most arguments posited by them are relevant to women in Africa, hence this approach will be adopted in the analysis of data in this study. Of most relevance to this study is the ideology of Chikwenye Ogunyemi. Chikwenye coined the term African Womanism which she hoped would emancipate African women from both white feminism and African-American womanism\ feminism. Her ideology considers issues that are relevant to African women. That include in-lawism, cleansing, interethnic skirmishes, and cultural, nationalism amongst other things.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are numerous terms that will be repeatedly used in this study, it is therefore fitting that a definition of these terms be provided.

1.5.1 Folklore

Folklore is as old as mankind. Before we can give a definition of what folklore is, it is appropriate to give the background origin of this term because its origin was surrounded by a lot of controversy. The term folklore was coined in 1846 by the English antiquarian William John Thoms, to take the place of the rather awkward expression *popular Antiquities*. The word has been approved by most European countries and is now current in many languages other than English [Krappe (1965:xv)] This subject under discussion has been identified by various scholars by such terms as oral literature, orature, traditional literature, folk literature and folklore. These terms will be used interchangeably throughout this study since they carry the same connotation. These terms simply attempt to emphasize the fact that this is literature “delivered by word of mouth”. These are useful concepts for scholars interested in examining the cultural

relationships between those who can read and write and those who cannot, between orality and literacy. These terms put emphasis on the fact that this type of literature comes from the past and it is handed down from one generation to another. Sometimes a prejudice is implied, in the sense that material is simply passed on from mouth to mouth and nothing really new is ever added to it. Some earlier scholars actually felt this way, but the idea has since been dismissed by more recent studies (Okpewho, 1992:4).

The oral nature of folklore implies that in the performance of some of the genres, like folktales and praises, there is an audience that will observe. The performers' voice, gestures, body movements and facial expressions are the devices used to manipulate the social situation and convey the message. The performer ought to be someone who is creative and flexible in his or her performance. He or she has to take into consideration the type of audience she or he is addressing.

The audience has a measure of dynamism; it may even change while the performance is going on. In such a case it means the performer will vary the performance in accordance with the audience she is faced with at that particular time, and in that way she will be able to maintain the interest of her audience.

The composition of the audience varies according to the occasion and in return the performer responds in various ways. The audience may clap hands, laugh, ululate, dance or jump over to the performing group. In some cases the performer just sings a song and is joined by the audience which will also clap hands for her as she performs. One can observe that because of the involvement of the audience oral performance is regarded as a participatory art. Folklore has no individual ownership and authorship since it is passed down verbatim from memory throughout the centuries.

How then can we define folklore? Krappe (1965:xv) defines folklore as:

an historical science, 'historical' because it attempts to throw light on man's past; a 'science' because it endeavours to attain this goal, not by speculation or deduction from some abstract principle agreed upon *a priori*, but by the inductive method which, in the last analysis,

underlies all scientific research, whether historical or natural.

Okpewho (1992:4) has this to say:

Oral literature may be defined as those utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree that artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression.

Finnegan (1984:50) defines it as follows:

Folklore is the generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, saying, spells, songs, etc.; in short the accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people.

Folklore means literature delivered by word of mouth. It is those utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung whose composition and performance exhibit appreciable characteristics of an accurate observation, vivid imagination and unusual expressions.

1.5.2. Feminism

Sue Marrow as cited by Mathye (2003:7) has this to say regarding the different definitions in feminism:

Feminism has only working definitions since it is a dynamic, constantly changing ideology with many aspects including the personal, the political and philosophical.....Feminism is a call to action. It can never be simply a belief system. Without action, feminism is merely empty rhetoric which cancels itself out.

According to Billington (in Kramarae & Treichler, 1985:158) feminism may be defined as:

A movement seeking the reorganisation of the world upon a basis of sex –equality in all human relations; a movement which would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the ground of sex, would abolish all sex privileges and burdens, and would strive to set

up the recognition of the common humanity of woman and man as the foundation of law and custom.

Ramphela and Boonzaier (1988:156) describe the male dominance prevalent in African societies as follows:

There is a widespread ideology of male dominance amongst Africans which emphasizes the idea that woman pass through the control of different men throughout their lives. It is a system of control that stretches from the cradle to the grave. The father's control operates up to the time of marriage, at which point it passes over to the husband. In cases of children born to single women, the mother's father and brothers assume control. Widowed women fall under the control of a designated brother-in-law who assumes the responsibility of his late brother, including fathering the children for him. This system confers the status of perpetual minor on African women, and has been reinforced by legal provisions of white governments.

The above definitions are an indication that the feminist movement came into being as a result of the patriarchal system that prevails in most societies in the world. It is a movement that fights the oppression that women face in the male dominated societies. Patriarchy may be viewed as the power of the fathers, a force that wields direct pressure, or through tradition, religion, law and customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play and in which the female is subsumed under male. Feminism is regarded as movement of Western origin, a movement that caters for the white middle class women and trivializes the concerns of Black women.

1.5.3 Womanism

Womanism is regarded as a branch of Feminism. It has adopted an Afrocentric mode in dealing with the problems facing African women. African women, as women of colour, are distinct from other women because of the common African cultures they believe in. This implies that womanism is culturally coded as it acknowledges the cultural and spiritual experience of women. It also reflects on the traditional background of women. It is also worth mentioning that there is a womanism that is American based and one that

is African based.

Nkumane (1999:24) has this to say about womanism:

Womanism recently emerged in the African-American community. In fact, it is the African women who gave birth to the womanist idea. Black women writers have themselves played prominent roles in womanist criticism. This term is associated with Alice Walker, who fought hard for the recuperation and recognition of a tradition of black women writers within which she can discover a theory of female Black creativity.

In her own words, the founder of womanism in Africa Chikwenye Ogunyemi, (1985:64) gives us this definition of womanism:

Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom. It concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates blacks. A womanist will recognize that along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national economic and political considerations into her philosophy.

1.5.4 Folktales

Msimang (1986:21) in his book *Folktale influence on the Zulu novel* has made an invaluable contribution to the study of folklore. In this book he mentions that a variety of names has been used to define a folktale. Callaway (1868), the first scholar and collector of Zulu folktales, referred to them not in a Zulu term, but an English phrase, *Nursery tales*. Scheub (1975) calls the Zulu folktale, *izinganekwane* and the Xhosa ones, *lintsomi*.

Msimang (1986:23) provides us with the etymology of the word *inganekwane*. He assumes that term might be deduced from the proto-form of this word. Msimang reconstructs the term according to Guthrie where he states that the proto-Bantu root for this word is **-gan-**, whose gloss is “tell a tale”, and the proto-bantu stem is **-gano-*

(tale). From this proto- stem the Xhosa derive the noun *isiganeko* which means an event or incident, which is semantically an equivalent to the Zulu *isigameko*.

Bascom (1965:4) defines a folktale as:

Prose narratives are regarded as fiction. They are not considered as dogma or history, they may or may not have happened, and they are not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, although it is often said that they are told only for amusement, they have other important functions, as the class of moral folktales should have suggested. Folktales may be set at any time and any place, and in this sense they are almost timeless and placeless.

Msimang (1986:22) defines folktales as

traditional tales told primarily for entertainment. They are but one genre of Zulu oral tradition, quite distinct from oral poetry or episodes of tribal history...

The *inganekwane* is a tale which is related primarily for entertainment and which revolves around the doings often fantastic - of men, animals and numerous extraordinary creatures...

...the finer distinction between *inganekwane* and *insumansumane* has disappeared and folktales are generally referred to as *izinganekwane*.

In this study, both Msimang and Bascom's definitions of a folktale will be adopted as both definitions highlight the idea that folktales are told for amusement and are regarded as fiction. This is not surprising since African groups do not distinguish between the various types of folk narratives. Their underlying function of commenting on real world situations will, however, receive special attention, especially in chapter 3. The term *izinganekwane* will be used as a blanket term to indicate all the different kinds of stories.

1.5.5 Proverbs

How can one define a proverb? Many scholars have admitted that it is a relentless task to try to give a precise definition of a proverb. The overwhelming data in many languages on this subject is an indication that proverbs have captured the interest of

researchers from antiquity to the present. Given the massive scholarship that exists on the proverb, it would appear that little could be easier than writing down a precise proverb definition. However, Meider (1993:4) concedes that Archer Taylor, in his famous book, *The Proverb*, admits that it is impossible to define a proverb. It is for this reason that his entire book was an attempt to define a proverb. The world's greatest paremiologists also tried to confront this insurmountable problem by explaining this tedious task as follows:

The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; and should we fortunately combine in a single definition all the essential elements and give each the proper emphasis, we should not even then have a touchstone. An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. Hence no definition will enable us to identify positively a sentence as proverbial. Let us be content with recognizing that a proverb is a saying current among the folk (Meider 1993:4).

Despite much effort to come up with a convincing definition, most scholars have not been satisfied with putting aside the need for a precise and universal definition. The impossibility of defining a proverb became so topical among proverb scholars, that it assumed the status of a proverb itself. The statement has been met with challenge from some scholars, and seen as an escape from giving this genre a precise definition. This has resulted in more and more complex definitions being given, with almost all of them alluding the impossibility of giving a universal definition. Various debates pertaining to the structural characteristics of a proverb have been brought forward and some of the terms like 'traditional' 'incommunicable', 'short', 'rigidity' have become a bone of contention. Unfortunately, this study will not delve on these debates related to the structural aspect of a proverb. Here are a few definitions of a proverb.

Meider (1993:5) defines a proverb as follows:

A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.

In the same vein Norrick (1985:31) has this to say about the proverb:

Proverbs are consistently described as self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed poetic form.

In the same breath Mathumba (1989:12) defines a proverb as:

a concise stylised metaphorical sentence, usually displaying peculiar formal features, expressing a common truth familiar to and accepted by all the members of a particular language community.

Mokitimi (1991:18) says:

Proverbs reveal feelings, emotions attitude of the speaker. They are later used in situations bearing relevance to the first one. At this stage there is a speaker and listener and if these expressions make an impact on the listener, he too uses them in other situations. In this manner, the use of these statements, as expressions of observation and experiences, move from speaker to speaker until the society accepts them as part and parcel of its collective lore.

Guma (1967:65) has this to say about the SeSotho proverb.

It is a pithy sentence with general bearing on life. It serves to express some “homely truth” or moral lesson in such an appropriate manner as to make one feel that no better words could have been used.

Proverb formulation has proven to be a cumbersome task and a field that has been studied extensively by prolific scholars representing almost all languages. The interest generated by the study of this genre resulted in the conceptualisations of what a proverb is by various scholars. From the pool of definitions that are available, we can conclude by deducing that proverbs are the truth that reflects the culture, values and norms of the society.

1.5.6 Izipongo (Praises)

Gunner (1991:1) defines *izibongo* as a plural noun which can be translated as “praises”, “praise names,” or as “praise poems”. When viewed collectively, it can be spoken in the singular as “praise poetry”. This is a genre of poetry widely used in Southern Africa by speakers of Zulu, Ndebele and Xhosa. According to Kresse (1998:173) the concept *izibongo* is derived from the verb *-bonga* which means mainly to ‘praise’ and also ‘to thank,’ ‘to worship’ as well as ‘to give clan name or kinship term’. The clan name is called an *isibongo*, and is mostly identical to the name of the founder of the clan. As such it represents social identity and can be used for tracing kinship and genealogy. *Izibongo*, meaning “praise names” or ‘praise poem’ is a *pluralis tantum* built from *isibongo*.

He goes further to state that the scope of the various types of *izibongo* is wide, but united in ‘naming, identifying and therefore giving significance to the named person or object’ in a specific, aesthetically acknowledged way. High social significance is best expressed in extraordinary, formalised language rather than everyday speech. Thus *izibongo* as a poetical genre evolved as a specific art of praising. Praise poetry may be engaged in by virtually anybody, in a number of contexts, and directed at a variety of people, animals and objects. Herd boys praise their clay oxen, the live animals in their care, or their friends: a ploughman praises his lead ox; a hunter, his dogs; a father may praise one his children or his homestead, a wife, her husband and recently praises are composed for political organisations and football teams.

Kaschula (1991:56) defines praises or *izibongo* in the following manner:

The word *izibongo* is a plural of class 4 nouns, and is always used in the form when meaning any phrase or phrases, sentence or sentences where the imaginative or emotional language is used to describe something. *Izibongo* may be attributed to a person, animal or any object of emotional excitement.

Lestrade (1946:11) describes a praise poem as:

A type of composition intermediate between the pure, mainly narrative

epic, and the pure, mainly apostrophic ode, being a combination of exclamatory narration and deeds for which the person has acquired fame, enumerating, in hyperbolic apostrophe, those qualities for which he is renowned, and they include a recital of those laudatory epithets applied either as an individual and known as his praise names.

Dhlomo (1947: 5) explains this concept of izibongo:

They were used to excite and delight, to appeal to and appease, to honour and humour a person. They were a fairly faithful and inspired record of your career and character. In youth they told your measure of promise, your inclinations and your dormant but dominant qualities; in advanced age, the story of your achievements and adventure. The King's praises were the longest and the most laudatory. The heroes were allowed a certain liberal measure.

From the above quotes and arguments we can deduce that *Izibongo* is a collection of praise names. This type of praise poem is the one accorded to the common man who, although his praises may contain references to events and endeavours, has not yet been elevated to a position of political importance. On the other hand, the praise poems of chiefs, kings or prominent and famous people, display the evidence of a loftier poetic quality upon the more basic simple praises as evinced by the use of poetic technique such as repetition, assonance, alleteration etc. These are the heroic poems known as *izibongo zamakhosi* which contain the epic of a whole nation, personified in its sovereign. Even these *izibongo* are not free from the elements of satire or criticism.

The role of a bard cannot be underestimated. He is a specialist in the history of his people and the genealogy of his chiefs. Although the purpose of the praise poem is to present the chief as an object of admiration, and in most cases he maximises praise and minimize criticism, the bard or *imbongi* is regarded as a conduit for channelling the opinion of the people and so presses conformity to the approved pattern upon the chief.

1.5.7 Culture

Odetola (1983:1) defines culture as:

A man's entire social heritage – all the knowledge, beliefs, customs, and skills acquired as a member of a society. Thus, people become distinctively human by the acquisition of culture. Culture presumes the existence of a human society and provides the skills for making society work. Culture is, therefore a large part of what is transmitted in the process of socialisation. It is through the acquisition of culture that groups, however simple, have solved the problems of group life in their own way. Culture can be material or non material. Material culture includes clothing, utensils, work of art. Non- material culture includes ideas, languages, norms, mores and beliefs.

Mbiti (1975:7) gives us the following definition of culture:

The word culture covers many things, such as the way people live, behave and act, and their physical as well as their intellectual achievements. Culture shows itself in art and literature, dance, music and drama, in styles of building houses and people's clothing, in social organisation and political systems, in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in the customs and institutions of the people, in their values and laws, and their economic life.

Kneller in De Bruin (2002: 40) defines culture as follows:

Culture is at once the creation of man and the condition of human living. Man creates culture, but culture is man.

From the above definitions, it can be concluded that man and culture are inseparable. Culture is also crucial in the effective adaptation of any member of any community to their environment. It is in fact, a great determinant of the development of codes of behaviour and communication and therefore guides actions and knowledge. It should also be noted that culture is not static but continuously changing, whether slowly or rapidly, as a result of its contiguity to other cultures. Contact between cultures may be deliberate or unintentional. Contact may only involve the transmission of one element of a culture from one society to another. Sometimes it can involve a large scale adoption of new foreign culture by another society. This process is called acculturation. It may take a while before a newly introduced culture can be adopted in a society. The period between introduction to full adoption is called "cultural lag" (Odetola,1983:114). The acceptance of a newly introduced culture can be cemented in a particular society by

Careful education of the people and achievement of attitudinal changes.

In this study, culture will be used in its broadest sense as a way of life fashioned by people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their total environment. The term, culture as used here will encompass a people's art, their science and all their social institutions, as well as their system of beliefs and rituals. In this study, we shall make an attempt to show how culture plays a major role in shaping the behaviour and thoughts of the Zulu people.

1.5.8 Stereotype

Miller (1982:4) has this to say about the origin of a stereotype:

The derivation of the word is the Greek *steros*, meaning solid, and *typos*, meaning the mark of a blow, impression or model. The term was first used to describe a method of printing designed to duplicate pages of type. A metal plate, cast from a mould, was used instead of the original form. One link to contemporary usage was thus in the idea of duplication, that all products of the stereotype process would be identical. Another feature was rigidity or permanence.

Miller goes on to say that a dictionary of psychological terms has defined "stereotype" as:

A relatively rigid and oversimplified or biased perception or conception of an aspect of reality, especially of persons or social groups, e.g the perception of "bankers" - in general and without discrimination-as invariably in business dealings.

Stereotype is a concept related to role, yet distinct. It can be defined as a "picture in our heads", it is a composite image of traits and expectations pertaining to some group (such as teachers, women, police officers, hippies etc)- an image that is persistent in the social mind though it is somehow inaccurate. The stereotype is an overgeneralization of characteristics that may or may not have been observed in fact. It often contains a kernel of truth that is impartial and thus misleading.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

H.R Mathye, (2003) also investigated “portrayal of women in literature” in Xitsonga novels. Her thesis, entitled: The image of women in selected Tsonga novels reflects a viewpoint similar to Masuku’s. Mathye, like Masuku concentrates on the depiction of women characters as portrayed by both male and female authors in novels. She also employs the Feminist approach in her analysis. Mathye’s research interrogated the portrayal of Tsonga women by Tsonga male writers, to discover if they fully represent the nature of women in Tsonga community. Secondly, she also wished to establish how the substantial changing role of women in different decades is fully captured by both Tsonga writers, male and female and to determine whether these depictions are true to reality or not. The novels she analysed were selected from the years 1930-1939, when the first Tsonga novel was written.

M.J. Maponyane (1990) wrote a Northern Sotho honours article on the Elements of feminism in M.A Kekana's Nonyana ya Tokologo. In her analysis, Maponyane showed that Kekanas' work is charged with cultural dissatisfaction that she strives to correct in her literary work. Kekana wanted to expose the cultural constraints that are imposed on women in the Northern Sotho society. Maponyane discovered that Kekana attests that cultural norms and values in her society distance females from being involved actively in the political and economic structure of society.

E. Mawela (1996) submitted a thesis for her M.A. degree on the depiction of women in Venda novels. The thesis is titled:, The depiction of women in Venda novels. Mawela analysed the various roles assigned to women in the Venda society. In her introductory chapter, Mawela states unequivocally that she will employ the feminist theory. Her message is not explicit, but a closer look at her analysis implies that women in the Venda society are not content with the roles assigned to them by society. There are a number of women who challenge the status quo, but unfortunately their actions are not welcomed by the Venda society at large.

P.T Mtuze (1990) for his analysed various images assigned to women in the Xhosa society. His thesis is titled: A feminist critique of the image of woman in the prose works of selected Xhosa writers (1909-1980). Mtuze's study laid emphasis on the stereotypes and other symbolic images of women. The study also reflects on the plight of Xhosa women as a result of the oppressive male-authored social norms and discriminatory practices. He makes a comparison between female stereotypes as used by male writers on the one hand, and female stereotypes as used by female on the other. Mtuze noted that an important feature of stereotyping is that it is universal as it transcends all racial and national barriers, affecting women in various countries and in different communities.

He has also discovered that in the first twenty years of written prose fiction, female characters play a subservient role and are strongly stereotyped by the male authors. Strangely, the female writers confirm popular female stereotypes instead of refuting them as one would have expected. They not only confirm sexist stereotypes, but also seem to want to coax women back to their former "glorious state" of subservient housewife and underdog. Despite the strides that women have made in the various walks of life, negative stereotypes continue to thwart their progress and undermine their achievements in various subtle ways.

N. Masuku (1997) also did her Masters dissertation on the portrayal of women in Zulu drama. Her thesis is entitled: Images of women in some Zulu Literary works: A feminist critique. Her study concentrated on the depiction of women characters by both male and female dramatists. Of the works that have been cited under this section, Mtuze's study is almost similar to Masuku's since she also employs the Feminist approach in her analysis. Masuku showed that some male authors depict women harshly in their literary works, and that women writers do same with their female characters. This anomaly can be ascribed to the fact that men have been raised to believe that women are of the lesser sex while women writers in order for their books to be accepted by the review board, had to ascribe to the same writing formula as men so that they could be published because Zulu literature is dominated by male authors and reviewers.

Nkumane's doctoral thesis entitled: Themes of forced and forbidden love: cross cultural trends in language literatures with special reference to Zulu novels, explored the themes of forced and forbidden love. She employed three approaches in her analysis of data: womanism, literary onomastics and psychoanalysis. Womanism proved to be an indispensable tool in her approach and showed how the culture of forced and forbidden love affected women's lives. She examined the various social stereotypes contained in these novels. She demonstrated how African names in particular determines sex roles resulting in the marginalisation of women in society.

Dlamini S.R (1995) wrote an M.A. thesis on songs by Swazi women. Her study is the most apt and relevant to this one because she does an analysis on a sub-genre of folklore called folk-songs. Her thesis is titled: Voicing their perceptions: A review of Swazi women folk songs. Dlamini is of the opinion that the Swazi nation is a nation which is still dominated by culture and women have no position in the Swazi society. Since they are not pleased with this status quo, the only avenue available to them to voice their grievances is through the singing of songs. These songs provide the woman with a channel to express her feelings and views about her perception of the world around her. It is through these songs that she is able to voice her complaints and dissatisfactions.

De Bruin (2002) submitted her masters thesis entitled: The role of children in the Zulu folktale. The study gives an in-depth investigation of the roles played by children in the Zulu folktale and their role as an audience. It also looks at the roles of parents, girls, boys and grandmothers in folktales. Although De Bruin mentions that this study is void of any theory, she makes an impressive analysis of what it is like to grow up as a girl and boy in the Zulu culture. She concludes by mentioning that girls who disobey the norms set by the society are punished, whereas those who are depicted as examples of the *intombi* are rewarded. She also makes an observation that boys are supposed to be hardworking, fearless and endanger their lives in order to protect the cattle in their care. Parents are supposed to be the caregivers of their children. This study underscores the argument in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this study respectively.

P.T Mtuze's Doctoral thesis that was cited in the preceding paragraph, dedicated a chapter to the role of women in folktales. From that chapter, he produced an article titled: Female stereotyping in Xhosa fiction and folktales. Using the Feminist approach, Mtuze analysed the various female characters depicted in Xhosa folktales. He concluded that women occupy a subservient role in society, they are seen but never heard and more privileges and rights are awarded to men than women. The various stereotypes that are presently attached to women can be traced back to folktales. These negative stereotypes influence the way modern writers depict their female characters in modern literature.

N. Masuku (1994) also wrote an article titled: The role of women in Folklore with special reference to Zulu folktales. This is another attempt to analyse the stereo-typical images attached to women in Zulu folktales. Using the Feminist approach, Masuku discovered that women in folktales were expected to get married and bear children, women who are beautiful are regarded as dangerous and they can cause a man's downfall. Women should be able to bear children, if they fail to do so, they are shunned and regarded as unnatural. There are also examples of folktales which are a form of protest, where a woman deliberately defies the norms and values of her society, e.g a woman who eats *amasi* at her son-in-law's house, wears his loin skin and sits on his chair, something that is taboo and completely unacceptable in the Zulu culture.

1.7 CONCLUSION

In this introductory chapter the aim, scope, definition of terms, method of approach and the literature review have been outlined. In following chapter, Chapter Two, we shall discover that Feminism as a theory covers a broad spectrum. Several types of Feminism will be discussed. It is also noteworthy to mention that the question of whether Feminism should exist in Africa or not will also be fully discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

THE FEMINIST THEORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to give an over-view of the controversy surrounding the term Feminism. A number of debates have ensued as result of this movement. There are numerous scholars who feel that feminism is tailor-made to serve a particular group of people and it does not address the need of all women. Feminism as a term which is conceptualized and adopted by white American women, involves an agenda that was designed to meet the needs and demands of that particular group. For this reason, it is quite plausible for white women to identify with feminism and the feminist movement. Placing all women's history under white women's history, thereby giving the latter the definite position, is problematic. It is for this reason that various definitions have been coined to best suit the needs of the various racial groups, black women in particular. Freud asked the question, "What do women want?" This chapter will make an attempt to answer the question by examining the thought provoking arguments presented by various women scholars. The needs and aspirations of the different "women's liberation movements" will be analyzed and be put into proper perspective.

2.2 FEMINISM

The words "feminism" or "feminist" are political labels showing support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the early 1960's. Throughout its long history, feminism has sought to disturb the patriarchal culture and to assert a belief in sexual equality as well as to eradicate sexist domination in transforming society. Emphasis was on women gaining greater individual freedom. This is echoed by Phillips (1987:68) who states that:

It is the freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom from sex determined roles, freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action. Feminism demands the acceptance of woman's right to individual conscience and judgment. It postulates that woman's essential worth stems from her common humanity and does not depend on another relationships of her life.

In short, feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit any specific group of women, or any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. On the contrary, it is a movement that has the power to transform the whole of society in a meaningful way. Feminism challenges the "patriarchal" conception of male and female roles in the society. It also draws a distinction between sex and gender in order to redefine male and female roles. The movement also confronts sex oppression in domains such as reproduction, production, sexuality and socialization. As already mentioned in the introduction, the feminism camp hosts divergent political views. Focus can easily be shifted from a fixed stable entity called feminism, to the possibility of a multiple feminism. This possibility is summed up by Ryan (1988:1) who states that:

Such a suggestion arises from a number of sources; the difficulty experienced in summarizing feminist critical theory; the inability to find a definition which encompasses feminism's diversities and divergences; the reluctance to limit feminism to a single category; an unwillingness to confine it to a totalizing theory; and finally a tendency to regard women as having a multiple rather than single identities.

It should be noted that the feminist movement is not a monolithic activity, but encompasses a number of divergent schools of thought that are only bound together by their common commitment to the cause of protest against conventional male and female role definitions in society. Feminism is "the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities - intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economic". In its broadest sense, feminism constitutes both an ideology and a global political movement that confronts sexism, a social relationship in which males as a group have authority over females as a group (Ryan 1988:24).

Globally, a feminist agenda encompasses several major areas. First and foremost, the inferior economic status of women and issues associated with women's poverty, such as educational opportunities, industrial development, racism, employment policies, prostitution and inheritance laws concerning property, constitute a fundamental woman's issue. Political rights for women, such as enfranchisement, rights of assembly, travelling in public, office holding, the rights of political prisoners, and basic human rights violations against women such as rape and torture constitute a second area of concern. A third area of global concern encompasses of marital and family issues such as marriage and divorce laws, child custody policies, and domestic labour. Women's health and survival issues, such as reproductive rights, pregnancy, sexuality, and AIDS constitute another area of global feminist concern. This broad global feminist agenda finds varying expressions in different regions of the world and among diverse populations.

Although this is a movement that has the interest of "all women at heart," it is not accepted by most women without question. Most women shy away from being referred to as Feminists. This can be attributed to various reasons, such as the perception that Black women especially Black American women, are increasingly distressed by the surrender of much within the Black community to a promise of "better situation" through integration, which, usually means movement from a Black culture into a White conformity.

Many women see feminism as synonymous with lesbianism; something they find abhorrent and so they reject all forms of feminism. There are, of course, women who do not wish to be associated with women's rights movements in any form, so they oppose and reject feminist movement. Some women are reluctant to advocate feminism as they claim to experience prejudice and oppression, by women who call themselves feminists rather than by men.

Some women are reluctant to advocate feminism because they are unsure of the meaning of the term. Some declare that they are not feminists but then go on to say that

they are convinced that the situation of women has to be improved drastically, that gender relations in African societies need radical transformation, that they are themselves committed to making the changes happen.

The negative attitude of many Africans toward the term and the concept of feminism is an indication that antifeminist positions are widespread in Africa. These antifeminist reactions stem mainly from stereotypical notions in Africa of (white Western) feminism that may have some vestige of truth but this perception does not do justice to feminist heterogeneity.

Feminism is often equated with radical feminists and hatred of men, penis envy, the rejection of African traditions, a fundamental rejection of marriage and motherhood, and an endeavor to invert the power relationship of genders. What is really worrisome and momentous for feminism, however, is that even African women and men whose ideas correspond to the basic ideas of feminism have problems with the notions and approaches of white Western feminism.

One central criticism leveled by Africans is that feminism does not see beyond Western societies, and this ignores or marginalizes the specific problems of African women. Some radical and Marxist feminists are an exception to the rule, although they often go to the opposite extreme by presuming to be able to speak in the name of all women without, however, having really informed themselves about the situation and the problems of women in other parts of the world. As a consequence, they base their assessment of the situation and the emancipatory ideas of African women and women's movements on their personal view and experiences.

Another reason for the antifeminist stance of Africans committed to gender issues is much more controversial and will be discussed in the section on African feminism. Many Africans claim that they cannot identify with white Western feminism, much less act under its auspices, because it concentrates solely on the question of gender, while they always view gender relationships in the context of other political, economic, cultural and social forms and mechanisms of oppression such as racism, neocolonialism, (cultural)

imperialism, capitalism religious and fundamentalism, and dictatorial and corrupt systems. However, the statement that Western feminism is gender-centered, while African feminism is not, needs to be qualified. For instance, Marxist feminism, assumes the intersection of race, class and gender, and while postmodern feminism, views gender as one of many constituents of identity. Moreover, there are definitely gender-committed Africans organisations, persons, and writers who predominantly concentrate on the question of gender.

Ultimately, the distance that Africans committed to gender issues maintain from Western feminism, also stems from their sense that white women, as members of Western societies, (and sometimes even due to their individual behaviour), contribute to other forms of oppression of African women (and men). The massive rejection of feminism in African societies and, above all, the discontent of Africans who sympathize with feminists have caused some African-American women to conceptualize alternatives to feminism (Arndt, 2000:710). The various ideologies will be discussed below.

2.3 BLACK FEMINISM

The chasm that exists between white feminists and the women of colour in America can be better explained by referring to the history of feminism. One perspective on feminism among native American women is that the emphasis has been on individuality as conceived by early Western feminists, who wanted greater equality with men in the prevailing patriarchal sociopolitical structures in American society and who premised their struggle on democratic ideals for gender equity.

Historically, women among the upper and middle classes demanded the vote for white women. In their democratic pursuit, they were not concerned with the other “women of colour.” Therefore, Native American women perceived this early feminism as a reaction to an existing patriarchal sociopolitical system not concerned with the racialised oppression of other marginalized women and subcultural groups or “ethnic minorities,” such as Native Americans, nor with the impact of U.S. colonialism on their traditional

way of life. Feminists of these earlier and more exclusive times were focused on challenging sexism and the chauvinistic behaviour of men in general, toward women in mainstream populations. The feminists were generally more educated and married of the middle class, in contrast to their “women of colour” counterparts.

Black women or “women of colour” like Toni Cade, Angela Davies, Toni Morris, June Jordan, Audrey Lorde and Alice Walker embarked on a quest to ‘break the silence’ in the 1970s. African American women in the 1980s and 1990s developed a ‘voice’, a self-defined, collective black women’s standpoint about black womanhood and they used this standpoint to “talk back” concerning black women’s representation in dominant discourses. As a result of this struggle, African American women’s ideas and experiences have achieved a visibility previously unthinkable.

Using the term “black feminist” places African American women in a position to examine how the particular constellation of issues affecting black women in the United States are part of issues of women’s emancipation struggles. In the context of feminism as a global political movement for woman’s rights and emancipation, the patterns of feminist knowledge and politics that African American women encounter in the United States represent a rather narrow segment refracted through the dichotomous racial politics of white supremacy in the United States. Because the media in the United States portrays feminism as a “for-whites-only” movement, and because many white women have accepted this view of American apartheid that leads to segregated institutions to all types, including feminist organizations, feminism is often viewed by both black and whites as the cultural property of white women.

Many African American women have struggled against this exclusionary feminism and have participated in what appears to be a for-whites-only feminist activity. Indeed, some black women have directly challenged the racism within these feminist organisations controlled by white women by prioritizing race, then class and then gender, an example of this is Sojourner Truths’ oration, “And Ain’t I A Woman”. In this a self actualisation speech she finds that she has to deal with first thing first, before she can begin to

address the issue of the absurdity of female subjugation, which was her initial intention when she went to the all-White convention in Akron, Ohio in 1951. She had to deal with her ostracism based on her colour, race, followed by class (Ntiri, 1997:83).

Using the term “black feminism” disrupts the racism inherent in presenting feminism as a for-whites-only ideology and political movement. Inserting the adjective “black” challenges the assumed whiteness of feminism and disrupts the false universal of this term for both white and black women. Since many white women think that black women lack feminist consciousness, the term “black feminist” both highlights the contradictions underlying the assumed whiteness of feminism and serves to remind white women that they are neither the only, nor the normative, “feminists”.

The term “black feminism” also makes many African American women uncomfortable because it challenges black women to confront their own views on sexist women’s oppression. Even though the majority of African American women may support the very ideas on which feminism rests, large numbers of them reject the term “feminism” because of its perceived association with whiteness. Many see feminism as operating exclusively within the term “white and American” and perceive its opposite as being “black and American”. When given these two constrictive choices, black women routinely choose race over the question of “gender”. In this situation, those black women who identify with feminism are perceived as being either non-black or less authentically black (Collins, 2001:12).

The term “black feminist” also disrupts a longstanding and largely unquestioned reliance on black racial solidarity as a deep tap root in the black political philosophies, especially within black nationalist and cultural pluralist frameworks. Using family rhetoric that views black family community, race and nation as a series of nested boxes, each gaining meaning from the other, certain rules apply to all levels of this “family” organisation. Just as families have internal naturalised hierarchies that give, for example, older siblings authority over younger ones or males over females, groups defining themselves as racial-families invoke similar rules. Within African American communities, one such rule is that black women will unconditionally support black men (Collins, 2001: 13).

Several difficulties accompany the use of the term “black feminist”. One involves the problem of balancing the genuine concerns of black women against continual pressures to absorb and recast such interests within white feminist frameworks. For example, ensuring political rights and economic development via collective action to change social institutions remains a strong focal point in the feminist of African American women and women of colour. Yet the emphasis on the themes (such as personal identity, understanding difference, deconstructing women’s multiple selves, and the simplistic model of the political expressed through the slogan the personal is political, that currently permeate North American white women’s feminism in the academy can sap black feminism of its critical edge. Indeed, the very efforts by contemporary black women thinkers to explicate a long-standing black women’s intellectual tradition bearing the label “black feminism,” can attract the attention of white women armed with a different feminist agenda.

Issues raised by black women that are not seen as explicitly “feminist” ones, (primarily issues that affect only women) receive much less sanction by the white feminists. In a sense, the constant drumbeat of having to support white women diverts black women’s energy away from addressing social issues facing African American communities. Black feminism appears to be very well-received by white American women, however given the context of dichotomous racial politics of the United States, some black women suspect the motives of the white feminists. Another challenge facing black feminism lies in the direct conflict between black feminism and elements of black religious traditions. For example, the visibility of white lesbians comes into direct conflict with the articles of faith that view homosexuality as a sin. While individual African American women may be accepting of gays, lesbians and bisexuals as individuals, especially if such individuals are African American, the vast majority of black women have distanced themselves from social movements perceived as requiring acceptance of homosexuality (Lorde, 1984:50).

The association of feminism with lesbianism remains a problematic one for black women. Reducing black lesbians to their sexuality, indeed, a sexuality that chooses

women over men, reconfigures black lesbians as enemies of black men. This reduction not only constitutes a serious misreading of black lesbianism - black lesbians have fathers, brothers, and sons of their own and are embedded in a series of relationships as complex as their heterosexual brothers and sisters - it simultaneously diverts attention away from more important issues. Who ultimately benefits when the presence of black lesbians in any black social movement leads to its rejection by African Americans? The theme of lesbianism and its association with feminism in the minds of many African Americans also overlaps with another concern of many African American women, namely their commitment to African American men. Indeed a serious challenge confronting black feminism concerns its perceived separatism. Many African Americans define black feminism as being exclusively for black women, something that is seen as a rejection of black men (Lorde, 1984:60).

Sherley Ann Williams notes that (1990:70):

one of the most disturbing aspects of current black feminist (is) its separatism its tendency to see not only a distinct black female culture but to see that culture as a separate cultural form having more in common with white female experience than with the facticity of Afro-American life.

This is a valid criticism of black feminism, one that must be addressed if the major ideas of black feminism wish to avoid the danger of becoming increasingly separated from African American women's experiences and interests. But it also speaks to the larger issue of the continuing difficulty of positioning black feminism between black nationalism and American white feminism. In effect, black feminism must come to terms with a white feminist agenda incapable of seeing its own racism, as well as a black nationalist agenda resistant to grappling with its own sexism. Finding a place that accommodates these seemingly contradictory agendas remains elusive (Collins, 2001:12).

While speaking out initially proved dangerous, the black women's increasing vocality ironically fostered the emergence of a new challenge. The new public acceptance provided by black women's successes allowed longstanding differences among black

women structured along the axis of sexuality, social class, nationality, and religion to emerge. At this point, where African American women can fashion a singular “voice” about the black woman’s position remains less an issue than how black woman’s voices collectively construct, affirm and maintain a dynamic black woman self-defined standpoint. Given the increasingly troublesome political context affecting black women as a group, such solidarity is essential. Thus, ensuring group unity while recognizing the tremendous heterogeneity that operates within the boundaries of the term “black women” comprises one of the fundamental challenge now confronting African American women (Collins, 2001:16).

2.4 WOMANISM IN AN AMERICAN CONTEXT

Womanism is a term which was introduced by Alice Walker (1983) in her acclaimed volume of essays “In search of our mother’s garden”. Alice Walker’s multiple definitions of the term “womanism” shed light on the issue of why many African American women prefer the term womanism to black feminism.

According to Westfield (2001:1) the term “womanist” was coined from Walker’s use of folk term “womanish” to characterize the spirit and posture of African women who, individually and collectively, dare to resist oppression. Westfield (2001:1-2) gives Walker’s definition as follows:

From womanish (opp. Of “girlish” i.e. frivolous, irresponsible not serious). A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “You acting womanish,” i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/ or nonsexually. Appreciated and prefers women’s cultures, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counter-balance of laughter) and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non sexually.

Committed to the whole survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for health. Traditionally universalist. Loves music. Love dance. Love struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.

Walker introduced four meanings of the term “womanist”. According to her first definition, a “womanist” was “a black feminist or feminist of color”. Walker herself uses the term interchangeably. Like Walker, many African American women see little difference between the two since both support a common agenda of black women’s self definition and self-determination. As Omolade (1994:34) points out,

black feminism is sometimes referred to as womanism because both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by black women who are themselves part of the black community’s efforts to achieve equality and liberty.

Walker sees womanism as rooted in black women’s concrete history in racial and gender oppression. Taking the term from the Southern black folk expression of mothers to female children “you acting womanish”, Walker suggests that black women’s concrete history fosters a womanist world view, accessible primarily and perhaps exclusively to black women. “Womanish” girls acted in outrageous, courageous, and willful ways, which are the attributes that freed them from the conventions that limited white women for a long time. Womanish girls wanted to know more and in greater depth than what was considered good for them. They were responsible, in charge and serious.

Despite her disclaimer that womanists are “traditionally universalists”, a philosophy invoked by her metaphor of the garden where there is room for all flowers to bloom equally and differently, Walker simultaneously implies that black women are somehow superior to white women because of this black folk tradition. Defining womanish as the opposite of the “frivolous, irresponsible, not serious, girlish” she constructs black women’s experiences in opposition to those of white women. This meaning of womanism sees it as being different from and superior to feminism, a difference allegedly stemming from black and white women’s different histories within American

racism. Walker's much cited phrase, "womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender" clearly seems designed to set up this type of comparison - black women are "womanist" while white women remain merely "feminist".

This usage sits squarely in black nationalist traditions premised on the belief that blacks and whites cannot function as equals while inhabiting the same territory or participating in the same social institutions. Since black nationalist philosophy posits that white people as a group have a vested interest in continuing a system of white supremacy, it typically sees little use for black interrogation or assimilation into a system predicted on black subjugation. Black nationalist approaches also support a black moral superiority over whites because of black suffering (Van Deburg, 1992:180).

Walker's use of the term womanism promises black women, who both operate within these black nationalists assumptions and who simultaneously see the need to address "feminist" issues within African American communities, partial reconciliation of these two seemingly incompatible philosophies. Womanism offers a distance from the "enemy", in this case, whites generally and white women in particular, yet still raises the issue of gender. Due to its endorsement of racial separatism, this interpretation of womanism offers a vocabulary of addressing gender issues within African American communities without challenging the racially segregated terrain that characterizes American social institutions.

This use of womanism sidesteps an issue central to many white feminists, namely finding ways to foster interracial cooperation among women. African American women embracing black nationalist philosophies typically express little interest in working with white women - in fact, white women are defined as part of the problem. Moreover, womanism appears to provide an avenue to foster stronger relationships between black women and black men, another very important issue for African American women regardless of political perspective. Again, Walker's definition provides guidance where she notes that womanists are "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female". Many black women view feminism as a movement that at best, is exclusively for women and, at worst, dedicated to attacking or eliminating men.

Womanism seemingly offers a way for black women to address gender oppression without attacking black men.

Walker also presents a visionary meaning for womanism. As part of her second definition, Walker has a black girl pose the question “Mama, why are we brown, pink and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige and black?” The response of “the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented,” both criticizes racism within African American communities and broadens the notion of humanity to make all people of color. Reading this passage as a metaphor, womanism thus furnishes a vision where the women and men of different colours coexist like flowers in a garden yet retain their cultural distinctiveness and integrity. This meaning of womanism seems rooted in another major political tradition within African American politics, namely a pluralist version of black empowerment (Van DeBurg, 1992:180).

Pluralism views society as being composed of various ethnic and interest groups, all of whom compete for goods and services. Equity lies in providing opportunities, rights and respect to all groups. By retaining black cultural distinctiveness and integrity, pluralism offers a modified version of racial integration premised not on individual assimilation but on group integration. Clearly rejecting what they perceive as being the limited vision of feminism projected by North American white women, many black women theorists have been attracted to this joining of pluralism and racial integration in this interpretation of Walker’s womanism (Collins 2001:11).

One particularly significant feature of black women’s use of the term womanism concerns the part of Walker’s definition that has been relatively ignored. A more troublesome line for those self-defining as womanist precedes admonition that womanists, by definition, are committed to wholeness. Walker states that a womanist is also “a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually”.

The relative silence of womanists on this dimension of womanism speaks to black women’s continued ambivalence in dealing with the links between race, gender and sexuality, in this case, the “taboo” sexuality of lesbianism. The African American women

have yet to come to terms with homophobia in African American communities. She applauds the growth of black women's fiction in the 1980s, but also observes that within black feminist intellectual production, black lesbians continue to be ignored. Despite the fact that some of the most prominent and powerful black women thinkers claimed by both womanists and black feminists were and are lesbians, this precept often remains unacknowledged in the work of African American writers. In the same way that many people read the Bible, carefully selecting the parts that agree with their worldview and rejecting the rest, selective readings of Walker's womanism produce comparable results (Collins, 2001: 11).

Walker's definition thus manages to invoke three important yet contradictory philosophies that frame black social and political thought, namely black nationalism via her claims of black women's moral and epistemological superiority as a result of suffering under racial and gender oppression; pluralism via the cultural integrity provided by the metaphor of the garden; and integration/assimilation via her claims that black women are "traditionally universalist." Just as black nationalism and racial integration coexist in uneasy partnership, with pluralism occupying the contested terrain between the two, Walker's definitions of womanism demonstrate comparable contradictions. By both grounding womanism in the concrete experiences of African American women and generalizing about the potential for realizing a humanist vision of community via the experience of these women, Walker depicts the potential for oppressed people to possess a moral vision and standpoint on society that stems from their situation of oppression. This standpoint also emerges as an incipient foundation for a more humanistic, just society. Overall, these uses of Walker's term "womanism" creates conceptual space that reflects bona fide philosophical differences that exist among African American women (Van Dedurg, 1992:205).

Another significant feature of black women's multiple uses of womanism concerns the potential for a slippage between the real and the ideal. There is a distinction between describing black women's historical responses to racial and gender oppression as being womanist, and using womanist as a visionary term delineating an ethical or ideal vision of humanity for all people. Identifying the liberatory *potential* within black women's

communities that emerges from concrete, historical experiences remains quiet different from claiming that black women have already arrived at this ideal, "womanist" endpoint. Refusing to distinguish carefully between these two meanings of womanism thus collapses the historically real and the future ideal into one privileged position for African American women in the present. Taking this position is reminiscent of the response of some black women to the admittedly narrow feminist agenda forwarded by white women in the early 1970s. Those black women proclaimed that they were already "liberated" while in actuality, this was far from the truth (Collins, 2001:14).

2.5 AFRICANA WOMANISM

Cleonora Hudson Weems coined the concept "Africana womanism" in the mid eighties. Weem's ground breaking work 1993 "Africana Womanism: Reclaiming ourselves", has been extremely influential and it has been adopted by faculty in several higher institutions in places as Africa, Brazil, Japan, and the Carribean islands. This book has been lauded for having added a crucial viewpoint to the recent literature on the construction of race in the evolution of the women's movement. One of today's most controversial issues in both the academy and the broader community is the role of the *Africana womana* within the context of modern feminist movement.

The argument that underpins Hudson-Weems' method or ideology rests on the a paradigm, which, according to her, is for all women applicable to African descent prioritizing race, class and gender. Hudson gives an etymology of the term Africana Womanism. She points out that (2001: 168):

Upon realizing that the term "Black Womanism" was not an apt terminology to include the total meaning desired for this concept, she decided that "*Africana "Womanism"*" was the perfect terminology for two reasons. Firstly, *Africana* identifies the ethnicity of the woman being considered, and this reference to her ethnicity, establishes her cultural identity as it relates to her ancestry and land base: Africa. The second part of the term, *Womanism* questions the accepted idea of being a woman. The term *woman* further argues that the *Africana woman* is the one who has received no special privileges in American

society.

“*Womanism*” is far more appropriate than “*female*” (feminism) because one of the major distinction – only a female of the human race can be a woman. Female on the other hand, can refer to a member of the animal plant or plant kingdom as well as to a member of the human race. Hence, a terminology derived from the word “woman” is more suitable and more specific when naming a group of the human race.

She further states that Africana womanism was a term she coined and defined in 1987 after nearly two years of publicly debating the importance of self naming for African women. Referring to the term *Africana Womanism* she makes it clear that her theory is not just an idea but a *method* – with uniquely African considerations and sensibilities. Africana womanism as a theoretical concept and methodology defines new paradigm, which offers an alternative to all forms of feminism. It is a terminology and concept that consider both ethnicity (Africana) and gender (Womanism).

Reed (2001: 168) identifies eighteen “descriptors” which serve to guide informed analysis of the Africana’s existence. The Africana womanist is:

- a self-namer, self definer, family centered, genuine in sisterhood, strong, in concert with the Africana man in struggle, whole, authentic, a flexible role player, respected, recognized, spiritual, male compatible, respectful of elders, adaptable, ambitious, mothering and nurturing.

The paradigm of Africana Womanism has its foundation in the dissimilarities between women of African descent and those of European origin. Africana womanism can be best explained in relation to feminism and Walker’s “womanism”. The establishment of the feminist movement hardly conceals the chasm between these two groups. The true history of feminism, its origins and its participants, reveals its blatant racist background, thereby establishing its incompatibility with African women. Feminism, then known as the Women’s Suffrage Movement in the United States, started when a group of liberal white women, whose concerns then were for the abolition of slavery and equal rights for all people regardless of race, class, and sex, dominated the scene among women on

the national level during the first half of the nineteenth century. At the time of the Civil War, such leaders as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Candy Stanton held the universalist philosophy on the natural rights of women to full citizenship, which included the right to vote. However, in 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States ratified the voting rights of African men, leaving women's rights, unaddressed. Middle-class white women were naturally disappointed, for they had assumed that their efforts towards securing full citizenship for African people would be linked to the universal suffrage. The outcome was a racist reaction towards the Amendment and towards.. Thus, from 1880s on, in the organized movement among white women pendulum shifted to a radically conservative posture on the part of white women in general.

In 1890 the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was founded by northern white women and it epitomized the growing race chauvinism of the late nineteenth century. The organization, which brought together the National Woman's Suffrage and the American Woman's Suffrage Association, departed from Susan B. Anthony's original women's suffrage posture. They asserted that the vote for women should be extended to middle-class white women, who could aid their husbands in preserving the virtues of the Republic from the threat of unqualified and biological inferiors (African men) who, with the power of the vote, could gain a political foothold in the American system. For example, staunch conservative suffragist leader Carrie Chapman Catt and other women insisted on strong Anglo-Saxon values and white supremacy. These women were interested in banding with white men to secure the vote for certain classes of whites, excluding not only Africans but white immigrants as well.

Catt was quoted by historians as saying that:

there is but one way to avert the danger. Cut off the vote of the slums and give it to [white] women. The middle-class white men must recognize the usefulness of woman suffrage as a counterbalance to the foreign vote, and as a means of legally preserving white supremacy in the south.Hudson-Weems(1998: 155).

These suffragists felt that because coloured and black people (coloured men in particular, with their new status as voters) were members of an inferior race, they should not be granted the right to vote in advance of the female “half” of the dominant group. Thus, while the disappointment of being left out in the area of gaining full citizenship—that is, voting rights – for white women was well founded, their hostility and racist, antagonistic feelings toward Africans in general cannot be dismissed lightly.

This is the basis for Hudson’s theory. She operationalizes her theory on the assumption that race is of paramount importance in any deliberations on or about African women. Since any discourse involving Africana people cannot escape the historical realities of Eurocentrism, oppression and domination, it makes sense to articulate a clear and firm position that is inclusive of those realities.

Hudson-Weems cites her own reasons why she prefers “Africana woman” over all other terms that are in use. According to her, Africana womanism is significantly different from the mainstream feminism, especially regarding the perception of and approach to issues in society. This is understandable because Africana women and white women come from different segments of the society and, thus, feminism as an ideology is not equally applicable to both.

Hudson-Weems suggests the need for a separate movement distinct to the Africana women and their identity. Some white women acknowledge that the feminist movement was not designed with the Africana woman in mind. Feminism primarily appealed to educated, middle class-white women, rather than to both black and white working class women Hudson-Weems(1998: 156).

This is further attested by Ntiri (2001: 165) states that:

Various schools of thought, perspectives and ideological proclivities have influenced the study of feminism. Few students have dealt with the issue of racism, since the dominant voice of the feminist movement has been that of the white female. The issue of racism can become threatening, for it identifies white feminists as possible

participants in the oppression of blacks.

The Africana women and men do not associate themselves with feminism. There is a general agreement in the Africana community that the feminist movement, by and large, is a white woman's movement. Firstly, the Africana woman does not see the man as her primary enemy as does the white feminist, who feels that she has been subjugated by men. Africana men have never had the institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as white men had. Consequently, the dynamics in the relationship between Africana men and women are different.

While many academicians uncritically adopt feminism in its established theoretical concept based on the notion that gender is primary in the women's struggle in the patriarchal system, most Africana women do not identify with the concept in its entirety and thus do not see themselves as feminists. The prioritizing of female empowerment and gender issues may be justifiable for those women who have not been plagued by powerlessness based on ethnic differences; however that is certainly not the case for Africana women. Those Africana women who adopt some form of feminism do so because of feminism's theoretical and methodological legitimacy in the academy and their desire to be a legitimate part of the academic community. Moreover, they adopt feminism because of the absence of a suitable framework for their individual needs as Africana women (Hudson-Weems, 1998:152).

Some women conclude that the feminist terminology does not accurately reflect either their reality or their struggle. Hence feminism even qualified as Black feminism, which relates to African-American women in particular – is extremely problematic as a label for the true Africana woman and invites much debate and controversy among today's scholars and women in general. African feminism is problematic, as it inevitably suggests an alignment with feminism, a concept that has been alien to the plight of African women from its inception. This is particularly the case in reference to racism and classism that are constant obstacles in the lives of African people.

The controversy about the naming process dates back to the 1970's when black women

in academia reformulated definitions and paradigms for self empowerment. The search for the right labels to convey black thought and practice became an exercise for those dissatisfied with feminism. Henrik Clarke (1992), a writer on lost identity and black consciousness refers to naming as a critical variable to a race of people. How people have been classified and named in the social order in the past has serious implications for the performance, expectations, and subsequent portrayal of such people. Naming cannot be left to the oppressor whose abuse of power has repressed blacks in various predicaments. Clarke says that we have been named, we should now become “namers” (Clarke, 1992:21).

The Africana people’s need for self-naming, self- defining, and self- identity has led to the emergence of labels such as Black feminism, African Feminism, womanism and Africana womanism. It must be noted that the process of naming is vital to the survival of the group. Hudson (2001:155) addresses this troubling issue by drawing a distinction between labels:

...Africana womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both white feminism and Black Feminism: moreover to the extend naming in particular. Africana womanism differs from African feminism. Clearly there is a need for a separate and distinct identity for the African woman and her movement.

Hudson-Weems points out that the Africana womanist should not to be confused with Alice Walker’s “womanist” that was presented in her essays entitled, *In search of our mothers garden* where she gives her definition of womanism. (See discussion above on womanism.) As far as Weems is concerned, Walker’s definition is exclusively to her *sexuality* and *her* culture. Walker’s definition of “womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” shows the link that that the author has established between the womanist and the feminist. The difference is however minimal the emphasis is only on colour, while it provokes feelings of alienation from men and evoking lesbian possibilities. The survival and wholeness of the black family do not appear to be central to Walker’s womanism.

Hudson-Weems defines the term Africana Womanism as:

Neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, *Africana womanism* is *not* black feminism, African feminism, or Walker's womanism that some African women have come to embrace. Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African *culture* and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of African women. It critically addresses the dynamics of the conflict between the mainstream feminist, the black feminist, the African feminist, and the Africana womanist. The conclusion is that Africana womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both white feminism and Black feminism; moreover, to the extent of naming in particular, Africana womanism differs from African feminism (1998:430).

In her paper titled *Self naming and self definition: An agenda for survival*, Hudson-Weems argues the importance of self naming. She posits that:

We talk about naming and defining ourselves. "Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined" historically. So, it is up to us to define ourselves. If we don't, someone else will, and they will do it miserably. We've been given all kinds of stereotypical names. We have to name ourselves. In the African cosmology, the word *nommo* is critical to existence. It is through the proper naming of a thing it gains its existence, its essence. So, there it is. We have name ourselves properly (1998:4320).

It is for this reason that Hudson feels that the Africana woman cannot afford to just settle for labels and definitions that really have nothing to do with the African experience or perhaps more accurately, that do not *acknowledge* the African experience. She points to feminism as a prime example. She believes that women who are calling themselves black feminists need another word to describe their concerns. Black Feminism is not seen as a term that describes the plight of black women.

None of these terms (i.e. black feminism, African Feminism and Walker's womanism) covers the full range of black woman's experience because they give primacy to gender, rather than race and class. This is the stance which is taken by Hudson in formulating a paradigm for Africana womanism, which she named, defined and redefined. Hudson is

of the opinion that the idea of Africana Womanism has always been in existence. Going back to pre-American slavery and even to Africa, African women have been both African and family centered, key components of African Womanism. Indeed, the welfare of the entire family is her number one priority. She states that she simply named it as a refined paradigm relative to the role of the Africana woman within the constructs of the modern women's movement. It should be pointed out that according to Hudson, Black women do not perceive their enemy to be black men, the enemy is considered to be the oppressive forces in the larger society that subjugate black men, women and children.

She further attests that the Africana woman has never been regarded as the property of their male counterpart. Men and women both dismiss the notion that gender issues should receive paramount importance in their reality, and thus they dismiss the feminist movement as a viable framework for their chief concerns. Instead they argue that those women who hold the banner for feminism are sellouts who have no true commitment to their culture or their people.

Africana Womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experience, struggles, needs, and desires of African women. The primary goal of Africana women, is to create their own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action.

Africana Womanism is indeed by its very definition, African centered, it places Africa at the centre of this analysis as it relates to African women. Hudson-Weems also believes that if you do not name and define yourself, someone else will. It is equally true that if you buy a terminology, you likewise buy its agenda. The agenda for the Africana woman is, indeed, distinguishable from all other female based theories primarily because of its insistence upon the prioritizing of race, class and gender respectively.

This family-centered, race empowerment agenda is in direct contravention to the various brands of feminism, which are female centered and concerned above all else with female empowerment. In spite of the fact that Black feminists, for example, call for

simultaneity in combating race, class, and gender oppression, most of their energy is consumed by combating female subjugation. Aptheker (1981:150), a white feminist argues that:

When we place women at the center of our thinking, we are going about the business of creating a historical and cultural matrix from which women may claim autonomy and independence over their own lives. For women of color, such autonomy cannot be achieved in conditions of racial oppression and cultural genocide... In short, "feminism", in the modern sense, means the empowerment of women. For women of color, such an equality such as empowerment, cannot take place until the communities in which they live can successfully establish their own racial and cultural integrity.

If we consider the plight of Africana people globally, it becomes clear that gender issues cannot take precedence over the greater and more immediate problems experienced by Africana people. Africana women need to prioritize the struggle for human dignity and parity. Human discrimination transcends sex discrimination, the costs of human suffering are high when compared to a single component, sex obstacle.

Weems argues further that the problems of Africana women, that include physical brutality, sexual harassment, and female subjugation in general, perpetrated both within and outside the race, ultimately have to be solved on a collective basis *within Africana communities*. Africana people must first eliminate *racist influences* in their lives, with the realization that they can neither afford, nor tolerate, any form of female subjugation. The Africana women and men must look closely at available options to determine if those options are, in fact, sufficiently workable rather than ally with white privileged-class phenomena such as feminism. When a group takes control over its struggle, tailoring it to meet its collective needs and demands, the group is always successful. When success in one's goal is achieved, it makes for a more peaceful reality for all concerned, knowing that the concerns of the people are respected and met (Hudsons,1983:50).

2.6 FEMINISM IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

One of the most controversial issues in contemporary discussion of African literature is whether or not various Western critical approaches and methodologies are suitable for or even adaptable to the African context. Feminism has been branded as an all white embracing theory and a movement that does not see beyond Western societies. As a result, it ignores or marginalizes the specific problems of African women. Although this may be the case, there are scholars of African feminism who believe that it can be applied in Africa to suit the needs of African women. These include Molaria Ongundipe-Leslie, Sierra Leonean feminist scholar, critic Filomena Steady, the late Nigerian nationalist and feminist icon Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and Nawal el Saadawi, an Islamic socialist feminist.

Molaria Ongundipe-Leslie, a Marxist feminist and a scholar is one of the proponents of feminism in Africa. She believes that feminism can be applied with success in the African context. She agrees that there are problems when it comes to the implementation of feminist ideas in Africa because of the context and background of certain issues, for instance the issue of racism in the white feminist movement. Ongundipe-Leslie warns that the African feminist should be careful that she is not buying into this racist discourse.

Then there are those African scholars who think that race and class issues are more important than gender issues. They claim that black men and women need to unite against white hegemony, male and female.

In her view, (Ongundipe-Leslie 1994:207) states that:

Black men and black women cannot unite around conflicting interests and cross antagonistic classes. To think that this is possible is to be either romantic, hypocritical or dishonest or just unintelligent.

She further argues that some men discourage women from reading white feminist theories because they see it as a sign of domination and colonialism. There has been a tendency to shun the term "feminism", regarding it as one of those borrowed "isms" which militate against the development of Africa. The term in an African context has often been regarded as some kind of intellectual monstrosity that is geared towards the

destruction of the marriage institution in Africa, by straining the "cordial relationship" between man and woman. She also thinks that as international scholars and sophisticated cosmopolitans, African women must read white feminists, but with discrimination, and with a critical sensitivity to their relevance or non-relevance, to the complexity and differences of their history, sociology and experience as different peoples. In her final analysis she believes that African women should theorize their own feminisms (1994:208).

It is disappointing to note that some of our African women feel uncomfortable to declare that they are feminists or to give the impression that they have any connections with feminists' ideology. This can be ascribed to the fact that the woman herself, in order to maintain eligibility for marriage, or to avoid being isolated and regarded as a woman/man, often restrains herself from talking about the man/woman relationship. Ongundipe-Leslie (1994:10) states that:

Women are shackled by their own negative self-image, by centuries of interiorization of ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Her own reaction to objective problems therefore are often self-defeating and self-crippling. She reacts with fear dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed. Aligning oneself with the feminist ideology seems to be a major obstacle as most African women realize that:

Feminism in essence is a struggle between husband and wife, brother and sister and father and mother (Davies, 1986:8).

Supposing that the African woman sees marriage and housewifery as her only source of fulfilment, Achifusi (1987:37) wonders if she should be ashamed of discussing her role as a wife and mother and the pleasures that go with it? Should she not be interested in examining how her position has been affected by the changing processes in the socio-economic life of modern Africa? It is her duty to critically evaluate her position in the society and give her reactions to issues which concern her. Doing so does not make her anti-society, rather, ignoring it portrays her as naive, unintelligent and incapable of determining what is good for herself.

Feminism is seen by most literary theorists as a movement which aims to change the status of women in society. Achifusi (1987:40) provides this definition of Feminism:

Feminism is a politic directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. The power relations structure of all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of works and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for who, what we are and what we might become.

From the above quotation, it is evident that feminism aims at changing existing chains of relationships between men and women in the society. It has to be mentioned that such relationships are often problematic. Why then should anybody feel apologetic for contributing towards the rectification of a problematic situation, especially when this whole affair concerns his or her well-being? Why then should African women shy away from any utterances that might suggest that they are feminists? And why should men so strongly detest women who assertively display any feminists leanings? One may also ask : Should being a feminist impair a woman's prospects of finding a husband; does being a feminist in any way imply inadequacy in a wife or mother; does it indicate an inability to carry out her duties in the home effectively? The answer is definitely "no".

Such attitudes give an impression that both African women and men lack a thorough understanding of the main objectives of feminism, especially in the African society. Ongundipe-Leslie mentions that by refusing to align oneself with the movement that aims at changing the whole society is a result of

..... the successful intimidation of African women by men over the issues of women's liberation. Male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic and have given the term feminism a bad name (1994:64).

This brings us to the question of what feminism entails in Africa. This subject is complex to define and raises too many questions. For example, does feminism exist in Africa? Should it exist in Africa? What is the relevance of feminism to an African woman? An obvious connection between African feminism and Western feminism is that both

internationally identify a woman's position as inferior to that of men and both seek to change that. African feminist consciousness acknowledges its affinities with international feminism, but delineates a specific African feminism with specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies.

The term "Feminism in an African context", as propounded by Fatima Haidara and the African students at Virginia Technical Institute, Blacksburg USA, is a search for a new terminology to adequately convey black women's feminism (Davies, 1986: 13).

In thinking about Africa, people always wonder "what is an African context?" What can feminism be in Africa? When they think of Africa, most Africans think only of Black Africa or more correctly, if they were honest, of their own little ethnic groups. Ongundipe-Leslie agrees that it is a cumbersome exercise to explain what an African context because Africans cannot be generalised. Blackness cannot be used as a criteria for taxonomies. It should be borne in mind that there are many kinds of Africans. For example, Libyans, Egyptians and Moroccans who are "white" in Africa but are as "Black" as people designated "Black" in America. There are no colour purities in Africa. Biology and culture has been "dynamised" by Africa's historical movements of peoples. Africa has been open to the world since the dawn of history. Therefore it may be stated that "black" is a political metaphor and, skin colour is not a useful and sufficient way to taxonomise Africans.

Ongundipe-Leslie (1994:218) is of the opinion that Africans tend to see themselves in terms of culture, how people think and behave. You are the culture that you carry, despite your colour. It is not that Africans do not recognize racial difference. They see it but they do not assume that a person is necessarily African from the way that he/she looks. This idea is concurred by Rosalyn Terborg -Penn as quoted by Reed (2001: 170) who states that:

....before applying the African Feminist theory to Black women's past, it is important to look at the term Black, because not all women of African descent identify with this term. She feels that "Black" symbolizes a cultural milieu, more than does color. To her, it indicates

a preference for the term African feminism over Black feminism.

Feminist concerns are said to be the predilections of women like Molar, Ifi Amadiume or Filomina Steady. Feminist concerns then are not for the “great rural and faithful African women” who are supposedly happy as they are and have always been. But what do research and analysis tell us about the rural African women of Africa? Ongundipe-Leslie does not believe that the “poor rural women” are happy with the status quo.

Feminism can also be defined by its etymological roots. Femina is the Latin for “woman” Feminism, an ideology of women, any social philosophy about women. This definition of feminism gives enough scope to encompass various types of feminisms: right-wing, left wing, centrist, left or centre, right of center, reformist, separatist, liberal, socialist/Marxist, non aligned, Islamic, Indigenous, etc.

Ongundipe-Leslie (1994:222) poses the questions:

“What is feminism for you.” What is your feminism? Do you in fact have an ideology of women in society and life? Is your feminism about the rights of women in society? What is the total conception of women as agents in human society – her conditions, roles and status- her recognition and acknowledgement? Feminism, generally must always have a political and activist spine to its form. If we take feminism to imply all these, is the African woman on the African continent, in an African context without problems in all these areas?

If feminism is not relevant to Africa, does this imply that the African woman is happy with her situation and therefore does not need an ideology that addresses her reality? If Feminism is foreign, where is the data to support the idea that African women or cultures did not have ideologies which propounded channels for women’s oppositions and resistance to injustice within their societies? Certainly, these channels existed. Ongundipe-Leslie also asks if the opponents of feminism willing to argue that indigenous African societies did not have avenues and strategies for correcting imbalances? Will they argue that these aspects of social engineering could only have come from white or Euro-American women? Are they saying that African women cannot see their own situations and demand change without guidance from white women?. The answer is that

there were indigenous patterns within traditional African societies for addressing the oppression and injustices of women.

She poses more questions: What feminisms exist in Africa? Indeed, there are many feminisms depending on the centre from which one is speaking or theorizing. These feminisms have to be theorized around the juncture of race, class, caste and gender; nation, culture and ethnicity; age, status, role and sexual orientation. More research needed to uncover what African women themselves, particularly, the working class and the peasantry think about themselves as women, what agenda they have for themselves, daily and historically. Once it is agreed that an ideology of women and about women is necessary and always has existed in Africa, we can ask if these existent ideologies remain relevant or need to be changed. It should also be considered whether these inherited cultures if be taken left as they are, or if they should be subjected to change where necessary. Should culture be placed in a museum of minds or should we take authority over culture as a product of human intelligence and consciousness to be used to improve our existential conditions?

African feminism for Ongundipe-Leslie, must include issues around the woman's body, her person, her immediate family, her society, nation, her continent and locations within the international economic order. Those realities in the international order determine African politics, which in turn impact on the African woman today without considering what IMF policies and the World Bank are doing to her status and conditions. She also notes that very often she is misquoted as saying that men are the enemy, on the contrary, she argues that men are not the enemy, but that the subordination and oppression of women is.

What can then be expected from feminism in an African context? Let us consider the following pointers as suggested by Ongundipe-Leslie.

- (a) Feminism is not penis envy or gender envy, i.e. wanting to be like a man. It is also not oppositional to men; it argues rather that a woman's body is her inherent property, not to be owned, used, and exploited by men.

- (b) It is not a parroting of Western women's rhetoric.
- (c) That women need not neglect their biological roles.
- (d) That the total configuration of the conditions of women should be addressed rather than obsessing over sexual issues.
- (e) That women's reproductive rights take priority.
- (f) That women's conditions in Africa need to be addressed in context of the total production and reproduction of their society and that the scenario also involves men and children.
- (g) It is not opposed to African culture and heritage, but argues that culture is dynamically evolving and is certainly not static; that culture should not be immobilised in time to the advantage of men as most men in Africa want it to be (Ongundipe-Leslie, 1994:221-225).

It is this generally holistic attitude of African women to feminism which often separates them from their Western sisters.

Ongundipe-Leslie (1991:229) advocates a new term for African feminism. She has advocated the word "Stiwanism", instead of feminism, to bypass these concerns and to bypass the combative discourses that ensue whenever one raises the issue of feminism in Africa.

The coining of a new word is to deflect charges of imitating Western feminism and, in this way, to avoid being distracted from the real issues of conditions of women.

"STIWA", is an acronym for "Social Transformation Including Women in Africa". Ongundipe-Leslie lists a number of reasons which prompted her defection from

feminism. She feels that the word feminism itself acts as a red rag to a bull for African men. She mentions also that some women are embarrassed to be called feminists unless they are particularly strong in character.

Ongundipe-Leslie believes that few men will oppose the new term or indeed the concept of including women in the social transformation of Africa. She is of the opinion that that both men and women everywhere, even in Africa should be involved in feminism All men need to be progressive feminists, committed to a socially just society. She feels that there is need to liberate the whole of society from dehumanisation. As far as she is concerned, it is the social system which must totally change.

She reiterates that men are not the enemy, but that the subordination and the oppression of women is. Men only become enemies when they seek to block these changes when they cling to "culture and heritage" as an excuse and by arguing that change is unnecessary.

Finally, and unfortunately, lesbian and gay discourses have not yet received earnest attention in African thought. Same-sex sexuality in Africa is only beginning to be discussed. Some African feminists have argued that Africa does not entertain lesbian and gay issues, as a result there is still too much silence and silencing.

2.7 WOMANISM IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Kolawole (1997:19) is another scholar who affirms that the womanist ideology is an ideal theory for women in Africa because it is culturally valid. According to her, this theory addresses issues relevant to African women. She also believes that feminism is uncompromising and does not fully comprehend the peculiarities of the African culture.

She cites a number of reasons why many African women do not want to be associated with feminism, one being the reason that western women fight for their rights in different ways and for different reasons. This is because the mode of publicity differs, partly form

the basic problems that Africans have in dealing with feminism. Many African women do not subscribe to feminism as a way of sharing their rejection of imperialistic attempt to force them to accept a foreign “ism” that is indifferent to the needs of the majority.

They refuse to subscribe to a theory that they cannot defend. Some African women have attempted to make feminism acceptable through the use of terms like “Black feminism” or “African Feminism”. This has proved problematic because African women need a terminology that they can relate to. According to Kolawole (1997:21), Feminism draws attention to some ambiguities:

Feminism is the political theory that struggles to free all women: women of color, working class women, poor, disabled, lesbians, old women – as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement.

It is this awareness that has prompted many Africans to look for an alternative terminology. The quest is for a terminology that adequately addresses the specific problems relevant to the woman’s position in Africa, unlike condescending to a foreign theory that is dogmatic. Kolawole states that Walker’s classic definition of womanism, addresses the question of racial focus and specificity and makes this concept more valid than the omnibus definition of feminism.

Many African women have spoken out in favour of the emergent concept of womanism as a valid African ideology. What then is womanism?

According to Kolawale (1997:34)

womanism does not require compartmentalization and one does not need to identify radical, liberal, psycho-analytic and other categories of womanism. Any woman who has the consciousness to situate the struggle within African cultural realities by working for a total and robust self-retrieval of the African woman is an African or African womanist. Like identity, the boundaries of human consciousness are fluid and its expression can reveal multiple levels of perception. For any conceptual framework to be valid to African women, woman’s cultural identity, self-perception and yearning within an integrative

collective consciousness needs to be foregrounded.

To sum up: womanism needs to seek genuine liberation of the African woman that involves probing African cultures, value, and tradition and understanding the real location of a woman. It should emphasize dynamic wholeness and self-healing as well as the unity of all blacks across gender lines.

Kolawole maintains that the woman in the traditional set up who made history did so through traditional institutional roles. This is confirmed by exceptional women queens, and political activators and leaders from all parts of Africa.

She also argues that since pre-colonial periods, African women have mobilized to fight for their rights and those of the whole nation. Modern African women who are actively speaking for other women do not necessarily take the cue from the West. For example, most of the early African writers admit that they were motivated by traditional African oral literature and historic powerful women. Their literary works makes them gender mouthpieces because most of them were motivated by the silences in early African literature that was largely patriarchal. Many agree that the West cannot speak for Africa.

Kolawole (1997:28) also sings the praises of Hudson-Weems. She commends the thought provoking master piece, *Africana Womanism*, as a major contribution to the definition of womanism. This book, according to Kolawole, comes as a relief to those who are not at ease with feminism in its diverse shades. Her bold ideological needs coincide with the needs of the majority of women on the continent.

But what does Hudson has to say about womanism? In an interview with Reed, Hudson says (2001:169):

Alice Walker is a creative writer. She is a novelist and a poet. She is no theorist. Like you say she was disenchanted with feminism – but not that disenchanted [as suggested] in her description of her book, *In search of our mother's garden*. And it's all just in the *introduction*, it was never developed. There was never a theoretical basis for womanism. Walker goes on to say "Womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender" I am not talking about a shade of

differentiation. I am talking about an entirely different agenda. Therefore, [Walker's] "womanist" has got nothing to do with Africana Womanism.

From Hudson's reaction, it would seem that there is no coalition between Kolawole and Hudson. Hudson does not buy into Walker's womanism because it is still feminism in a modified form. Hudson-Weems believes that womanism has lesbian inclinations that make womanism unacceptable. Hudson's ideology has been discussed in depth in the preceding section.

Chikwenye Ogunyemi is another scholar who believes that African Womanism is the best answer to feminism. Ogunyemi presented a paper at Humbolt seminar, in which she explored the post colonial reality of African women (and men) and the way African women writers perceive it. She also discussed the concept of African womanism. Suzan Arndt, intrigued by this term African womanism, arranged to interview Ogunyemi. Ogunyemi's ideology of African Womanism is encapsulated in this interview.

According to Arndt (2000:711), Ogunyemi arrived at the term womanism independently of and about the same time as Walker. While she used the term *womanism* without a modifier in her early publications, today she speaks specifically of *African Womanism*. Although her conceptions have important parallels with Walker's and Hudson-Weems' versions of womanism, there are decisive differences too. Ogunyemi's African womanism is best known, although it is not as famous as Walker's womanism. In fact, she is one of the most important scholars of African women's literature, and her work has great influence in the mainstream discourse in the field.

The most substantial difference is that Ogunyemi wishes to conceptualize an ideology that clearly demarcates and emancipates African women from both **white feminism** and **African-American womanism/feminism (emphasis mine)**. Her motive for this is:

Since feminism and African-American womanism overlook African peculiarities, there is a need to define African womanism. It is necessary to reiterate that the womanist praxis in Africa has never totally identified with all the original Walkerian precepts. An important point of departure is the African obsession to have children.

Only African women may be African womanists in Ongunyemi's sense. Besides this general demarcation from African-American womanism/feminism, Ongunyemi also explicitly dissociates herself from Walker. Another difference in content manifests itself in their incompatible attitudes toward lesbianism. While Walker emphasizes that womanists love other women, "sexually and/ or non sexually", Ongunyemi argues that her African womanism rejects lesbian love because of the African silence or intolerance of lesbianism. The core of Ongunyemi's definition of African womanism is:

The conviction that the gender question can be dealt with only in the context of other issues that are relevant for African women. An African womanist will recognize that, along with consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations to her philosophy. Moreover, an African womanist must deal with, among other things, interethnic skirmishes and cleansing, religious fundamentalism, the language issue, gerontocracy and in-lawism. (Arndt 712: 2000).

According to Arndt, Chikwenye criticizes white Western feminism for being gender centered. Moreover, she argues that white feminists either ignore African women's problems completely or speak in the name of all women without being sufficiently informed about the situations and problems of women from other cultures. According to Ongunyemi African-American womanism overlooks African peculiarities, too. From this, Ongunyemi concludes that there is need to define African Womanism.

When requested to elaborate more on the genesis and basic ideas of womanism, Ongunyemi believes that most theories cannot explain everything. A theory according to her will definitely omit something out and so whoever comes after will have to develop an idea that will take into consideration that which has been left out. As for African women, they cannot take the African-American situation and its own peculiarities and impose it on Africa, particularly as Africa is so big and culturally different.

When she was thinking about womanism, she was concerned about those areas that are relevant for Africans but not for Blacks in America, issues like extreme poverty and in-law problems, older women oppressing younger women, women oppressing their co-

wives, or men oppressing their wives. Religious fundamentalism is another African problem that is not really relevant to African Americans – Islam, some Christian denominations, and also African traditional religions. These are problems that, to her mind to be covered from an African -womanist perspective. So she believed it was necessary to develop a theory to accommodate these differences.

Not only is Chikwenye Ogunyemi the founder of the very important African womanist project, but she is also a literary critic. Arndt also wanted to find out what possible impact literature may have on gender relationships. In other words: how has literature, over the centuries, shaped the way of thinking, and how far can African-womanist literature change the present situation?

According to Ogunyemi, the literary works of women like Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Nawal El Saadawi have an effect on how young women perceive their world, especially those who have just graduated. These women behave differently from Ogunyemi's generation and her mother's generation. Possibly due to the influence of the women authors, named above. Ogunyemi referred to research undertaken on how the younger generation of women, view their options. The research has shown that a small percentage of young women do not want to be monogamous. They want to marry into polygynous households so that they do not get oppressed in marriage the way previous generations were oppressed by men. Hence, they would marry somebody who was already married, and then live in their own houses and have children. They want children, but they also want to be free in marriage.

That is why they are rearranging marriage: if you do not like how marriage is evolving in the society, you start making your own arrangements. These women manipulate the system so that their children can have access to their father. The women, like the men are free to come and go. With such an arrangement they do not have to do housework for the man and the extended family. So they are liberated – liberated in a way Ogunyemi's generation was not, as far as housework and such domestic chores are concerned. Consequently, men are beginning to recognize that they cannot repress the women the way they did before, although there are still some women who have not yet

moved with the times. Ongunyemi believes that this is where feminism is different as feminism does not mean that a woman who is “modern” will become immersed in something traditional like polygamy, then turn it around – turn the whole polygamous concept on its head and then totally reconstruct polygamous marriage. She believes that because if you are a feminist of any branch, you will not want to marry somebody who is already married and has no intention of divorcing his wife (Arndt 2000: 717).

Ongunyemi was asked how both African womanism and gender-sensitization program as a whole, rely on men and what role can men play to make the ideas incorporated in her project come true. Ongunyemi firmly believes that men should not be left behind. Men have to be sensitized to women’s ideas. She holds the opinion that one of the ways in which men can become more comfortable to the idea of change is to avoid names like “feminism”. Such terms often alienate them from the women’s ideas. So it should be called something else because it is something different. Then both men and women will not quarrel about having a colonized mentality. When you begin to name your own activity yourself, there is power in that naming, and when men see that there is power in the naming and also that you do not view them as enemies, men will become part of the desired change. Men and women have to agree that something is wrong with our system. Only then can you begin to work together to change it. Ongunyemi’s thoughts may be summed up by saying that if you take the women alone and deal only with the women, then you are going to go come back to the men, who have not changed at all. There should be some common ground where both men and women meet.

She suggests that there should be co-operation between Western feminism and African womanism. Western feminists should take cognizance of the reality that Africa is still experiencing problems that have to be solved. Co-operation is needed because Africa is economically tied to the Western world.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is hoped that the various ideologies discussed above have helped to put

the women's liberation movement into perspective. It has been seen that Feminism was a movement which was intended to cater for the needs of the White middle class women. The needs of the African women were ignored because of the racist background. This racist attitude led directly to the various schools of thought like black feminism, Womanism, and Africana womanism.

Africa has its own problems too. The problem of the patriarchal system also weighed heavily on the shoulders of African women. The question whether or not to impose a foreign theory on the African women is debatable. In order to bypass these endless concerns, Ogunjipe-Leslie coined the term Stiwanism, while Kolawole and Ongunyemi prefers the term womanism. These terms were coined in an attempt to create a movement that will be acceptable to both African women and men. By so doing, it is hoped that women will have the confidence to champion causes relevant to them without fear of being called names or stigmas being attached to them. Men will also participate with a free conscience without fear of perpetuating a western ideology that is intimidating and foreign to them.

CHAPTER 3

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE ZULU FOLKTALE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Folktale is one genre of folklore that has proved to be popular with most scholars and a lot of research has been carried out on this. Various approaches have also been adopted to show the versatility of folktales. This chapter aims to contribute to the research into folktales. This chapter will be devoted to the role played by women in folktales. The chapter will also look at the attitude of women towards marriage, and at what the society deems proper as far as marriage is concerned. The images of women will be discussed. The chapter will highlight the stereo-typical images attached to women, whether society depicts them as witches, unfaithful beings or as human beings full of courage and living a challenging life. It will portray women's reaction towards culture, whether or not they rebel against it. Finally, this chapter will also give a superficial exposition of Levi Straus approach. The purpose is to show that this theory could be married to the Feminist approach since they both highlight the inequalities that exist in our society.

3.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOLKTALE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ITS PERFORMANCE

It is generally accepted that folktales are usually told by women. Canonici (1995:19) comments that the centre of this world is the grandmother, the performer par excellence, for ever ready to entertain her young charges and to impart to them the wisdom that life has taught her. As if driven by an intimation of her mortality, and getting ready to join the ancestors of the clan, she is able to reflect on life lessons and to transform them into bold images that will remain impressed in the memory of her audience. She is the living tradition, the link between generations, between the present, the past and the future, between the living and the living-dead; the ancestors of the clan

and the tribe. Grandmother is the incarnation of tradition, of that spirit which has informed many actions in the past and is at one's disposal to inform the present responses to life's challenges. It is this spirit that the grandmother tries to imbue in her audience through the tales that represent the externalisation of the wisdom of many generations. In order to identify itself, every nation, family or clan needs an icon that embodies its essence, to which to return periodically to renew itself, that is, to rediscover its roots, what a community really is and stands for, as a guide for the present and an inspiration for the future. In the small circle of family and clan, the grandmother represents this icon. She is the living tradition, the past, present and the future. At this fountain-head the younger generations stop to refresh themselves and to gain new vigour, before making the leap forward that will bring them the fulfilment of their role in life. The grandmother's role can thus never be under-estimated.

Why are these folktales narrated? Are they simply told for amusement for the purpose of relaxation and entertainment, or is there a deeper meaning. Oosthuizen (1977:41-43) sums up the social significance of folktales, stating that folktales are told for amusement, behind which, however, there is a deeper meaning. She believes that folktales give a person a chance to escape from his biological limitations as a member of the genus and species 'homo sapiens'. This is illustrated in *izinganekwane* in which humans are able to change at will into someone or something else.

Oosthuizen quotes Bascom as saying that a substantial body of folktales is more than the literary expression of a people. It is, in a very real sense, their ethnography which, if systematised by the prudent, gives a penetrating picture of their way of life. Many folktales reinforce culture, they also inculcate general principles and attitudes, e.g. they ridicule laziness, haughtiness and inappropriate curiosity. Treachery, parental harshness, jealousy are negative and undesirable characteristics, and perpetrators of such characteristics are invariably severely punished.

3.3 THE DOMESTIC ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL ZULU BACKGROUND

Within the Zulu traditional societies, the most important economic activities are cattle rearing and agriculture. These are not carried out haphazardly but with a clearly demarcated division of labour based upon sex. On the whole, the rougher tasks requiring strength are done by the men, while the woman does the work that requires more continuous attention. Thus housework falls within the sphere of the woman's activities and cooking, beer making, sweeping, washing of utensils, fetching of firewood and water are the work of women. In this they are helped by their daughters, who at an early age begin to fetch water, sweep and look after their younger brothers and sisters. Agriculture is the special sphere of women, who hoe the ground, sow, weed, and reap the crops, later grind the corn or mealies for use. The family gardens are the special responsibility of the wife, who needs to produce the staple food for her husband and her children. Guarding the crops against the birds is also her responsibility, but she may delegate the task to elderly relatives and her children. The men play little part in agriculture, they merely hew the bush where new fields are to be cultivated, and at harvest or in the spring sometimes help with the reaping or weeding. Women are the potters, though it is not every woman that can make pots, and mat making and the plaiting of beer sieves and ropes for thatching are done by women, though basketry is by no means confined to females. Women are the carriers, it is they who cut and carry the grass for thatching when huts are being built. Huts are always thatched by women.

All the work connected with cattle is done by men only. Of all the activities that are considered the special sphere of men, the most important to the tribal economy is certainly the rearing and the care of cattle. Men or boys herd the cattle, milk, pour the milk into the calabashes and even wash the milking utensils, for women have nothing to do with any operation connected to cattle. Hut building, except for the thatching, is the work of men. Wooden utensils such as milk pots and spoons are all made by men who also do a great deal of basketry. They sometimes specialise in metal work which is always a male's occupation. Historically, a great deal of their time was taken up in

attending to legal cases and in fighting. It is within the village that most of the important economic activities of the Zulus take place.

Let us now turn to the various folktales and discuss them in detail.

3.4 DISCUSSION OF FOLKTALES

The folktales to be analysed have been cited from Nyembezi's collection Igoda: Ibanga 2 (1995) and Msimang's Folktale influence on the Zulu novel (1986). The full translated version of these folktales will be found in the appendix.

3.4.1 Summary of folktale: UDemane noDemazane

In the folktale *uDemane noDemazane*, we find the woman working in the fields. Her duty is to work and plough the fields every day. As she is busy ploughing the fields a bird appears from nowhere and sings a magic song, saying:

Tsiyo! Tsiyo!

This the earth of my father,
Which is cultivated by lazy people;
Which is not cultivated by diligent people.
The soil must go *mbe! mbe!* (tight, tight)
The hoe-handle must go *phoqo phoqo!* (break, break)
The seeds must go *chithi, chithi!* (scatter, scatter)

The grass miraculously grows again and the poor woman has to start from scratch. When the bird is captured, it is discovered that the bird defecates curdled milk (*amasi*). The man is very pleased because he has got himself a cow which produces milk. He hides this bird from his children. The curious children are warned not to open the pot in which the bird is kept captive, but they do and they also enjoy *amasi*. Unfortunately the bird escapes. When the father discovers that his bird is missing, he brutally punishes his children by stabbing them with sharp needles.

3.4.2 Application

Sherry Ortner as quoted by Eisenstein (1983:22) located women's oppression in culture rather than in biology. Ortner argues that in all cultures, worldwide, women are considered inferior to men. Although this devaluation of women took different forms, it is indisputably universal. She goes on further to say that we find women subordinated to men in every known society. The search for a genuinely egalitarian, let alone matriarchal culture, has proved fruitless. Women have merely participated in the animal like repetitive tasks of carrying on the reproduction of the human race. But men have participated in the project culture, of creating the new.

The woman is obliged to carry out some of her cultural duties. She is depicted as a labourer that toils daily, scorched by the hot sun. She does not have control of and cannot lay claim to the bird despite being the one who was tormented by the bird. This folktale of Demane and Demazane illustrates the strong presence of sexual division of labour in the Zulu economic system. The woman hoes the field, a task traditionally reserved for women in Zulu society. The woman is troubled by a bird that is an incessant pest to her. Although she reports this strange event to her husband, he dismisses her until eventually he discovers that she is telling the truth. However he also discovers that he has gained a lot by capturing the bird, which will now be his property because anything to do with cattle or milk falls within the sphere of the man:

.....the position of paterfamilias in the Zulu family was perfectly clear. His word was law, his will supreme, his person sacrosanct. He was the creator of his children, the owner of his wives, king in his kraal, and living representative of the gods (his ancestors). Everybody and everything inside the kraal was his, and within recognised limits, he could do what he liked with them (Pottow, 1990: 84).

De Bruin (2002:72) attests that the father in this tale has neglected his children by not informing them about the *maas* bird and also by not sharing that which the bird has produced. He selfishly hides the bird from his children and forbids them to open the pot. The father therefore breaches his primary duty and obligation; that is the support and

caring for his children. The father has absolute authority in the family as he is the provider of and the family property belongs to him. He forgets that hiding something from the curious mind of the child will only motivate him to investigate. The children opened the pot and the bird escaped. The father receives his punishment for not telling his children about the bird, because the children would have taken more care if they knew there was a bird that was valuable to the family.

The father and his wife are punished by losing their children. The father is especially hurt by the loss of his daughter, since he is not going to receive any *lobola* cattle when she marries. The father of *Demane* and *Demazane* rejoiced when he discovered his “magical cow.” The bird symbolises wealth and status since it produces milk. This also shows that the cattle are a symbol of wealth and the position that they occupy in the Zulu culture. In losing his son, he loses the one person who could ensure that his name would be carried on to future generations. The mother is not exonerated from this heinous deed. She participated willingly in this deceitful event and because of her cunning, deceiving behaviour, she is rendered childless, a severe punishment for her bad behaviour (De Bruin, 2002:72-73).

Although the children have violated the interdiction not to open the pot, this is consequent to a prior violation by the parents who neglect their duty of support towards their children. Moreover the children’s crime does not warrant the punishment meted out to them. This shows that the parents are inherently evil and greedy.

Msimang (1986:150) states that *Demane* and *Demazane* were pierced through the skull with awls the children run and plunge themselves into a pool where the awls cool off and slip out. The children then leave the pool and find refuge in the rock-of- two-holes (*Itshe likaNtunjambili*) which becomes their home. The pool plays a significant role in saving the children’s lives and the spirits are instrumental in giving the life back to the victims. The pool represents the ‘clinic’ where their operations take place.

De Bruin (2002:101) paints a rather biased analysis of the sister *UDemazane*. She

states that:

Demazane corrupts her brother into opening the pot and eating the *maas* belonging to their father. Demane does not fulfil his role as a being a member of the 'stronger' sex and allows himself to take part in the feast. He however still tries to warn Demazane thrice that the bird is escaping. Perhaps Demane is aware that, in the olden days, touching your father's utensils without consent was punishable by execution. It was believed that if a boy touches his father's belongings without his permission, he indicates that he wishes his father dead. Demazane is too greedy to pay attention to her brother's warning. Perhaps she is aware that the punishment for girls is usually less serious. Her selfishness and greed bring both of them to peril, but she is so occupied with eating *maas* that she doesn't realise it. Greed is the one of the well known "seven deadly sins" and therefore a serious offence. Demazane is not only greedy, but also dishonest: she tries to hoax her father by putting a crow in the pot, hoping he won't discover the difference. Both these children are severely punished. After having received her punishment from their parents, Demazane is still disobedient to her brother. Her character has not evolved, as would be expected. She roasts fat meat, again disregarding her brother's orders. Again she endangers both their lives when the ogre enters and steal their food.

De Bruin has resorted to the use of the "femme fatale" stereotype. My personal view is that it is unfair to cast the blame on the girl alone because this was a joint decision. Demazane did not corrupt her brother because he was a willing accomplice. He may be a member of a "stronger" sex, a boy who will one day wield as much power and authority as his father does, but the crux of the matter is that he is still growing. He also has a curious mind like his sister Demazane. These are children who were raised by greedy and selfish parents, who did not bother to furnish reasons to their children why it is taboo for them to eat the *maas* produced by the bird. Demazane is not greedy, but she has a curious mind and an active imagination which makes her wonder how it is like to eat the 'forbidden food' that their parents enjoy so much. The boy is not exempted because he is also desperate to taste *amasí*. However, the boy, being the older and the wiser of the two children, realises that they have stolen enough and should stop. Interdictions should be accompanied by an explanation. The parents of Demane and Demazane should have explained to their children the implications of eating *amasí*, and

they should have given the children the knowledge that one day they will be given the opportunity of eating *amasi* after the completion of the *ukuqhumbuza* ceremony.

Demazane is still a young girl and she still needs the intervention of an adult. She still needs to be reprimanded when she does wrong. After they escape from their parents we note that Demane is taking over the role of parent and he is now the provider and protector of Demazane. He does a wonderful job of raising Demazane because in the end they both find happiness and marriage. Demane's efforts are rewarded because according to Zulu culture, if a girl's father dies, her older brothers look after her and her eldest brother also receives the *lobola* cattle when she gets married. These cattle are often used by him to pay *lobola* when he wishes to get married. In this instance, Demane received the cattle on behalf of his father because his father was 'dead' and as the eldest son he was entitled to the cattle.

Eisenstein (1983:20) concurs with the anthropologist Michelle Rosoldo:

Rosoldo offered the hypothesis that the assignment of women to the domestic sphere and of men to the public one was characteristic of all societies. This was the thread that linked all known human societies, from the most primitive to the most complex, and that underlay oppression of women, despite the variety of forms that this took worldwide. Rosoldo proposed that, despite all of the variations that could be observed cross- culturally in the roles assigned to the sexes, all cultures distinguished between male and female, and assigned appropriate behaviours and tasks to each. Further, she observed that in all cases, no matter what form the sexual division of labour took, the tasks and roles assigned to men were given greater significance and importance. Male as opposed to female activities, are always recognised as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and value to the roles of men.

The folktale reveals to us that it is unfair for only the woman to work, the husband should be at her side to ward off unpredictable misfortunes. Man and wife must be united and work as a team, the story also shows that both man and wife enjoyed milk produced by the bird, as a result of their joined efforts. The emphasis in this tale is on the expected care and protection that husband and wife should have for each other.

Incidentally, as pointed out above the folktale also demonstrates that anything which has to do with milk belongs to the special sphere of men.

The socialist feminists see the family as the primary site of the sexual division of labour. As such it naturalises gender roles which are socially produced. Feminists refuse to see anything other than the actual physical process of pregnancy and giving birth as natural and even this is subject to social regulations.

3.4.3 Marriage

The folktale of uMamba kaMaquba will look at the attitude of women towards marriage and the expectations of society.

3.4.4 Traditional background on marriage

For African people, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole history of drama is repeated, renewed and revitalised. Marriage is a drama in which everyone must participate. Marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community, he is a rebel and a law breaker, he is not only abnormal but sub-human. Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that the person concerned has rejected society and society rejects him in return (Mbiti, 1975:133).

3.4.5 Summary of folktale: UMamba kaMaquba

The folktale “UMamba kaMaquba” is about two sisters who go to a river to draw water. The elder sister's calabash breaks and she sets off to find a husband after the younger sister deceives her into believing she cannot return home. The elder sister obediently assists two old women on her journey by licking the discharge from the eyes of one and lifting the load of the other. In return for her kindness, she is promised marriage and she

arrives at Mamba's homestead. While Mamba is out herding cattle she obediently grinds the sorghum finely. When Mamba returns she fearlessly allows him to wrap himself around her, even after discovering he is a snake. She later gives birth to a child.

One day she returns home to her own family with her baby whereupon the younger sister jealously decides to also marry Mamba. The younger sister encounters the same two old women but rudely refuses to assist them. She is reprimanded and told there would be no marriage for her. On arriving at Mamba's homestead she grinds the sorghum coarsely contrary to custom. She shrieks in fear and repulsion at the sight of Mamba, the snake. She is chased home where Mamba is killed and burnt. However his ashes are collected by the elder sister and he is magically re-transformed into a human being. Mamba, the elder sister and their child leave to establish their own home.

3.4.6 Application

The above folktale, reveals the Zulu society's point of view. The society's ideologies so condition the view of life that whatever is deemed proper, like marriage for girls, must be secured at all costs. The folktale also reveals the importance of respect and obedience to the wisdom of the aged. The role of the wife as submissive to her husband is emphasised. Selfish, jealous, rude and intolerant attitudes are unacceptable in Zulu society whilst courage, obedience, humility and tolerance of others are shown as desirable. Marriage and childbirth are highlighted as being of central importance in the lives of traditional women.

In this folktale of UMamba kaMaquba, the eldest sister is determined to be married. Marriage is so important to her that she will do anything to get it, even at the cost of her own humiliation. The elder sister is an example of an ideal wife. She behaves in a comforting, and non-aggressive way. She is there to make life manageable for her husband and child. She is also a dutiful and faithful wife. Because she is tolerant and accepts her husband's shortcomings, she is rewarded for her moral excellence, i.e she was rewarded with a human husband.

On the other hand, the younger sister is the direct opposite of the elder sister. She is insubordinate. She does not abide by the rules of society, i.e she is not obedient and she is not submissive to her husband and from her unusual behaviour one can deduce that she is a non-conformist. Child bearing is also not one of her priorities. Generally in society childless, domineering or assertive and insubordinate women are despised and stigmatized. Women sometimes have to go through an acid test before marrying the men of their dreams. A woman stands to lose an eligible marriage partner if she fails to display certain basic attributes such as kindness, humility and self sacrifice.

According to Msimang (1986:120), the old woman in folktales symbolises the test to be accomplished. The sacrifice or suffering is a test which must be accomplished before a party qualifies for marriage. In the folktale "uMabhejane", king Mahlokohloko also had to condescend and lick the eye-oozings of an old woman on his way to marry Mabhejane's daughter. For this suffering and humiliation despite his status, the chief was rewarded with a magic gall-bladder which made it possible to withstand his mother-in-law's witchcraft.

Incidentally, a version of Mamba kaMaquba is also found in the Tsonga corpus. The Tsonga tale is also about two sisters one 'good' sister and one 'bad'. The good leaves home because she broke her water pot and was afraid that her mother would punish her, so she goes to look for the road to the sky. The girl meets an old woman and her life is never the same again. She is challenged, she is tested, and when she returns home it is to a new life as a woman and a mother. Her 'bad' sister decides, possibly out of jealousy, to emulate her, and also leaves home. Being angry and headstrong, she refuses to listen to her sister's advice and goes in search of a baby. The 'bad' girl however, undergoing the same set of experiences as her sister, is not successful. Her journey is a disaster, leading to her death (Bill, 1995:22).

Both girls meet an old woman who puts them to a test. According to Bill, the old woman can be regarded as a representative of *Tilo*, which in Tsonga means 'one who is endowed with great power and omniscience'. The central figure is the old woman, she-

who must- be-obeyed in all things. She is the authority figure, and one who knows. In many ways, she represents society and its demands for conformity and unquestioning acceptance. She represents the political power that society exercises over its members. Reaction to her must be what is expected, she is the arbiter of 'good' and 'bad', and ultimately of who will be rewarded with fertility, that is life, and who will be punished by being sterile, that is death.

The girls' responses to the old woman's teaching, their behaviour as they carry out the tasks she sets for them to do, and their replies to the tests ultimately determine their fate. The 'good' girl is obedient, she listens and she takes advice from the teaching. She is diligent in carrying out the tasks she is set. She answers the tricky questions posed to her by the old lady correctly and she goes home with four babies by the python husband, and in addition, there are new clothes and money.

In contrast, the 'bad' girl is rude, insolent, disobedient, wilful and heedless of advice and warnings. She is careless in carrying out her tasks, she stamps, she winnows, she cooks food which is not well done, she wastes food, letting it fall to the ground. She does not learn how to cook for and serve her python husband, she even tries to kill him. For her punishment, she is devoured by the cannibals, and most significantly, she does not get the child she has set out to find.

Both these versions tell us about what the African people thought about the importance of teaching young girls about preparing for marriage. They need more than physical maturity, the ability to bear children. They also needed to be taught to be good wives and they had to accept this teaching. The girls had to be obedient, carry out their daily duties faithfully, in a manner pleasing to their husbands. They had to be conscientious, not wasteful of food and diligent in the preparation, cooking, and serving of food. The 'good' woman is one who understands the mysteries of life, she knows how to behave in a manner of everyday life and as a sexual partner.

Makgamatha (1990:244) affirms that in the African culture in general there are many concepts, many mythological ideas connected with the snake. A considerable number of

peoples associate the snake with the spirits of the ancestors, believing that these spirits manifest themselves to their descendants in snake forms. No other animal and few, if any, other items known to man, have such a rich and varied symbolic significance as the snake.... It possesses so many unique characteristics that it suggests a large variety of associations, some of which appear to be in direct contradiction to others. Although it is one of the best known, it is often associated with life-giving processes.

Thus, the snake is connected with the function of giving and saving life, of rejuvenation and immortality (just as the snakes remove their skins in order to renew or rejuvenate their youth), and this clearly a role that is ascribed to the ancestral spirits. Berglund found that for the Zulu, pythons are not animal like other snakes, but they are *amakhosi* (kings).

There is evidence in folk narratives that the snake is also sometimes regarded as a symbol of the male life-giving principle. There is no doubt of the association of snakes, through water, with human fertility or the belief that the shades of the father, who are intimately involved in the formation of the foetus, often appear in the form of snakes. There is little wonder, therefore, that the snake's role as phallic symbol has often been emphasized that there is a tendency to regard the snake in folk narratives as a temper to sexual enjoyment.

Indeed, it is evident that in folk narratives, snakes are especially fond of women, both for company and for sex. The snake often appears in these tales in the role of a male lover, or a man with an insatiable sexual desire (Makgamatha,1990:126).

From the Western perspective, this treatment of young women may seem a desperate and a pathetic way to achieve marriage. It is for this reason that one of the proponents of radical feminism (Arthur, 1990:10) feels that:

heterosexuality ties women to men, separating them from each other and keeps them subordinate. They place increasing emphasis not just on the oppression of women in heterosexual relations but on the development of a lesbian culture and on the evils not just of sexism

but of heterosexism.

However, the above view of is not acceptable to the African people because this is not how they view life and they do not ascribe to the philosophy of life suggested by the radical feminists. Mtuze (1990:61), on the other hand, attests that though some feminist critics may discern male chauvinistic tendencies in this harsh treatment of girls, it has its advantages in that it equips the young girls in order to face the trials of life with equanimity, and to appreciate that one has to stoop to conquer.

3.5 WITCHCRAFT

3.5.1 Introduction

The following folktales, “uMabhejane” and “uSiwelewele intokazi eyabe iyogana”, will be used to illustrate society's perception of a woman. The folktales will show whether or not sexist stereotypes are prevalent in the Zulu society or not.

3.5.2 Traditional background

According to the Zulu culture, a witch is regarded as an enemy of the society. She is the person who uses the powers of the universe, which she has learnt to harness by means of magic, for anti-social ends. The wizard uses her powers for evil against the welfare of the society. She injures people's health, destroys life and she is the cause of all misfortunes. Once she is discovered, she is shown no mercy, but is disposed of as possible (Krige, 1988:310).

3.5.3 Summary of folktale: UMabhejane

The woman in uMabhejane is depicted as an aggressive and domineering woman. She is described as a powerful witch and she has a horn on her head. This woman had a beautiful daughter, who was deeply in love with King Mahlokohloko. King Mahlokohloko sent people to Mabhejane to inform her about his plans of marrying her daughter. Mabhejane was possessive of her daughter and she killed all the male messengers of the king. The woman killed thirty messengers. The king decided to go and see Mabhejane personally. Although Mabhejane was unable to kill the king, she was able to transform him into a black bull. Fortunately Mahlokohloko was "resurrected" from the dead with the help of his new bride.

3.5.4 Application

De Bruin (2002:64-65) gives us a character analysis of Mabhejane, who is described as the mother-in-law from hell. Her behaviour is directly opposed to the expected norms of traditional behaviour. She does not participate in the festivities and jubilation that normally surround a wedding. She does not allow her daughter happiness, instead she tries to kill her daughter's husband to be who is the son of a very kind chief, Sikhulumi. Mabhejane does everything in her power to destroy her son-in-law, eventually transforming him into a black bull. However, she does not receive the punishment that she deserves, perhaps because she is a powerful witch and nobody would dare to act against her. As punishment for her evil deeds, Mabhejane loses her daughter forever, because her son-in-law would never allow mutual visits between his wife and his mother-in-law, fearing that she might try to harm his wife or his future children.

De Bruin goes on to argue that mothers like Mabhejane who try to prevent their daughters from marrying good men, are probably motivated by jealousy. An intensive psychological assessment of their behaviour may lead to the conclusion that they are examples of the 'Electra complex' which refers to animosity that can occur between mothers and daughters. Mabhejane has a physical deformity, (she has a horn on her

head) but still gave birth to a very beautiful daughter who attracts the attention of chiefs.

Mabhejane's fatal flaw, however, lies in her inability to behave according to the rules of motherhood in the Zulu society. She is punished severely for this by being rendered childless. The moral of the folktale of Mabhejane is a lesson to be learnt by all mothers and prospective mothers: to have children is a privilege, not a right. If one misuses one's privileges, it will be taken away from you! (De Bruin, 2002: 64-65).

In this folktale, Mabhejane is portrayed as a supernatural being imbued with magical powers. She is portrayed as the 'woman as witch and killer' stereotype, destroyer of human life.

Berglund (1976:268) attests that power is a characteristic of a man, a part of his composition, and is found in lesser or greater quantities in all people. Put into negative forms of expression, it breaks out in anger and consequently *ubuthakathi*. Berglund also states that Zulu people believe that witches are often, female, whose preoccupation is to destroy the fertility of men, beasts (particularly cattle) and fields. Zulu thought patterns allow for male witches and diviners, witches are most often described as being females.

The above clearly shows the Zulu society's view of women. Negative sexist stereotypes of a 'woman as a witch' are prevalent. Although it is possible for men to practise sorcery, the overwhelming consensus is that witches are female.

3.5.5 Summary of “USiwelewele intokazi eyabe iyogana”

The folktale “uSiwelewele intokazi eyabe iyogana” is about a young man who falls in love with a beautiful girl named Siwelewele. He only knew her for a short period of time before they tied the knot. After the marriage it was discovered that Siwelewele could change into a hairy monster. The husband did not believe this, but she was eventually caught in the act. The husband stabbed her with an assegai and her beautiful body was thrown into the river where the animals could devour her.

In this folktale, Siwelewele's beauty is depicted as irresistible. The husband was unable to see beyond her beauty. When he eventually discovered that she was breeding a "domestic animal," he did what he thought was right, in this case by killing the woman. From the Feminist perspective, this folktale depicts a woman as dangerous species which, if not destroyed can divert man from his true self. A beautiful woman always has a blemish and men are pardoned for acting the way they do. While women are enjoyed as beautiful and attractive beings, they are condemned for this role if they exploit it to deceive man. The woman being the property of a man, is at the mercy of her husband. The husband is at liberty to decide the fate of his wife, and by the power vested in him by the society, he carries out his will with ease. It would have been a sensible thing to do if, on discovering that Siwelewele was a witch, another form of punishment could have been chosen, for instance the banishing of Siwelewele would have been a more humane option.

Fatima Mahmoud (1991:33) argues that:

wife battering is neither a private nor a family problem, but rather a reflection of the broad structures of social and economic inequality in society. Domestic violence therefore, is seen as a part of total, social context that tolerates the subordination of women and the use of violence against them as a solution to frustration and conflict.

Hence, the above two folktales confirm the perception that a woman is awarded a low status in the community. She is seen as a dangerous species that preys on human life, basically evil, and must receive the most extreme punishment (Krige 1988:310).

Bill (1995:28) in her article, mentions that the same folktale is found in the Tsonga culture. Her argument is that if humanity is to carry on to be prosperous and stable, the man and the woman must both leave home-, the man to take a wife, and the woman to be taken as a wife. If they do not, brother-sister incest, the 'eating' (a sexual connotation is implied here) of the desirable fruit of the homestead, presents a grave danger. So how far is too far to go to seek to 'eat or be 'eaten'? Bill argues that this folktale focuses

on the danger of going to *lobola* too far. The animal-human spouse whose behaviour is a threat to marriage may be the outcome. Dangerous liaison, non-sanctioned marriage may result from encounters with these creatures.

According to her, the socio-cultural implication of this folktale is that the act of refusing to consume is a representation of the moment of recognition of danger, and it impacts on the future of the relationship or marriage. The situation is either regulated, or terminated. The termination of the relationship shows that the animality has been recognized, that the character concerned is aware of the danger of eventually being consumed by the non-human, or animal, partner in the relationship. The message is in fact that marriage for human beings, for man and a woman, who engage in a relationship which is based on sex, but which goes beyond this, to being a relationship which carries obligations towards each other and towards society. 'Safe-sex', in this interpretation, is that which contributes to the continuance and stability of society(Bill, 1995:30).

3.6 TABOOS

3.6.1 Traditional background

The folktale "Umkhwekazi namasi" stresses the observance of traditional family customs. Maas is forbidden to the old woman in her son-in-law's home. Further cultural taboos include the use of his wooden spoon, beer pot and stool. Severe punishment is imposed for non-conformists to these customs of *ukuhlonipha*, which primarily affect women. Pottow (1990:131) states that:

The mainstay of the Zulu diet is *amasi* or curds of milk, and most of their dishes are a mixture of this *amasi* with different vegetables.*amasi* is looked upon as food of the household, and strangers are not allowed to partake of it. People related to a man will not drink milk at the kraal of his wife, and the same applies to wife's relations who will not drink milk at the kraal of any of her husband's relatives... A woman may... eat *amasi* of her husband's kraal after the *ukudlukudla* ceremony, and a girl may not eat *amasi* at her lover's kraal until after the marriage.

There are other *amasi* taboos related to the family social system too. In the folktale “UDemane noDemazane”, the children were severely punished for eating *amasi*. In Zulu, there are cultural taboos prohibiting children from eating *amasi*. Children must abstain from *amasi* when their ears are pierced, and they may not eat *amasi* when they reach puberty until after the completion of their puberty ceremonies. Girls and women are also prohibited from eating *amasi* during the seven days of menstruation. In case of a girl, she must abstain from *amasi* upon her first menstruation until her father recognises her marriageable age and slaughters a goat for her. This custom by which women abstain from *amasi* is known as *ukwomula*. Furthermore, women after giving birth to a child do not eat *amasi* for two months, and after the death of her husband a woman abstains for a year both at her own kraal and that of her husband (Pottow, 1990:132).

3.6.2 Summary of folktale: UMkhwekazi namasi

The folktale “Umkhwekazi namasi” (mother-in-law and the curdled milk) is an example of a woman who transgresses the norms of the society. This woman was staying with her daughter and son-in-law. The old lady was fond of *amasi* but unfortunately she was forbidden to eat *amasi*, which is forbidden to her in her son-in-law's home according to the Zulu custom. Every morning when the daughter and son-in-law went to hoe the fields, she would sneak back home from the fields and enjoy the son's milk. This occurred on several occasions, until she was caught and punished. She was instructed to go and fetch water “where no frog croaks”.

3.6.3 Application

Umkhwekazi namasi is an example of a woman who rebels against culture. This folktale is also an example of a dietary taboo where the woman is forbidden to enjoy certain foods.

Msimang (1996:134) argues that:

.....people may however point at minor issues such as that the women were not permitted to eat certain dishes at their in-laws, especially *amasi*. Such critics should take cognisance of the fact that *amasi* is seen as a private family dish which cannot be given to outsiders unless they have been given permission by performing a particular ritual in which they are welcomed as members of the family. Then they can partake of *amasi*. The Zulu man was also affected by this. For instance, he could not partake of *amasi* at his in-laws until granted permission in the form of *indlakudla* (eat-the-food) a ritual where a goat was slaughtered in his honour.

Granted Msimang's argument is watertight since we cannot dispute the fact that *ukudlakudla* ceremony is a custom practised in the Zulu society. It is also a fact that at a certain point in time both men and women go through a period of abstention. The practice affects both men and women. This folktale, however raises too many questions. Why would this woman, a person who is well versed in the mores of the Zulu society and a person who is venerated in a society for her age, since she is the bearer of all knowledge and wisdom jeopardise her position? From a feminist point of view, one would assume that perhaps she is trying to convey the message that though they are both subjected to the same treatment, she is personally unhappy with the practice. Maybe men are comfortable in their comfort zone, unfortunately this does not apply to her. It may be deduced that this old woman is protesting against some of the rules laid down by the society that are not favourable to her.

The old woman in the folktale is aware that she is transgressing the laws laid down by the society. From the reaction of this woman, it is evident that she was not pleased with the hierarchical and patriarchal society. She did not succumb to the oppressive rules of her society, and she was prepared to defy the established norms and values. It may be argued she needs all the nutrition she can get as she has many roles to fulfil: mother, home keeper, and labourer.

This folktale attests the feminists perspective of equal rights for all sexes. Because the

Zulu culture prohibits this old woman from eating *amasi* at her son-in-law's home, the woman retaliates by defying her culture. This she does by dressing up as a male. She puts on the son-in-law's loin skin, sits on his wooden chair and drinks milk from his calabash. This act is taboo and totally unacceptable to the Zulu culture since the mother-in-law is not allowed to use the son-in-law's utensils. This folktale somewhat reveals to us that women are not content with some of the treatment meted out in the name of culture. After all, culture is not static, it is dynamic and it is subject to change. This folktale endorses the idea that women also long for equal rights.

We commented about the significance of water when the folktale "*uDemane noDemaze*" was discussed. Makgamatha (1990:248) is also of the opinion that of all the inanimate substances and objects found in African folklore, water is the richest in symbolism. Water seen in relation to the context in which it is found, is commonly accepted as the symbol of purification and cleansing, the origin of birth. The cleansing and purifying that water symbolizes is not only of bodily, but also of mystical, impurities that one may contract through the breaking of taboos, the commitment of crime, and through contamination by evil magic. In this folktale "Umkhwekazi namasi", the old lady is instructed to go and fetch water "where no frogs croak" as a form of punishment for her sinful deed. The fetching of water may be seen as symbolic. The water is the symbol of cleansing the old lady from the impunity of breaking of taboos. The old lady was able to draw water, at a great risk because the king of the river killed those who transgressed. However the genet felt sorry and released her, to the amazement of the son-in-law who was hoping that the old lady would be killed. It can be concluded that the old lady's escape from jaws of death implies that wrongs must ultimately be corrected, which is the view that Levi Strauss underscores when he applies the theory of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

3.7 PROCREATION

In this folktale "Unyumbakatali" the woman finds the remedy to solve her barrenness and she takes the initiative in solving the problem that she is facing. By so doing, she

succeeds in safeguarding her marriage.

3.7.1 Traditional background

Marriage and procreation in African communities are a unit: without procreation marriage is incomplete. It is a religious obligation through which the individual contributes the seeds of life towards man's struggle against the loss of original immortality. Biologically both husband and wife are reproduced in their children, thus perpetuating the chain of humanity. In some societies it is believed that the living dead are reincarnated in part, so that aspects of their personalities or physical characteristics are born in their descendants. A person who, therefore, has no descendants in effect quenches the fire of life, and dies forever since his line of physical continuation is blocked. Procreation is a sacred understanding and obligation which must neither be abused nor despised. Polygamy is a custom found in most African countries.

Procreation is advantageous for a man, because by having numerous children he is safeguarding his wealth as he will beget people who will work for him and safeguard his wealth. He who has many descendants has the strongest possible manifestation of immortality, he is 'reborn' in the multitude of his descendants, and there are many who 'remember' him after he has died physically and entered his 'personal immortality'. Such a man has the attitude that the 'more we are, the bigger I am'. Children are the glory of marriage, and the more there are of them the greater glory. Polygamy also raises the social status of the family concerned. In the minds of African people, a big family earns its head great respect. If the first wife has no children, or only daughters, it follows almost without exception that her husband will take another wife, partly to remedy the immediate concern of childlessness, and partly to remove the shame anxiety of apparent unproductivity. To be productive, in terms of having children, is one of the essential attributes of being a mature human being. The more productive a person is, the more he contributes to the society at large (Mbiti, 1979: 135-142).

Ngcangca (1987:5) observes that marriage enhances the status of both men and women in the community. It gives them new rights and a measure of respect. When a woman gives birth to her first child, her status changes. She enters motherhood and she is considered to have fulfilled the main function of marriage and that gives her better social standing in the community. Fertility is the backbone of marriage. If the couple is not able to produce children, the curse is usually on the woman, there is even a special term, '*nyopa*', a Sesotho word for women who do not bear children. There is no special term for a man. Man is looked upon as a dominant partner in marriage and has no shortcomings. It is the woman who has to fulfil the demands of both the male and the community. Ngcangca goes on further to say that childbearing not only enhances the status of a woman in marriage but also secures it. He has also observed that from the early age girls are made to partake in adult life activities by being assigned to act as nursemaids of their younger brothers and sisters. They are gradually introduced into the performance of household duties so that by the time they reach puberty, they are capable of coping with all the household duties on their own.

On the other hand, Msimang (1990:311) maintains that in the Zulu view of life marriage is but a means to the end, the end being reproduction. The first duty of a wife is productivity, consequently a barren woman is condemned whereas the fruitful one is elevated. No one should die without issue to perpetuate his name. It is reason that Zulus practise sonorant and levirate marriages. If a man dies unmarried, his family commissions one of his brothers to marry a girl on his behalf (levirate marriage). Children born out of that union belong to the deceased brother. Likewise, if a woman is unproductive, the man marries one of her sisters to raise children for her. In the case where the husband is infertile, the elders in the family send the husband away for sometime and invite a male relative to cohabit with the wife during the husband's absence. It is stipulated that this relationship must end the minute the woman has conceived, otherwise he would be killed. It is however, unacceptable for the woman to take the initiative especially if she feels that her in-laws are not co-operative and finds herself a male friend who will solve her problem. Usually a male born in such circumstances would be named Velaphi (where-do-you-come -from) which implies that the family are aware that the husband did not father the child - put bluntly, the question

is: who fathered you? In reality the woman is subjugated by the society. She is not expected to take any initiative without the consent of her in-laws or husband (Msimang, 1990:311).

3.7.2 Summary of folktale: UNyumbakatali

The folktale tells the story about king Dumudumu who married a barren girl. The king had four wives already, but they all gave birth to crows. The new bride was scorned by the other wives for not bearing children and she was called Nyumbakatali (the barren one). Even her husband no longer cared about her. Because of her barrenness she was condemned and demoted from being the principal wife. She was eventually helped by two birds that gave her a magical cure. She was able to give birth to two beautiful babies. Nyumbakatali was once again promoted to principal wife.

3.7.3 Application

This folktale highlights the significance of childbirth as the primary goal of marriage. It also focuses on the traditional custom of polygamy. In the Zulu tradition, child bearing plays an important role because it enhances the status of man. His status is further enhanced by the number of children he has. The traditional role of a wife as submissive and inferior in status to her husband is demonstrated in Nyumbakatali's acceptance of her husband's ill treatment whilst she is infertile. The folktale also depicts the friction and jealousy that often occur in the polygamous homestead. A barren woman is regarded as incomplete and is shunned by the society. Pottow (1990:145) attests that:

Childlessness is a great affliction for a married woman and her own people. It means she cannot form a uterine grouping (kwethu- a "house") which constitutes an economic unit and assures her comfort in old age when her daughters in-law take care of her. Secondly, having children who grow to maturity also assures the perpetuation of her house and, thus, her status as an ancestress in the life hereafter. The first child is especially important, for no marriage is considered complete before a child has been born. If a wife is barren or dies before she has borne children to the husband, the husband can

reclaim his *lobola*.

It is because of the inability of chief Dumudumu's wives to bear him a son that he resorted to marrying the fifth wife with the hope that the new bride, would give him an heir. Unfortunately for Dumudumu, the principal wife seems to be worse than the co wives who at least bear crows. Because of Nyumbakatali's barrenness, she is demoted from the high position by her husband who moves her hut towards the entrance near the ash-dump. Women are sometimes scorned, ill treated by relatives, or the husband himself, for not producing a son, who automatically inherits his father's property and propagates the family name. From the above folktale it is clear that a barren woman is not awarded any status in the society, even by the husband who is supposed to be her protector. He shuns her because she cannot give him an heir that will inherit the family name. Women who are unwilling to conform to social norms, i.e who choose not to have children, or who are unable to have children, are portrayed as unnatural, selfish and pitiable as motherhood is regarded as the natural destination of girls and women.

The socialist feminists are of the opinion that under patriarchy, motherhood is the one legitimate destination for all women, and that takes place within the context of a patriarchal family. The family is the key institution through which male dominance over women is secured by male control of women's sexuality and procreative powers. The feminists acknowledge the biological differences between men and women, i.e pregnancy, menstruation etc, they also acknowledge that motherhood is a key source of women's natural creative power and of a female culture, but they feel that these differences should not be used against women, and they also believe that child bearing should not necessarily be a legitimate destination for all women. They further attest that patriarchal control over women's procreative powers removes control over motherhood from women themselves and denies them the fulfilment that the experience brings. Motherhood needs to be removed from patriarchal control in order for its potential to be realised (Ashton,1973:14).

This folktale confirms the feminists view that procreation is a gift from God. The folktale shows the power of man in relation to the power of God (*Mvelinqangi*) or the ancestral

spirit (*amadlozi*) represented by the pigeons. Only God can resolve the problem of barrenness, while man only has the social power to determine the status of the inmates of his homestead. Children are a gift from God (nature) while the status is an institution bestowed by man on man (culture). This structure underscores the Zulu philosophy of life that there is justice within their social infrastructure to the effect that wrongs will eventually be put right. The *amadlozi* will not turn a blind eye to the cry of their child Nyumbakatali. They pick her up from the ashes and cause her adversaries to be punished (Msimang, 1990:311).

After the birth of Nyumbakatali's babies, her life pattern changes. She washes herself and looks very presentable. When her husband asks her where she has got her two beautiful babies from, she does not give a polite answer as a wife is supposed to when answering her husband, especially if the husband is a chief. Instead she humiliates him for having condemned her for being infertile.

3.8 COURAGE

In sub-section 3.3 the division of labour that men and women have to adhere for the sake of the smooth running of the family was given. It was mentioned that women performed domestic tasks, they prepare food,- grinding grain, brewing beer and cooking. On the other hand, care and management of stock was exclusively a male preserve. The Zulu *amas*i is made by men who are also responsible for the care of the milking vessels. The butchering of animals is also male work. Cattle byres, fenced with poles or with brushwood, are set up by men.

Hunting was a male activity. Chiefs organised the most rewarding hunts when men of the chiefdom beat the bush, moving information reminiscent of the line of battle. On collective hunts, the man whose spear first struck an animal claimed it, though he surrendered a portion to the chief. Independent hunting was also done. The weapons used were made by men since men also specialised in working with iron (Hammond-Tooke, 1959:159).

3.8.1 Summary of folktales: UNanana Boselesele and Umfazi nemamba

These folktales depict the women as nation savers. In the folktale, “UNanana Boselesele,” Nanana is depicted as a heroine who kills an elephant that has been troubling the community. The elephant, Sondonzima, had travelled a great distance in search for food. Eventually it reached Nanana’s homestead when it arrived, Nanana was away and only her children were at home. The elephant asked the children who they were. They replied that they were the children of Nanana of Selesele, who built her house on the path deliberately, because she relied on her cunning. Sondonzima then ate the children and left.

When Nanana arrived home, the house was empty. She saw the elephant's foot-prints and realised that her children had been taken by the elephant. She then tied pots, firewood, an axe and a knife to her body, and taking some smouldering coals, went in search of the elephant who had eaten the children. While she was trailing the elephant, she met three animals- a buffalo, a duiker and a rhinoceros. She asked them if they had not seen the elephant. They all replied that she should find the elephant at the elephant’s lake and the rhinoceros added that the elephant she was seeking had a distended stomach.

When Nanana reached the lake, she saw Sondonzima. She insisted that the elephant swallow her as well, saying that she wanted to see her children. Sondonzima then swallowed her. Inside the elephant she saw everything he had eaten: cattle, sheep, goats and people. She then made the fire and put the pot on to heat. She then cut a portion of Sondonzima’s lungs and liver and cooked this for the people to eat. The elephant started complaining loudly about stomach ache, then fell over and died. Nanana then chopped a hole through the elephant’s body and emerged with all the animals and people that had been trapped inside. Because of her bravery and cunning she was rewarded with a large herd of cattle.

The second folktale “Umfazi nemamba” tells the story of a woman who volunteers to kill a black mamba that has been troubling the villagers and their livestock. She put very hot porridge in a calabash and then set out to hunt the snake, going to the place where the snake had often attacked people. When the mamba saw the woman, it attacked, aiming for the crown of her head. However, as the woman was carrying the calabash on her head, it landed in the hot porridge and died. The woman was rewarded for her bravery.

3.8.2 Application

De Bruin (2002:67) notes that Nanana Boselesele endangered her own life in order to save the lives of her children. However, it could be summarised that she insisted to be swallowed to save all those who have been eaten. Her motivation, as a good mother, could have been to find a family for herself and her children.

The woman in the second folktale has a familiar motivation. By hunting and killing the snake, she ensures a safe life for her community and especially for her children.

The women in these two folktales are depicted as the 'great givers of life' or the 'great mothers' because they showed bravery and extraordinary powers when they came to the rescue of their children and communities. They also prove that females are not passive creatures who belong in the kitchen. These women played vital roles in dangerous situations where the men were not brave enough to face the danger involved. The men are shown as fallible and having fears and weaknesses.

These two heroines proved that they are as brave as warriors and that, therefore, women should not always be seen as passive creatures whose role is to have babies and keep house. Women can also take control, beat the odds and lead adventurous and challenging lives, matching men in many undertakings.

The analogy of the hunting expedition can be seen as symbolic of the women's quest for equal opportunities. These two folktales show that one should not overlook the potential

of someone simply because of stereotypes.

3.9 THESIS, ANTI-THESIS AND SYNTHESIS IN ZULU FOLKTALES

3.9.1 Introduction

Although feminism is used as the main framework within which to analyse Zulu folktales in this study, it might be desirable and necessary to complement it by bringing in some views based on Levi-Strauss approach. It must be emphasised from the outset that a detailed exposition of this complex theory will not be given. Only those aspects of this paradigmatic analysis of folktales relevant to this study will be briefly outlined. Thereafter, two folktales, “UDemane noDemazane” and “Umkhwekazi namasi” will be used to illustrate my arguments using the Levi-Strauss approach.

3.9.2 Levi-Strauss approach

Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, is a structuralist who focuses on the paradigmatic structure of the folktale. He finds this approach valuable as it does not only reveal the story line and its content, but focuses on the sociological message of the folktale (Msimang 1986:17-19). This is aptly summarised by Douglas:

But Levi-Strauss is not content with revealing structure for its own sake.... He wants to use myth to demonstrate that structural analysis has sociological value. So instead of going to analyse and compare formal structures, he asks what is the relation of myth to life (Douglas in Leach, 1967:57).

Msimang (1986:14) is correct in stating that the binary opposites, levels and transformations form the basis or the corner stone of Levi-Strauss' theory. The levels can be cosmological, sociological, techno-economic and geographical. In this study the focus will be on the techno-economic and the sociological levels or schemata. The levels are actually the organising schemes of the folktale. It will be noticed, of course,

that Levi-Strauss focuses on the myth as the subject of analysis, but he defines it so broadly as that it includes also the folktale.

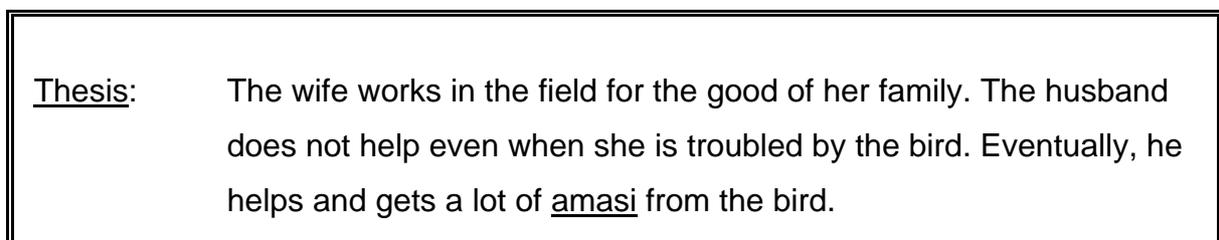
His binary opposites are actually pairs of polarities such as the raw and the cooked; life and death; good and bad; young and old; etc. Levi-Strauss maintains that any folktale consists of such opposites. However these polarities must be resolved. Hence in Levi-Strauss' approach the folktale (thesis) must be broken down into polarities (anti-thesis) which must be resolved by mediators (synthesis) with the result that the initial situation is reversed or remedied in some way (Msimang,1990:307-308).

I believe that the antithesis represents a reality which is unacceptable to women, i.e from the feminist point of view. Assuming that women, who are the main folktale performers, are probably also the folktale composers they would try to transform the antithesis into an ideal situation (synthesis) which will satisfy their desire. Below I shall deal with thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

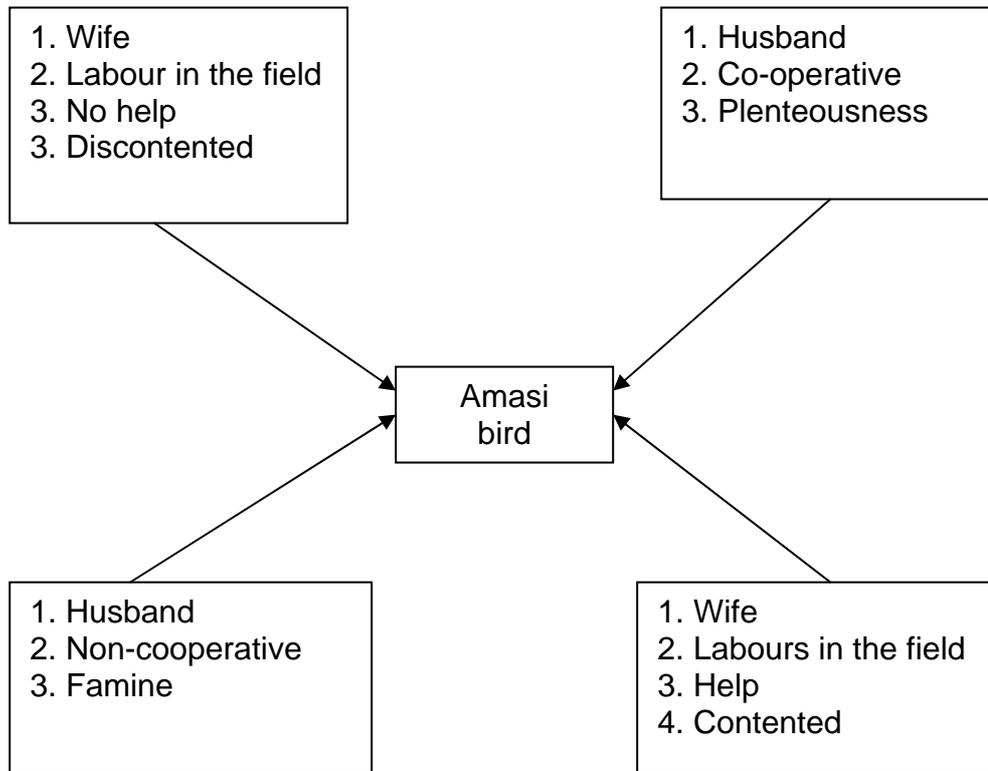
3.9.3 Thesis, antithesis and synthesis in UDemane noDemazane

The diagrams of the antithesis and synthesis will be given before discussing these aspects. These will be placed on two levels only, namely: the economic (ploughing in the fields) and the sociological (focussing on the norms regarding division of labour and taboos).

Diagram 1



Antithesis: Mediation and Transformation Synthesis:



3.9.4 Discussion

As far as the wife is concerned, it is argued, within the feminist framework that the tradition (reality) is unfair to her. She wakes up early every morning to work in the fields for the benefit of the whole family, her husband included. Yet the husband does lift a finger to help. According to tradition this is simply not one of his departments.

Viewed from the Levi-Straussian approach this reality constitutes an antithesis and is therefore unacceptable. Mediators must be introduced to transform the situation for the better. Indeed a bird suddenly appears on the scene and reverses all the advances made by the woman in cultivating the field. To put everything to naught the seeds are scattered and the hoe is broken.

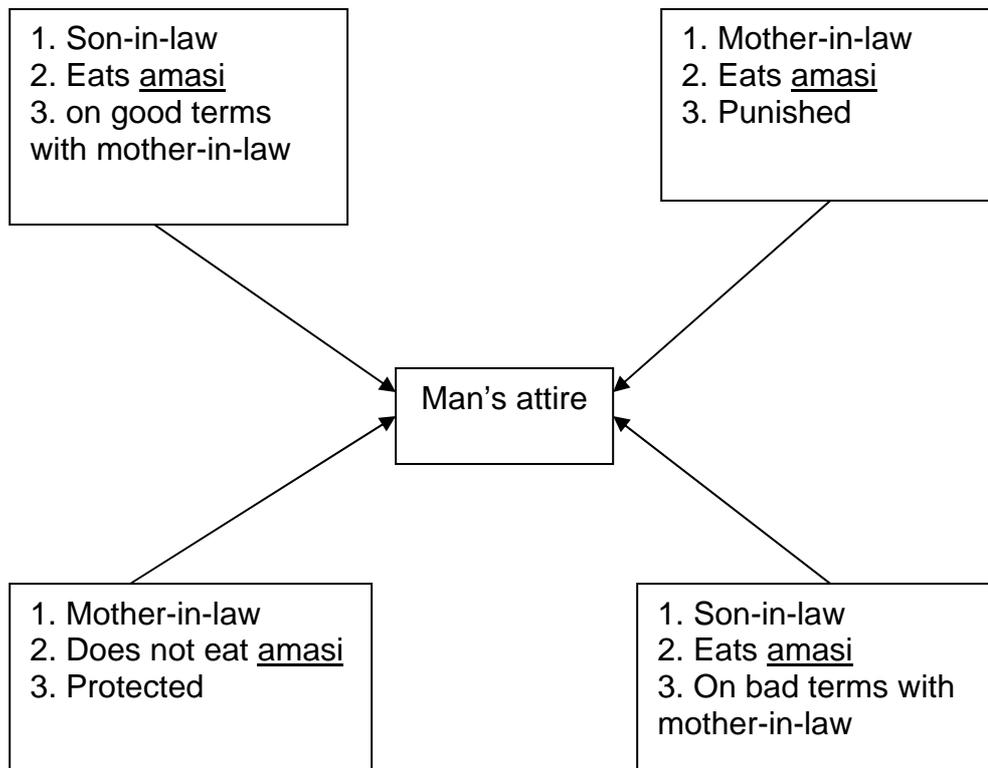
Despite this, the traditional man is unmoved. Instead he reprimands the poor woman. She is frustrated and discontented. The result is going to be famine unless something happens. Fortunately, the bird persists. Each time the woman makes progress the bird reverses it. Eventually the man is moved to help and success is instantaneous. The man catches the bird, which turns out to be an *amas*i (curdled sour milk) producing bird. There is plenty of nutritious food for the family and the wife is more than satisfied.

3.9.5 UMkhwekazi namasi

Diagram 2

Thesis: The mother-in-law comes to stay with her daughter at her son-in-law's place. According to custom, she may not partake of amasi at her son-in-law's place. She becomes rebellious and eats the "forbidden fruit".

Antithesis: Mediation and Transformation Synthesis:



3.9.6 Discussion

Feminists do not approve of discriminatory taboos, such as the one that bars the mother-in-law from partaking of *amasi* at her son-in-law's home. According to the Zulu culture it is taboo for the mother-in-law to share a dish of *amasi* with her son-in-law.

According to the Straussian approach, the antithesis, which is reality, is unfair to the woman. Again mediators must be introduced to remedy the situation. The mother-in-law longing to enjoy the rights enjoyed by men, defies her culture. She puts on her son-in-law's attire, sits on his chair and feasts on *amasi*. This action of transforming herself into a man qualifies her for the eating of *amasi*, but disturbs the balance of power. To restore the balance, the son-in-law is compelled to take action against her, as it is inconceivable for a man and a woman to be on par in the Zulu culture.

As the son-in-law cannot lay a hand on her mother-in-law, he punishes her indirectly. He sends her to accomplish an impossible task, i.e. to draw water where no frog croaks, with the hope that she will be killed on her journey. Fortunately for her she is saved from the jaws of death by a genet, and arrives home safely. This shows the society that it is unjust to punish someone when the cause is genuine. This can also be seen as a reminder to the society that women are also human beings and they also have desires, just like the privileged class men. It is unfair to punish the woman when she fights for what is fair and equitable.

3.10 CONCLUSION

It would appear that the objectives of the feminists are satisfied in these two tales. In both cases the woman was the underdog. In both cases the status quo was challenged and transformed in favour of the women characters. The unfair reality became more poignant once each tale had been broken down into binarities using the Levi-Straussian approach. Likewise the mediation and transformation was graphically illustrated. It can thus be concluded that the Levi-Straussian approach especially the thesis, antithesis,

synthesis aspect of his theory, complements the Feminist theory.

CHAPTER 4

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE ZULU PROVERBS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are by nature popular, that is, they are known and used by the entire population and they have been used since time immemorial. They are communal or social assets, just like culture. They are deeply rooted in culture and almost everyone who grows up in a particular society becomes a living carrier and custodian of its proverbs. Proverbs are the trademark of culture guaranteeing its authenticity and they truly echo a culture and not just the inventiveness of a single person who has just coined a phrase. Like the authors of written literature artists of oral literature rely on their own tradition to reveal their own experiences and feelings. Proverb formulation is therefore a creative process and an event in its own right, although the acceptance of a proverb may take several generations, so that their origin and their authors are seldom individually known.

The language of proverbs has a rich vocabulary of words, symbols, associations and comparisons. Proverbs are drawn from the society and they are part of the heritage. Zulu proverbs range extensively and encompass the entire life of the people, dealing with home and family, their work and social relations, their values and problems. Proverbs are expressions of culture and they reflect reality because they express the philosophy of the people concerned. They are the very features that help to identify a specific culture. Experience alone, however, does not generate a proverb. Experience has to be coupled with observation. Zulu proverbs convey this need for pondering over experience, for observing events to consider all sides of an issue in order to distinguish between appearance and reality and to appraise where true value lies.

The aim of this chapter is to determine whether culture, through the use of proverbs,

serves as a catalyst to oppress or protect the mature Zulu woman and growing woman. The answers will be found in the analysis of the relevant proverbs.

There is abundant literature on the definition of a proverb. The various definitions pertaining to the proverb have been discussed in chapter 1. Ntshinga (1998:36) stresses that numerous works tackle the subject from different perspectives. The definitions are usually formulated from the perspective that suits the targeted goals of an individual scholar. The general problem with these definitions is that each tends to focus more on the interest of the researcher, so that it omits considerations which might be of interest to other researches, and which may validate the definition itself. Some definitions are undoubtedly reactions to earlier ones. Others are a conglomerate versions of many that came before them.

I concur with Ntshinga's findings, especially on the issue of choice. As already mentioned, if proverbs are formulated from the perspective that suits the targeted goals of an individual scholar, it is then safe to say that the above definitions were chosen because they serve the purpose of this study. The purpose is that the proverbs in this study should reflect the philosophy of life of the Zulu people, especially when it relates to women, they should be accepted by all the members of the community, they should contain wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views. Lastly, they are handed down from generation to generation.

Proverbs are not only the embodiment of culture, but they are used in various situations. They are used for teaching, making people conform to accepted patterns of behaviour. They are used to console, and may also be applied to people who regret their inability to achieve success. Proverbs encourage co-operation, they are also used for acceptance, approval and commendation. Lastly, they are used to ridicule or disapprove.

It should also be emphasised that proverbs cannot be used haphazardly, but are context bound. Proverbs express wisdom that reflects on a given situation if used in a particular context. When a proverb is not applicable in a certain context, people use another, thus employing that one that expresses a principle targeted in a particular

situation.

The above argument is also endorsed by Mokitimi (1991:72) when she says that proverbs make perfect sense after they have been contextualised. She defines context as the social situation in which the proverb is used. The social situation implies the component of such a situation, such as the occasion of the proverb performance, the participants and how, why and when a proverb is used. She goes on further to mention that a number of studies have emphasised how important it is that proverbs should be studied in their contextual environment. Proverbs occur only within the matrix of discourse, any approach to their meaning outside their contextual meaning should be discouraged. It is essential to heed the contextual setting of proverbs because this enables a scholar to explore possible meaning discrepancies between the “proverb isolated and frozen on paper and the proverb used in the flow of discourse”.

Linguists and folklorists have repeatedly attempted to explain the semantic ambiguity of proverbs, resulting from their being used in various contexts with different functions. When proverbs are considered in context, it quickly becomes apparent that there are contradictory proverbs. This should not be an issue since proverbs are not universal truths but rather limited pieces of folk wisdom which are valid only in certain situations. Saayman (1996:18) argues that:

.....the problem of contradictory proverbs exists primarily because people ignore their social context. If one deals with proverbs only as a concept of a cultural fact or truism, contradictions are easily found in any proverb repertoire. In contextual usage, however, proverbs function effectively as social strategies. In fact, the meaning of any proverb is actually evident only after it has been contextualised. To put it bluntly: proverbs in collections are ‘dead’. Proverbs in normal discourse are not contradictory at all, and they usually make perfect sense to the speaker and listener. After all, people don’t speak in proverb pairs, unless they are ‘duelling’ with proverbs as a verbal contest.

In the preceding chapter, an exhaustive discussion on the importance of marriage and procreation in the Zulu culture was given. Browsing through the numerous proverbs

available on women, one discovers that most of them refer to marriage and the responsibility and obligations of women in marriage and before. Before elaborating on proverbs pertaining to women and marriage, a brief discussion on the status of a married woman in a polygamous marriage, which was a form of marriage applicable to the Zulu society, will be given.

4.2 STATUS OF MARRIED WOMEN IN A POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGE

Polygamy is almost a universal institution in Africa. Msimang (1996:125), in his published article "Out of Africa: African Women's Rights in the cultural context", gives us an in-depth insight to the status and rights of married women in a polygamous marriage.

Every woman in a polygamous family is allocated a particular house in the homestead. Each house has a different status which attaches to the wife married into it. There are two ways of maintaining this status against all odds. Firstly, there was custom of affiliation. Secondly, there was a custom of sororate marriage. The status of a wife of a commoner is regulated according to the order in which they were married. The first wife was usually married into the first house which was on the right hand side as you enter the homestead (*indlunkulu*). This wife became the principal wife. Her right was to bear the family heir. Her obligations were to be the principal hostess and the spokesperson for the other co-wives. She had the duty of caring for her mother-in-law and to bring up her children.

The second wife occupied the first house on the left (*ikhohlwa*). Her right was to bear the heir for her house and her obligations included provision of the household necessities for the inmates of her house (especially her children).

The third wife occupied the *inqadi* house which is on the right hand side, below the *indlunkulu*. Her right was to bear the heir of her house who is known as *isizinda*. This is the young man who remains to maintain his father's homestead after the father's death,

when the other brothers are required to found their own homesteads. This son is to be held so neutral that he is given the duty of an arbitrator in all feuds and disputes involving the family after the father's death.

The fourth wife occupies the house below the *ikhohlwa*. In other words all the odd numbered houses are on the right and all the even numbered houses are on the left. All the huts on the right are more privileged than houses on the left.

Affiliation means that the house is subordinate to another. For instance the third house is affiliated to the first house, and the fourth house is affiliated to the second house. Likewise the fifth house is affiliated to the third house and the sixth to the fourth house. There is a very intimate relationship between a house and its affiliate. For instance, if the principal wife does not bear the heir, his inheritance will devolve on the heir of the inqadi or the third house and vice versa. The same applies to the houses on the left. For instance, if only the sixth house bears the heir, he will inherit from the 4th and 2nd houses. Secondly, the wife in the subordinate house looks after the interest of the superordinate house if the latter is ill, absent or dead and vice versa. For these reasons the family head is obliged to marry an affiliate who has been approved by the wife in the superordinate house. In most cases the wife in the superordinate house took the initiative to woo a suitable maiden to be affiliated to her house. The affiliate also honoured and was indebted to her superordinate. It was this involvement of the senior wives in the selection and courting of junior wives which guaranteed happiness and harmony in a polygamous family. The co wives were like sisters and as a rule they enjoyed sharing a husband; but of course, to every rule there is an exception.

4.2.1 Right to equitable and fair treatment

The husband had a duty to treat all his wives with equity and fairness. He was obliged to allocate them the fields on an equal basis. He had to treat them with love and understanding abstaining from beating them or assaulting their honour and dignity. The wife who was wronged by the breach of the above could return to her people who would

then penalise her husband by fining him a head of cattle before the couple could be reconciled. On her part the wife was supposed to cook and care for the husband and children. She had a free hand to bring up her children and could only report them to their father in case of serious delinquency. Intimacy between the father and his children was never allowed. In fact a distance had to be maintained between the father and his children to ensure discipline. The father spent most of his time at the headman's or king's assembly or in the principal's house and his children hardly ever saw him. Their request and wishes were conveyed to him by their mother who was their mediator and spokesperson. She always ensured that she brings her children up in the manner which will make her husband proud of them.

4.2.2 Right to husband's company

The demand for equitable and fair treatment meant that the husband should afford each wife an opportunity to enjoy his company in the privacy of his *ilawu* (a private sleeping hut). Every woman looked forward to this glorious opportunity for love making. Should any wife feel neglected in this respect she had the right to send her children to ask his/her father to come and catch the rat in their mother's hut. This was an invitation to the husband to visit his wife for the night. Should he still neglect her, she had the right to appeal to the principal wife who would mediate with the husband on her behalf also warning him that if he persists in neglecting her he would be interpreted as having driven her to extra- marital love relationship(Msimang, 1996:123-125).

4.2.3 Right to property

Every woman in a polygamous family had a right to property and such her right was protected by the law of the land. Her husband could not temper with her property except with her permission. If her property was used for the benefit of another house it had to be repaid.

There are three types of property that a married woman could accumulate: household

utensils, harvested crops; and live-stock. These were accumulated from the various sources: household utensils were obtained through bartering or as present (especially wedding presents if her children or those of her close relatives got married). Harvest accrued from her fields since each woman was entitled to fields for cereals and vegetables in order to provide for her household needs. The husband was legally obliged to provide such fields. Small stock such as fowls and goats were obtained through bartering. Goats could also be bartered to obtain cattle. However the source for the last mentioned was mainly *lobola*. On her marriage the father of the bride presented her with two head of cattle, the one *umbeka* was a present to her husband and the second *inkomo yamasi* (milk cow) was hers personally. *Amasi* (curdled milk) is a private family dish of which outsiders may not participate. The newly wed would then obtain *amasi* from her cow until she is given formal permission to partake of *amasi* from her in-law family. Later, the cattle paid as *lobola* from her daughter accrued to her house to become inheritance for her first born son. Finally when *lobola* for her daughter was paid the 11th cow in each case was her own property. However to give her only one cow out of 11 was unfair.

4.3 RECAPITULATION

Msimang's insightful discussion gives us a clear indication of what the situation in a polygamous marriage looked like. In the previous discussion the advantages of a polygamous marriage were discussed. Blum (1989:108-109) also mentions that there can be more definite advantages for women who share a husband. For some girls the prospect of marrying while still young, is very appealing. Young girls feel that a polygamous husband can offer her greater social and economic security, greater prestige within the community and many other goods that are valued in her society. It is also imperative for a married woman to maintain a relationship with her natal family groups. For instance, a co-wife can tend to the needs of the husband and children greatly thus facilitating a visit to her natal home.

Polygamy may also offer the only possibility for a woman to get married. A previous

matrimonial experience, which may have ended up in widowhood; or a particular quality about the woman herself, such as sterility, may severely limit a woman's chances of re-marriage. Binding herself to this form of marriage will ensure that a woman is provided with a male guardian.

Some societies do not consider it proper for a woman of marriageable age, or even of any age, not to have a male guardian. In traditional societies, a girl was always under the authority of a man: first her father or his surrogate, and then her husband or his substitute. In fact, traditional marriages usually included the transfer of the father's authority over his daughter to the husband. In circumstances such as those, polygyny was one way of ensuring that every woman have a guardian.

In African societies, there are two distinctions that traditionally characterized the relationship between men and women in general and in particular the relationship between husbands and wives. It was generally accepted that males should enjoy social superiority, and also exercise authority over females. Women lived in a state of dependence, not only before but also after marriage. Due to this culturally set subordination to the men, African women traditionally occupied an inferior position within the society. To say that African women occupied inferior positions does not imply that they lacked rights, or lived in continual servitude. It means that, generally, women were dependent upon men for overall protection, including that of their rights. When wronged, women could do little by themselves to seek redress for their grievances: they had to look to a man or men, such as a husband, father, brothers, sons and other close kin, for help and protection. Such conditions of dependence had broad implications upon the place of women in traditional African society.

Msimang and Blum have painted a colourful picture about the polygamous marriage. It has been shown in the previous chapter that marriage was every woman's desire to be married as the African societies demand that every woman should have a guardian in the form of a husband. The question to be asked is, do Zulu proverbs that reflect the truth and the philosophy of life of the Zulu people, depict marriage as something to look

forward to, to cherish and honour till death intervenes? Do the proverbs based on marriage depict marriage as a state to be feared or an institution where women find peace, solace and happiness.? To answer to these questions, an analysis based on the proverbs pertaining to women and marriage will be undertaken..

Msimang's discussion will be our point of departure since most Zulu proverbs pertaining to women and girls reflect on marriage. It should also be noted that although Msimang's argument focuses on women's rights, the proverbs focus on women's virtues.

Proverbs make sense when used in a certain context. Their meaning and purpose are best revealed by their actual usage in social situations. In the following paragraphs, the proverbs under discussion will be cited. The examples used have been taken from Nyembezi's collections Zulu Proverbs and Inqolobane yesizwe. The proverbs to be discussed have been classified into various themes for the sake of clarification.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF PROVERBS ON WOMEN

4.4.1 Examples of proverbs associated with marriage

(a) Ukwenda ukuzilahla.

Translation: To marry is to throw oneself away.

Meaning: This is said because a girl cannot tell beforehand what married life will be like. Therefore her marrying is like throwing herself away (Nyembezi, 1990: 132).

Dlamini (1995:73) who has made a thorough study of Swazi songs, is of the opinion that marriage is given a paramount position in the Swazi culture. This is so because it is not only a union that binds husband and wife, but it also links two groups through marriage and starts a complex relationship that is bound to

continue for a long time. Dlamini also concludes that most songs analysed depict marriage as an institution to be feared. In another context this might only mean that marriage is tantamount to a leap in the dark, that is a game of chance.

Dlamini further states that the red clay, *libovu*, is given a great deal of significance as a symbol of marriage. It is strongly believed that this clay cannot be used more than once on the same face. The implication is that a woman cannot be married twice in her life time. It may not be surprising, therefore that the Swazi women equate marriage to death. It is for this reason that she weeps when the clay is smeared on her face (Dlamini 1995:75). The Zulu proverb under discussion, conveys the same message as the Swazi song. The proverb actually suggests to the girl that she passes the point of no return and her destiny that cannot be altered. Although the proverb below may suggest otherwise.

(b) Indololwane yaxosha umakoti egoyile

Translation: (Literary meaning) The pain of an elbow drove the bride away.

Meaning: This proverb means that a person can withstand pain, hardship or torture to a certain point (Nyembezi, 1997:186).

Marriage is a non-reversible commitment and it is obligatory in this society. Every woman is expected to marry and no woman can avoid it. Women who cannot withstand the hardship associated with marriage will be scorned and lose their integrity. Although love is blind, she enters marriage well informed of the hardships and misery that may come with it. Hammond-Tooke (1974:30) observes that:

A young woman in primitive society is certain that marriage is inevitable. Her future as a wife and mother holds little mystery and fewer illusions for her. Her mother's and grandmother's life experiences are effective models of what hers will be, and she is not necessarily in hurry to begin her career as a wife.

This confirms the idea that marriage is mandatory for women and it holds little mystery for them since they are taught at an early stage that marriage is not a bed of roses. Perseverance and patience are the remarkable virtues required in a good woman to keep her marriage intact. This idea is perpetuated by the proverbs that follow below.

(c) Umendo kawuthunyelwa gundane

Translation: No mouse is sent when one is to marry.

Meaning: When a woman leaves her home to be married, she goes with the hope that she will find married life a happy life. Troubles which may be in store for her cannot be predicted. Not even a mouse may be sent to see how the land lies before one takes a plunge. If it were possible to do so, many tragedies would be averted (Nyembezi, 1990: 132).

(d) Umendo kawubhulelwa

Translation: **Marriage is not divined for.**

Meaning: Although people go to the diviner to explain unusual happenings, they never go to him /her to predict what their married life will be like. This proverb emphasises the uncertainty of married life (Nyembezi, 1990: 132).

The two proverbs clearly indicate that there are a lot of uncertainties in the institution of wedlock. A woman may also be faced with untold misery. A girl experiences pressure from the day she is born. She is regarded as source of wealth in terms of the *lobola* that will be paid to her father when she gets married. Customarily *lobola* should be paid to the bride's father as a token of appreciation. All parents want to see their daughters married as the idea of seeing their daughter doomed spinsterhood is untenable. It sometimes happens that marriages are arranged for various reasons. The girl has to abide by the decision

of her father. Often these marriages are arranged with the hope of permanence, and therefore the compatibility of the couple is usually given some consideration. Parents do not deliberately seek to make their children miserable, so whenever possible they take the couple's desires into account. The actual marriage arrangement often amounts to no more than the stamp of approval on the choices already made by the young couple. In any case, the two families' hopes for mutual gain or alliance rest on the viability of the marriage. Dlamini (1995:72) argues that:

Although the arranged marriage issue affects both young men and women, it is usually the women who are the victims. Besides the fact that men can manage to refuse if they do not want to marry the woman given to them, they still have the advantage in other respects. For instance, even if he marries the woman given to him by his parents, he still can go ahead and get himself another wife of his own choice which is not the case with the woman.

The woman has to enter into this kind of marriage, even if she is aware of the possibilities of encountering problems. If she is lucky enough, she may be taken as a principal wife and enjoy all the privileges that are attached to this status. If not, she has to stay in the marriage and make her parents proud as her father would not be happy to lose his cattle. Once married the woman has to prove her worth. Pride, cheekiness and arrogance are a thing of the past.

(e) Umendo ngumkhumula nsika.

Translation: Marriage pulls down the pillar.

Meaning: Before marriage, a woman may be proud and fastidious. Once married, however, she may find herself having to surrender her pride, and become as tame as a lamb. This pulling of pillars may also denote the giving up of home and old friends; it means utter devotion to the new life among the husband's people (ibid: 132).

This proverb suggests that the woman becomes tame as a lamb in marriage. This is so because she has met her match. Polygamous or monogamous marriages, which are the forms of marriage common in the Zulu culture, create problems for women. A satisfactory state, as described by Msimang in his article, undoubtedly occurs in many marriages, and it would be unfair to state that polygamous marriages had no advantages. Such a pleasing state of affairs is given scant attention in literature. There is far more mention of jealous, rivalry and conflict among co-wives. Dlamini's analysis of the Swazi songs pertaining to marriage, gives conclusive evidence that women in the polygamous marriage face insurmountable hardship. It gives them a sense of insecurity since one wife may be pushed aside to make room for another. A jealous wife is not approved of, therefore a wife may suffer torment silently, knowing that she cannot have the man to herself.

(f) Uyofika kwaMkhathali, isidwaba siyokuhaqa.

Translation: You will get to Mr. Mkhathali's, the skin will encircle you.

Meaning: This will be used mainly towards an insolent and defiant unmarried woman, meaning that in marriage she will find more than her equal, and that her attitude will change. It is the hardships that a woman usually encounters in married life, that causes people to use this as a threat to insolent young girls (ibid: 133).

Defiant and insolent unmarried women have to swallow their pride when they get married. The proverb 'Uyofika kwaMkhathali, isidwaba siyokuhaqa' serves as a scaring tactic to prospective brides. This proverb assures the would-be bride that when she arrives at Mkhathali's place, the woman should be armed for antagonistic attitude from the other wives. It is also possible the other wives are not happy about her arrival. Dlamini (1995: 95-110) views polygamous marriage as institution where only the strong survive. Besides experiencing jealousy, each woman is uncertain of her position after the arrival of the new wife. A woman in this marriage must develop a thick skin if she wants to survive.

(g) Akuqhalaqhala lahlul' isidwaba.

Translation: There is no cheeky woman who ever got better of the skin skirt.

Meaning: A girl may be very cheeky before marriage, and want things to be done her own way. That cheekiness, however, cannot continue once she is married, for in the Zulu society the woman definitely takes second place. She is not her husband's equal, and must obey him. She must also give due respect to her in-laws. This expression may be used for a married woman who has been tamed by marriage (Nyembezi, 1990: 132).

The above proverb also serves as warning to girls, since they will find that after marriage they are in a no-win situation. Rivalry and envy grow easily where equals seek exact treatment but cannot be entirely certain that they are receiving it. What may be the causes of conflict in a polygamous marriage? Hammond-Tooke (1974:39) reason that:

Co-wife conflicts centre on standard key issues: equitable economic provisions including proper housing, access to food and other necessities, an equal share of the husband's time, sexual attention, and general regard; the protection of her children's interests and their inheritance rights. Each wife is jealous of her rights and quick to notice and resent any disparities.

Jealousy and witchcraft often go hand in hand in polygamous marriages. Sheer desperation and frustration causes the women to resort to extreme measures like witchcraft to secure what they believe is rightfully theirs, as they are at their wits end when faced with stresses and a situation which might never improve. Society has observed that marriage is not a utopia, hence, it is used as a powerful tool to threaten and inculcate the fear to prospective brides that even the so-called "tough cookies" are breakable in marriage.

De Bruin (2002: 80-85) gives extensive discussion on the role of girls in the Zulu society. She says that in traditional Zulu society the inequality between boys and girls is clearly depicted when the father of a new born baby will more likely to offer an animal of gratitude to the ancestors when the baby is a boy than when it is a girl. She also argues that it would be incorrect to conclude that the birth of a girl is not celebrated in much the same way- after all: girls are also referred to as” the cattle of their ancestors”. They contribute to his wealth by bringing in *ilobola*. In fact, the first born in the family will often be named Zibuyile, meaning the cattle have returned! Boys however may be preferred because they are the carriers of the family name.

From earliest childhood, girls in the traditional Zulu society are tutored to be submissive. They must obey the rules of the society and accept that their ultimate goal is to be a good wife and produce and raise children. This must be done without any protest. Traditional Zulu girls grow up with the knowledge that they will always be subjected to the authority of a male figure; be it their fathers, their uncles, their brothers, their husbands or even their sons, after the death of their husbands. A girl is also traditionally not allowed to inherit her father’s possessions after his death.

Education in the traditional Zulu society was not targeted at the individual personal development of a child, but rather to unify the child with the group. A girl is thus raised to be a useful member of the Zulu tribe, a mere link in the chain of daily survival and not to be an individual with her own dreams and ideals. She had no other choice than to comply with the expectancy of her tribe. Any signs of wilful behaviour were punished, and conformity was praised.

In spite of the objections of feminist critics, the ultimate quest of a traditional Zulu girl would be to obtain a good husband and to bear him children. Critics usually maintain that the type of girls that are depicted in folktales, is the exact type that the feminist movement would like to see emancipated. The critics maintain that

by telling children tales in which the heroine is only successful when she is polite, obedient, willing and demure, the children will develop sexist attitudes. The criticism may well be applicable in the modern Western society, but it should be taken into account that the Zulu folktale was originally targeting the traditional Zulu child, for whom life was rather different. An emancipated woman would be strange phenomena in a society where people were still clinging to the customs that have proven successful for their survival over the centuries.

Except for being a good wife and a mother, a Zulu girl has to fulfil certain other requirements which even the most hardy feminist cannot criticise, such as being friendly, respectful and obedient. These qualities would be appreciated in even the most emancipated of women. The Zulu society does not only reduce women to wives and mothers; it also describes the kind of behaviour that would be accepted in all societies. Looking past the accusation that society reduces women to only wives and mothers, it is also clear that it teaches an universal lesson to all girls to obey the rules of the society to which they belong. Where there is no obedience in a society, the society will become decadent. It is only incidental that in the traditional Zulu society the price of obedience and conformity is marriage and motherhood (De Bruin 2002: 80-85).

(h) Ihlonipha lapho ingayi kugana khona.

Translation: She respects where she will not marry.

Meaning: People in general think a great deal about marriage. A girl grows up expecting that she will marry one day. Where and who she will marry, remains a matter for conjecture until the marriage takes place. It is fitting, therefore, that she should treat all people with due respect for she does not know where she will ultimately find herself. She may, as a girl, have behaved in a very highhanded and haughty manner towards certain people, only to find that she later marries into that family. When, therefore, a young girl shows little regard for people because they are not her relations, she is

often reminded that *ihlonipha lapho ingayi kugana khona* (Nyembezi: 1990:133).

The most significant goal in the education of a girl is to make her a good wife and mother. This entails not only training in the requisite skills but also in the values and attitudes appropriate to feminine roles. One of the attitudes is giving respect to everybody since she might not know where marriage will take her. The proverb above attests to that.

(i) Ukugana yinkatha yenkangala.

Translation: Marriage is the grass-carrier in the desert.

Meaning: This proverb implies that a girl ought to be very happy to have someone who proposes marriage to her, for marriage is difficult to achieve. It is difficult to obtain grass in the desert, and when one has something heavy to carry, one ought to be happy with any kind of grass from which to make the head-cushion (ibid: 134).

This proverb attests the view that every girl is sensitised right from early childhood that her destiny is marriage. She has to learn that she cannot pass a certain stage without becoming someone's girlfriend and subsequently his wife. The proverb *ukugana yinkatha yenkangala* could in a way encourage good behaviour on the side of the young woman. Only good girls are rewarded with marriage. Once marriage has been proposed, it has to be preserved by all means since the proverb suggests that marriage is hard to find like the grass carrier in the desert. The young woman has to hold on marriage against all odds. This also encourages perseverance.

Much emphasis is laid on womanhood and its virtues because young women are the future mothers of the nation. Not only are they child bearers but home builders too. Conformity to the values thus prescribed by the society ensure a socially accepted individual.

The above argument is strengthened by Mtuze (1990: 55) when he says that:

In most parts of Africa the whole of a girl's life is one long preparation for the useful role she is expected to play in the society. When she is betrothed to a man his relations expect her to conform to certain traditions and norms of the family. Everybody takes an interest in how she sits, speaks, laughs, acts and reacts to situations.

It is clear that a girl in a patriarchal society is brought up to carry out the expectations of the society. Once the young woman has come of age she has to involve herself in preparing for marriage. She also looks forward to becoming a wife, this is the values that were inculcated in her at an early age by her parents and the society. As she grows older she looks forward to marriage, being fully aware that marriage is not always a bed of roses and she would be miserable if she does not find someone to fulfil her wishes because all girls are destined to be married.

This argument will find a lot of resistance from the Western feminists because some radical feminists argue that marriage system should be abolished since it binds women to men and women are regarded as an appendage of men. Women who are tied down in marriage cannot lead challenging lives like their male counterparts. Womanism, on the other hand, does not find fault with everything that is cultural, if it is morally acceptable. Womanists have the right to engage in household chores, they should do everything that will promote a healthy relationship between the husband and wife and within the family. Women are not condemned for engaging in the promotion of the well being of their families, but they are damned if they consider marriage to be their sole purpose in life. Women should strive to be self reliant, independent and bold.

4.4.2 Examples of proverbs associated with morality

(a) Umswane wembabala awungeniswa ekhaya.

Translation: The bowel contents of a bush-buck are not brought home.

Meaning: This is a saying connected with marriage. It warns that one should not take the daughter of someone who practises witchcraft. She might destroy the whole family (Nyembezi, 1990: 135).

Witchcraft is usually associated with women in Zulu culture, although men are often admitted to the cult. Witches exist to perpetuate both good and evil, depending on the situation. The use of witches in the proverbs, however is to discourage bad morals. Women are believed to possess innate powers which can render any herbal preparation impotent, hence the reason for their restriction from many ritual performances.

Therefore, a man should not marry a daughter of a witch since this woman may have inherited her mother's destructive qualities. When the bride arrives at her new home she is careful to hide her shortcomings and pretend to be virtuous. For some time people will continue to say nice things about her. Later in life she may reveal her true colours as the proverb indicates.

Every mother has the best interest of her children at heart; although some mothers tend to be overprotective and possessive when it comes to their sons. No mother would like to see her son marry an unfit woman, that is a woman of low morals or who is born of a witch. This behaviour is in line with the philosophy of life of the African people. Good natured girls and women are exalted in Zulu society. Therefore, blame cannot be cast on a vigilant mother who wants the best for her son.

(b) Ikhiwane elihle ligcwala izimpethu

Translation: A beautiful fig is infested with worms.

Meaning: This proverb can have various connotations. The proverb can

mean that a beautiful person is evil, promiscuous or unfaithful
(Nyembezi: 1979:156)

It is a biased observation to insinuate that a beautiful woman does not belong to only one man. Through the process of socialisation most of these, especially negative and ambivalent conceptions, are internalised and passed from generation to generation. What is of interest is also the fact that women encourage these stereotypes in their daily interaction with other women. One can also note that in such context and situations women themselves are known to use such proverbs whenever it suits them, unaware that they are perpetuating the images conveyed in these proverbs.

Throughout the ages beautiful women have fulfilled an ambivalent role in society. They may be regarded as precious and rare jewels because of their dazzling beauty, on the other hand their compelling beauty may cause them to be the centre of attraction to men. Feminine mythical creatures are said to be endowed with devastating beauty and have the capacity to lead men astray. This proverb is a warning to men that beautiful women are a potential danger to the male species and they are not to be trusted since they are inherently corrupt and promiscuous. They also have the power to cheat and lead men astray because of their looks and their cunning and shrewdness. Eventually, they possess the power to topple men. It would seem that society, especially men, convey the message that beautiful women were created as playthings for men since they are easily pliable. This argument is aptly summed up by a Yoruba proverb which states that “a beautiful woman does not belong to one man”.

Ngcangca (1987:29) attests that beauty was not the main attribute which boosted the girl's image to be eligible for marriage but the following features; she should be respectable, chaste, modest, hard-working and good tempered.....her family should have a reputation for honesty, friendliness and respectability. The Sesotho saying: *Mosadi ojewa matsoho* (A woman is eaten hands) meaning that the most important aspect of a woman is her ability is to use her hands, confirms,

according to the African culture that beauty is trivial, but the above mentioned attributes make an ideal woman.

(c) Inkonyane yomdlandla yeqa la kweq' unina.

Translation: The calf of a wild buck leaps where the mother has leaped.

Meaning: The saying is used to explain the behaviour of a child who behaves like the parents. Very often it is used of girls who, in their bad behaviour follow the behaviour of their mothers. Thus, for instance, if a girl has an illegitimate child, and the mother had a similar fall before, the expression will be used. The expression is not only used after the act. It may be used as a warning. A boy may want a certain girl in marriage. The girl may appear quite satisfactory, but there may be things known about the mother which may not be pleasant. The people would then say that although the child seems good, there is no way of telling what may happen later, for she may have the mother's weakness latent in her, and this may show itself later. The proverb is used particularly of mothers and their daughters, and to a lesser degree of mothers and their sons (Nyembezi, 1990:136).

Full responsibility for rearing a girl is usually assigned to the mother who carries the entire onus of the girl's behaviour. In societies where virginity at marriage is required, the mother bears a burdensome responsibility. In societies throughout the world and throughout recorded history, women's primary roles have been family oriented. The activities and relationships that are basic to their lives are within the context of the family. Rearing of children is a task which is assigned to the mothers. Mothers play a major role in the guidance and the discipline of the child, especially a daughter. Ntshinga (1998:79) is of the opinion that:

In IsiXhosa, when the child does not behave, it is said that s/he has taken after the mother, and when she does good, it is said

that s/he has taken after his/her father.

Judging from the proverb under discussion, it is obvious that the view held by Ntshinga is also applicable to the Zulu society. Mothers are castigated for their daughter's mistakes and fathers exalted for their daughter's achievements.

4.4.3 Proverbs associated with authority in the family

(a) Ikhanda elixegaxeyo lofulel' abafazi

Translation: The weak head will be used by the women for thatching.

Meaning: The status of a man in his own home is quite definite in Zulu society. It is accepted that he is the master, and the wife or wives hold a subordinate position. A man who keeps the women 'in their place' is a good master. The expression means that a weak-minded and irresolute man becomes the plaything of his wife or wives (Nyembezi, 1990: 140).

In societies throughout the world and throughout the recorded history, the husband is the dominant partner in marriage, and in the patriarchal societies his dominance is re-enforced by the fact that he represents the authority of his lineage. He has legitimate authority to punish his wife if she displeases him or fails to carry out her duties. Ideally, if the wife accepts her subservient role and is properly submissive, the husband exercises his authority with justice and restraint. According to this proverb, a man should be firm in maintaining authority in his home, he should and must not seem like a plaything. How he maintains authority in his family is his own business, but he definitely does not have the right to beat his wives. This is socially unacceptable and the act of wife beating is detested by the Zulu culture. This proverb can be linked to the one below.

(b) Umuzi weziqhwaga uyachitheka.

Translation: The home of the strong people breaks.

Meaning: If strong people, or people who believe themselves to be strong put up together, there is bound to be trouble because they will not respect one another. Each one will believe himself capable of challenging the others. In a family where a woman believes herself capable of challenging every act of her husband, and where the husband is determined to 'put his wife in her place', there is bound to be chaos. Such a family is likely to break up. This proverb is also a warning that man and woman should not allow themselves to be ruled by temper. They should find peaceful ways of settling their disputes and differences, and should try all times to accommodate each other (Ibid, 139).

This proverb is a warning to married couple to keep their tempers under control. The man in the Zulu culture has the last say in his home. A woman is not allowed to exchange words with him. If the woman continues to be arrogant and insolent, the man will try by all means to exert his authority. The woman may be punished or lose her status as a married woman because she will be sent back to her home. The bad tempered nagging shrew who henpecks her husband and the strong minded woman who will not be a subservient helpmate are familiar figures in all societies. Just as recognizable is the frustrated man who displaces all his aggression onto his helpless wife. For some men wife beating is an accepted means of displaying manliness. This is echoed by a Zulu proverb which goes: *'Induku kayuwakhi umuzi'*. This proverb strongly suggests to men that wife beating is unacceptable in the Zulu culture. Incidentally, this act of wife battering is an act which is also deplored by the feminist movement. Andersen (1983:169) states that:

historically, wife beating has been a legitimate way to express male authority. Studies indicate that the overwhelming amount of domestic violence is directed against women. Coupled with the idea that violence is a purposeful behaviour, this fact leads

to the conclusion that violence against wives is a form of social control, one that emerges directly from the patriarchal structure and ideology of the family.

Careful consideration, of the above quotation leads one to note that wife beating is the form of expressing male authority and social control. The Zulu society categorically states that wife battering is unacceptable, an idea endorsed by the feminist movement. Zulu culture dictates that if a man wants to put a woman in her place, punishment in a form of beating is not the best resolution. This will not keep her in a subordinate position, but instead it will enrage her and fill her heart with hatred and remorse. A man who is faced with an insurmountable task of “taming” an arrogant, insubordinate and dominant wife try opt for other measures.

4.4.4 Proverbs associated with motherhood

Undoubtedly more value is placed on motherhood than any other female role. It is through her children that a woman makes her most vital contribution to society. Motherhood even overshadows her role as a wife, for her primary obligation as a wife is to provide continuity to her own or husband’s lineage. It is a universal cultural idealization that motherhood is the culmination of a woman’s hopes, dreams and ambition. It is nonetheless widely felt that to miss out on motherhood is to miss the most precious experience life holds for a woman. The proverbs to be discussed will shed light on how motherhood is viewed in our Zulu culture.

(a) Ingan’ igaba ngonina.

Translation: A child places reliance on its mother.

Meaning: To a child the mother is everything. It is the mother to whom he returns for everything, even for protection form the wrath of the father (Nyembezi, 1990: 143).

(b) Intandane enhl' ekhothwa ngunina.

Translation: A good orphan is one that is licked by the mother.

Meaning: By good here is meant that one is in better circumstances. It is well known that mothers are more tender and sympathetic towards their children. Fathers are, as a rule more hard-hearted. A mother is capable of making great sacrifices for the welfare of the children, whereas a father may not care so much. Thus, a child without a father is generally in better circumstances than a child without a mother (Nyembezi, 1990: 142).

(c) Unina wunina MaZulu!

Translation: A mother is a mother, ye Zulus!

Meaning: Usually there is great love between the mother and her children. She will do all in her power to see that they are comfortable. She will deny herself many things for their sake. Thus, when people see her suffering, great inconvenience and hardship for their sake, they remark that, indeed, a mother is a mother. There is no one like a mother (Nyembezi, 1990: 143).

These proverbs relate to the images and conceptions of women, namely their differential rights, obligations and responsibilities that are conveyed in these proverbs. There are indeed several proverbs that throw light on the conceptions of the function of the role of women. Basically, they are perceived as life givers and in this respect the role of motherhood is emphasised. Associated with this are the required qualities and virtues that are considered appropriate to motherhood status. Ntshinga (1998:76) agrees that some proverbs reveal a mother as being very important and central to a family. A mother is referred to as a place of sanctuary. She is the person to seek comfort from at the end of the day. She is a home to go to. She is the support and shelter to children, she also provides home warmth and security.

Probably the greatest rewards expected from motherhood are emotional the love and respect given by her children. Especially in those situations in which a woman does not receive or expect emotional gratification from her husband, she may invest her emotion in her children and have high expectations of emotional returns from them. It is assumed that polygamy intensifies the mother- child bonds, reflecting the primacy of the mother child unit in the structure. The mother is the focus of attitudes that idealise the relationship. She is capable of making great sacrifices for the welfare of her children, whereas a father may not do as much. Thus a child without a father is generally in better circumstances than a child without a mother. From the given proverbs it is obvious that a mother is the key- person in a child's life. She is supposed to live her life for her children. Her children must come first in all instances. Her children have trust in her and she is the one that must ensure that they are content, both physically and psychologically.

The mother inculcates culturally defined patterns of sleeping, eating, speaking, walking and hygiene from the earliest infancy. Relatively few aggressive techniques are practised, for the mother-child relationship is characterised by indulgence (De Bruin, 2002:57).

A mother is not regarded as a threat by her children. She refers her naughty children to their father or another relative for discipline. She often acts a saviour between the children and their father.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to determine whether through the use of proverbs, the Zulu woman faces protection or "oppression" by the use of these expressions. An attempt has been made to give the definition of a proverb. Various scholars have tried to define a proverb, and most scholars admit that it is a burdensome and intricate adventure to do so.

It is also mentioned that this chapter is not an attempt to refute findings already made on proverbs. The intention here is to prove that proverbs are the embodiment of culture, they reflect the philosophy of life of the Zulu nation, they are short, pithy sentences which contain wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views. They are used in various situations. They console, educate, reprimand, instruct, approve and disapprove.

The proverbs pertaining to women were analysed. Many of them pertain to women in marriage. The proverbs pertaining to marriage have shown that women in a polygamous marriage suffered greatly misery. This is not to say that a polygamous marriage had no advantages. The proverbs, which reflect the philosophy of life and the belief of the society, depict marriage as a monster. Marriage is seen as an institution which breaks women who are cheeky and insolent. It is also used as a threat to put women in their place. Some proverbs prepare a young girl for marriage, they educate her that she should give due respect to everybody since she does not know who her in-laws might be. Proverbs also depict beautiful women as a species to be avoided. They are seen as inherently evil and shrewd and they have the ability to topple men.

Proverbs also warn men of not falling into a trap of marrying a witch's daughter as she will destroy the whole family. Witches are detested by the society, and in this instance women are seen as dangerous to human life. There are some proverbs that exalt the role of motherhood. Mothers are regarded as a haven, the provider of love and security. Children swear by their mother because they are the sustainers and givers of life.

One could say that the analysis of the proverbs shows that women experience excruciating pain in marriage. Perseverance is a true virtue which is deemed proper for marriage. Women are doomed in marriage and only the tough survive. Lobola is also contributing to the woman's misery since a woman may hate to disappoint her parents by returning home because she may be regarded as a failure. The situation can be aptly summarised by a Northern Sotho proverb which aptly states that: *Le bitla la mosadi ke bogadi* (The woman's grave is at her in-laws). This means that the woman has to persevere in marriage no matter how hopeless and frustrating her marriage is.

Women are complimented for their unusual skills of child rearing and for providing love and security for them. At the same time women excel in child rearing because their children appreciate their mother's love. Through despair and frustration, women tend to focus more on their children than their spouses. Women find fulfilment in sharing their love with their children. Often because it is a futile exercise to pine for a love that will never be requited.

Proverbs have been a very important part of African culture. They are a medium through which the important cultural images and perceptions of women are conveyed. We have also noted the importance of socialisation through the use of proverbs as an important process for perpetuating the cultural group. It is an important part of the culture it is only to be expected that people still hold firmly onto some of these ideas and conceptions and this one might describe as cultural loyalty.

This presents a very difficult problem for women who want to question some of these images of women as portrayed in the proverbs. Even in contemporary times one encounters some of these conceptions of women. This is because the ideologies of gender roles and power receive their support from the various cultural traditions in which proverbs play a very important part, as has been indicated. While we appreciate the strong cultural support for our identities, there is a need to critically re-examine it in an attempt to build a future that does not see men and women as living in different worlds. This ultimate goal is to create a situation where men and women can stand side by side and confront the system of beliefs, practices and norms which they have inherited and which sometimes seem to set one against the other.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN ZULU PRAISE POETRY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Praise poems exist in many different parts of Africa and also play an important role in the Zulu social life. Praises are not only composed about important personages like kings, princes, headmen and national heroes, but they are also composed for women, young boys, children, dancers, and cows and so on. The subject of the praise poem may include anything from people to inanimate objects. In this way we may talk of poems composed in praise of practically anything. Praises may be composed by a person about an object dear to him. In this case, as would be expected, the person usually showers himself or the object with praise. The purpose of this chapter is to undertake an analytical study of the praises of women in Zulu traditional poetry. It will also show how women depict themselves when they shower themselves with praises and in the same breath how the bard, as the mouthpiece of the society, depicts these royal women.

5.2 THE NATURE OF IZIBONGO

The *izibongo zamakhosi* have a special status and constitute aesthetically the mostly highly appreciated sub-genre. The ruler, the king, or the political leader, who is traditionally conceived as the centre and 'symbol of the unity' of the community must be portrayed as impressively as possible. Kgobe (1994:29) contends that the content of the praise poems consists of the praises lauding heroic deeds of men in battles, hunting and expeditions and casual encounters with beasts of prey. According to Msimang (1981:51):

Praises are an intermediary between epic and ode, a combination of exclamatory narrative and laudatory apostrophizing. Praise poetry combines the qualities of an ode, eulogy and epic. As an ode it apostrophises the king, referring to his personality and physique,

pointing out his good and bad qualities. As an eulogy, it lauds the king for his diplomatic and military achievements. As an epic, it alludes to history.

The act of praising focuses on identifying a person, embodying his or her personality through the process of naming and also in essence providing a link with his or her community, lineage and origins. The naming is a process of objectivity, so that once a name has been given, or self given, it is actually beyond the power of the individual to remove it or contest it. It is part of their identity, one which may be used even after their death when the praises are called out on ceremonial or public occasions. In terms of verbal art, the skill and complexity of a language used to mark the social significance of historical invocations involved – through references to earlier kings, royal ancestors, whose praises are often quoted or referred to in praises of the current ruler.

Raymond Kunene(1961) in his survey on Zulu poetry divided the *izibongo* into three broad periods:

- a) Pre-Shakan (1750-1800)
- b) Shakan (1800-1850)
- c) Post Shakan (1850-1900)

The pre-Shakan period, Kunene explains as being characterized by tedious and monotonous lyrical odes which highlighted the physical features of the person being praised. This was done by using imagery typical of the type used in *izinganekwane*- of small animals that typified qualities of shrewdness, e.g in Jama's izibongo-

*UBuchakijana bakithi bakwaSidlozi,
Bumba mgojana buyaselela.*

The one of great cunning of our place at Sidlozi,
That digs a small hole and hides in it.

The Shakan era, Kunene maintains, was emphasized in contrast by the nationalistic qualities of the subject praised, with his aggressive and more heroic behaviour taking

precedence. Instead of small animals, we find more mention made of large animals.....lion, buffalo, elephant e.g. in Shaka's praises:

Uyisilo! Uyingwe! UyiNgonyama!
UyiNdlondlo! UyiNdlovu!

You are a wild animal! A leopard! A lion!
You are a horned viper! An elephant!

The post-Shakan period reverts to a more lyrical type of poetry again, e.g. in Mpande's praises, he is likened to a harmless swallow.....

Inkonjane edukel'ezulwini
A swallow that wandered away to the skies

Historically, stanzas, like many of the stylistic traits of poetry, seem to have been developed in the 'Shakan' period of Zulu literature, in about 1800-1850 (Cope 1968) which already displays a crucial influence of the political on the poetic form. The expansive phase of military conquest under 'the Zulu Napoleon, Shaka' during which the subjected peoples were integrated into the emerging 'Zulu nation', implied the need for the construction of a larger identity. This implied that the creatures that formed the greater part of the imagery used were birds, (the swallow, amongst all birds, had a special appeal to poets), buck, sheep and snakes. When the national character changed as national consciousness was awakened, more aggressive animals were used. This shift from 'tribe' to 'nation' was reflected in the poetical imagery of the praises: bolder metaphors and symbols than before were used in order to create a wider and more powerful image of the growing community – more aggressive animals such as elephant and lions as dominant symbols for rulers were used.

The praise poems of chiefs, kings or prominent and famous people, display the evidence of a loftier poetic quality upon the more basic simple praises as depicted by the use of poetic technique such as repetition, assonance, alliteration etc. These are the heroic poems which contain the epic of a whole nation, personified in its sovereign.

While they give rise to the Zulu language's most complex form of aesthetic experience, they also signify power relations and social structure than the other poetical genres. This may be due to the fact that they are not conceivable without their social context of naming and identifying, thereby fulfilling a unifying function on various levels, religious, historical and political.

5.3 THE ROLE OF IMBONGI (PRAISE POET)

The role of *imbongi*, the bard, as a specifically gifted and trained artist, cannot be underestimated. In regard to the complex tasks involved in interpreting and organizing public opinion, *izibongo* have to include criticism of the ruler when appropriate. Only by 'praising what is worthy and decrying what is unworthy' can a full picture of social life be given, only then will the *imbongi* be acknowledged as someone who 'speaks sense' in terms of public perception. Thus the aesthetics and rhetorical strategy of the art of praising in *izibongo* encompass also the art of criticizing (Kresse, 1998:181).

Constantly inherent in praising is its counterpart, criticism, although the criticism is less obvious. There are two levels on which criticism can be uttered: indirectly as an 'absence of praise' directly, as 'presence of criticism' in the performance (Cope 1968: 31); in between these gradual sub-differentiations are possible. The expressing of public criticism of the ruler is a consequence of understanding poetry as a reconstructed social experience, and it is remarkable that such criticism, linked to the form of praises, already noted the 'extravagant freedom of speech' granted to the reciters who during the performance on festival occasions publicly raised problematic issues which might otherwise have been difficult to state (Kresse 1998:181).

The art of praising the king or the political ruler, giving a socially valid portrait of him, due to the historically central position of the ruler also means giving an illustration of the current state of the society. This is a delicate issue, and one can see why the *imbongi* has to be knowledgeable in regard to all different aspects of the society, their current state and interaction, and their present significance for the relationship between ruler and ruled. Ideally, the poet must be especially sensitive in realizing as well as

considerate in reformulating and making 'what is going on' publicly known to ruler and subjects, while still giving a valid account of the ruler's performance and as such, an adequate 'map' of social experience. In order to do this, he should know not only 'everything that the king and all his ancestors ever did or even had done' but also be aware of public opinion.

The poet has a special social responsibility, since his art has a central normative function in mediating power in two opposite ways. On the other hand, from the ruler to the people, all the feats and qualities of the ruler – and thus inherently, of the whole social community which he represents – are to be celebrated, with the effect of reinforcing a social pride, strength and solidarity. On the other hand, a commentary on his rulership is mediated back from people to the ruler, who in his status, is traditionally dependent upon public opinion. At the same time, the bard is a sort of special advisor or counsellor to the king. Traditionally bards had to stay with and live near to the king, he is a documentor of the commoners' impression of the current state of affairs, giving voice to the people's feelings, and such a mediator between two social categories, the ruler and the ruled. Ruling has to conform to the socially defined public opinion; if this is ignored or violated, social order becomes unstable. The regulative function of *izibongo* is to reconcile the personal leadership of the ruler with the people's will. Therefore, the main function of the bard is to interpret public opinion and to organize it (Kresse1998:179).

5.4 IZHASHO (PRAISES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE)

Izibongo zabantu or *izihasho*, is a type of poetry which evinces the elements of satire more prolifically. These poems are composed in contemporary times about ordinary people. In this form of praises, a person may be criticized in a satirical manner using the traditionally recognized frame work form of *izibongo*, despite the fact that the assumed underlying intention of this type of oral composition is usually praise and not dispraise.

The style of composition of *izibongo* and *izihasho* is the same as far as form, meter and poetic techniques used, but differs in content. Unlike the praises of kings and important people, which were composed by a professional *imbongi* (bard), and normally recited on formal occasions, *izihasho* are a form of oral history of the ordinary man/ woman in the street.

This person, with no royal connections or even special status or achievements to his name, is still imbued with pride in being recognized by his praises. This is even the case with those people whose praises are hardly complementary. Being known by his 'praises', provides a person with an identity, a sort of recognition and support which is important to his ego and self image (Turner, 1990: 56).

The royal praises are clearly distinct from the praises of normal people. The *izihasho* is used in more private circumstances, and they are composed either by the person himself, or by family and peers/contemporaries. The oral poems are accumulated over a passage of time, as the person grows and develops from childhood. Coarse language, images and expressions are at home here, as there is nothing at stake. A person may even laugh, as it offers him a measure of recognition (albeit notoriety) in his immediate society. It is regarded amongst the Zulus, as desirable to be recognized in society rather than to exist in obscurity, totally ignored. The person identifies himself with what people say about him or her, this is his or her personal yardstick to measure his own value in society.

The following praises of the royal women and those of commoners will be analyzed.

5.5 ANALYSIS OF PRAISES OF ROYAL WOMEN

From a social and economic point of view, royal women whether they be princesses, queens or members of the harem, had more privileges than responsibilities. This is due to the fact that they were always served by the court servants (*izinceku*) and slaves (*izigqila*) or prisoners of war. The lives of princesses were somewhat restricted in that

they were discouraged from marrying commoners. The praise poems of royal women are not performed socially as are those of married women. These praises would be used rather as salutations or greetings by both men and women upon their arrival at the royal home. They would be used also by the women attending the queen. They would in addition be called out, as thanks by men after they had eaten food prepared by the royal lady. In the latter case it would not be necessary to repeat the whole praise poem, it would be considered sufficient to call out a single praise name, such as, for “Msizi”! (Gunner, 1979:253).

Before we can give an analysis of the praises of the individual Zulu woman, it is appropriate to give a historical background of each individual, particularly of the royal women to enhance a better understanding of the incidents and places alluded to in the praises. Msimang (1991:51) concurs with this view point when he attests that it is common knowledge that, due to their allusions to the historical events and personalities, praise-poems are not always intelligible to people unfamiliar with the relevant history.

5.5.1 Brief historical background of Mkabayi

Princess Mkabayi of the Zulus is acknowledged to be a callous woman. Being one of the twins, she was destined to be killed in infancy. Her compassionate father, king Jama, could not bring himself to kill his own issue, so Mkabayi and her twin sister, Mmama both survived much to the displeasure and disapproval of the Zulu nation. The nation feared the wrath of the ancestors should both the twins be allowed to live. The fear became reality right when the queen died before bearing the nation an heir. Because Mkabayi had a stronger character than her twin sister, she bore the brunt of the nation’s disapproval and hate. She was held responsible for all the misfortunes of the royal family and the nation at large.

When Mkabayi realized that the nation was still yearning for an heir she wooed Mthaniya for her rather disinterested father. However the king married Mthaniya and from this came the long awaited heir, named Senzangakhona (or Well-doer), which was the acknowledgement by King Jama that Mkabayi had done well to court Mthaniya for

him). This swayed the hearts of the nation towards her especially since the erratic Jama had offended his subjects once again by marrying an already pregnant Thonga woman who had given birth to Sojiyisa. The nation feared that this illegitimate boy would inherit the Zulu throne.

However, Mkabayi soon lost that love of the nation when on the death of Jama, she imposed herself on the nation as regent for her brother Senzangakhona. This was unheard of in Zulu history but men succumbed to her guile and domineering character.

Her unscrupulousness shocked the nation once again when she instructed her army to destroy the powerful Sojiyisa, who posed a threat to Senzangakhona's reign. She was dubbed a blood-thirsty despot and a terrible woman of antiquity, whose primary aim was the continuance of the Zulu nation and its traditions.

However when Senzangakhona came of age, she stepped down in his favour. Unfortunately, Senzangakhona was not destined to live long. After a short reign he was succeeded by his son, Shaka, one of the most able emperors the world has ever known. Shaka, on ascending the throne, ruled his people without recourse to anyone for advice. This is one of the major reasons why Mkabayi plotted his assassination.

Yet despite Shaka's success, when he was accused of abusing his power, Mkabayi did not hesitate to plot the assassination of the greatest of the Zulu kings. She, together with her nephews, Dingane and Mhlangana, planned the murder of Shaka. Desirous of putting Dingane on the throne, she later murdered Mhlangana.

Mkabayi remained unmarried, preferring to retain her independence and political influence and her position as head of the Qulusi military kraal. She played a major role the Zulu history, deposing and ascending various kings to the throne, and her power and influence was felt during this time of great historical importance to the Zulu nation. Many years later when Captain Gardiner went to Dingane on missionary work, he found her old, but still very powerful. She died a lonely woman during the reign of Mpande. For her part in the killing of Shaka, Mkabayi stands condemned to the present day.

5.5.2 Analysis of Mkabayi's praises

Praises have normally been regarded as a male domain, both as regards their composition and their content. They are normally associated with feats of bravery and battle. The analysis of Mkabayi's praises will determine whether her praises fit the description that her composition is associated with feats of bravery. It should also be noted that Turner and Cope are some of the scholars that have made an in-depth analysis of Nandi and Mkabayi. In their analysis they have discovered a few facts that are worth mentioning here.

Praise poem of Mkabayi

USoqili!
Iqili lakwaHoshoza
Elidl'umuntu limyenga ngendaba;
Lidl'uBhedu ngasezinyangeni,
Ladl'uMkhongoyiyana ngasemaNgadini,
Ladl' uBheje ngasezanuseni.
UBhuku lukaMenzi,
Olubamb'abantu lwabenela;
Ngibone ngoNohela kaMlilo, umlil' ovuth'intaba zonke,
Ngoba lumbambe wanyamalala.
Inkom'ekhal' eSangoyana,
Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz'izulu,
Iye yezwiwa nguGwabalanda
Ezalwa nguNdaba wakwaKhumalo.
Intomb' ethombe yom'umlomo.
Zaze zayihlab'imithanti zawonina.
UMthobela-bantu izinyoni,
Bayazibamba usezibuka ngamehlo.
UVula-bangene-ngawo-onk'amasango,
Abanikazimuzi bangene ngezintuba.
UMcindela kaNobiya,
UMhlathuz' uzawugcwal' emini.
Imbibakazan' eyaqamb imigqa kwaMalandela,
Yathi ngabakwaMalandela,
Ithi yikhona bezoqananaza ngazo zonk'izindlela

Father of guile!
Cunning one of the Hoshoza people,
Who devours a person tempting him with a story;

She killed Bhedu amongst the medicine men,
 And destroyed Mkhongoyiyana amongst the Ngadini,
 And killed Bheje amongst the diviners.
 Morass of Menzi,
 That caught people and finished them off;
 I saw by Nohela son of Mlilo, the fire-that-burns-on-every-hill,
 For it caught him and he disappeared.
 Beast that lows at Sangoyana,
 It lowed and its voice pierced the sky,
 It went and it was heard by Gwabalanda
 Son of Ndaba of Khumalo clan.
 Maid that matured and her mouth dried up,
 And then they criticised her amongst old women.
 Who shoots down birds for her people,
 As they catch them she is simply watching on.
 The opener of all main gates so that all people may enter,
 The owners of the home enter by the narrow side-gates.
 Sipper of others of the venom of the cobra,
 The Mhlathuze river will flood at midday.
 Little mouse that started the runs at Malandela's,
 And thought it was the people of Malandela
 Who would thereby walk along all the paths. (Cope, 1968:173)

The opening address of Soqili, 'father of guile' has significance in so far as Mkabayi, being of royal blood and unmarried, is addressed as a male. She was commonly referred to as Baba, indicative of importance and standing among the Zulus, transported her from subservient and insignificant status of a woman, to one of a prince and later, fatherly figure, commanding the utmost respect and obedience

Turner (1990: 6) states that Koopman in his study of Zulu names, makes note of the fact that the morpheme -so-; does not necessarily mean father or owner of as Doke records it as a contraction of the old Bantu form of *uyihlo*, but can be used purely as male marker. However, the interpretation by Koopman here seems fitting.

In the first stanza we have these lines:

USoqili!
Iqili lakwaHoshoza
Elidl'umuntu limyenga ngendaba
Lidl' uBhedu ngasezinyangeni,

*Ladl' Ubheje ngasezanuseni
Ubhuku lukaMenzi*

Father of Guile!
Cunning one from Hoshoba
She killed Bhedu amongst the medicine men,
And killed Bheje amongst the diviners.
Morass of Menzi

The use of powerful metaphor here deserves mention. Msimang (1980:66) explains the idea of Mkabayi being likened to a morass has significance in that she was a dangerous and powerful woman who was responsible for the deaths of Kings (Shaka) and commoners alike, but her appearance was deceiving. She seemed to be a shy person, who remained unobtrusive. Like marsh, her presence was inviting, but her victims soon got themselves bogged down and died, (like Mbopha and Mhlangana enticed by Mkabayi to take part in her plot to kill Shaka, and who eventually in turn were murdered without any of the promises made to them being fulfilled). Another facet of this vivid metaphor which illuminates Mkabayi's character, is the fact that she never actually wrestled with her victims, but rather connived and plotted behind the scenes. Like the marsh, she too was passive, and the more the victims resisted the inevitable, the more they submerged themselves leaving no tell-tale evidence behind.

In most cases, women are depicted as docile and helpless. However, Mkabayi assumed powerful attributes that are normally associated with men, thereby contradicting the stereotype that women are always docile and submissive. She was a brave, fast thinking woman who was prepared to take risks. It should be borne in mind that Mkabayi lived in a male dominated field and a cut-throat environment where her decisions were questioned with cynicism because of her sex. She was in a position where the man is supposed to rule the country and woman obeys the rules. Hence, as a survival skill, she resorted to shrewdness, plotting and conniving tactics to secure her position as the ruler of an empire as big as the Zulu nation. Even a man, could resort to these tactics for the sake of survival.

Mtuze (1990:54) makes an interesting comment about Helen Suzman another strong

female politician who stood her ground in a male-dominated, hostile world. A caption in a daily newspaper has this to say about her:

Suzman, for seven years the only woman in parliament, said she was treated with traditional male courtesy by male colleagues and “never gave a damn” about occasional comments that a woman’s place being in the home. I was seen as a tough old boot. Once a male M P told me I had a man’s brain. He meant it as a compliment. Little did he know his brains was the last brain I would care to have, she said (Daily Despatch, 1989).

In the following lines, Mkabayi is associated (like Shaka) in the form of a beast, another very rich metaphor.

*Inkom'ekhal' eSangoyama,
Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz' izulu,*

Beast that lows on Sangoyama,
It lowed and its voice pierced the sky

This emphasises the fact that when Mkabayi spoke, Kings and commoners alike listened in silence. This is due to her undeniable influence as a power behind the throne of the descendants of Mandela.

Mkabayi’s association with a beast is a great honour because owning livestock is a male preserve and only man can make decisions as far as cattle are concerned. In terms of Zulu customs, as the cow has connotations of wealth, ritual values, legal value (in term of *lobola*, and they are regarded as being a life giver in terms of meat and milk and *amas*i they provide, apart from other several other valuable properties they possess, such as the hide and horns, used for clothing and by the *inyangas*.) This implies that accordingly, Mkabayi was awarded the status of a man, a powerful and fast thinking one for that matter.

Eisenstein (1988:39) comments by saying:

The moment of truth, in consciousness-raising, came at the point where the 'exceptional woman' understood that to be told "You think like a man" was to be told, "You are not a 'real woman' and (simultaneously), "Real women are inferior to men".

It would have been an insult to Mkabayi to be told that she thought like a man because she was indeed a man in deeds and thoughts.

In the following lines:

*Intomb' ethombe yom'umlomo
Zaze zayihlab' imithanti ezawonina.*

Maid who grew to maturity and her mouth dried up
And then they criticised her amongst the old women

Zibani (1997:28) is of the opinion that there are many possible interpretations that can be given about these verses, but two possibilities will be considered. Firstly, this can refer to her rejection of men who wanted her in marriage. The elderly people possibly scolded her, showing their disapproval of her behaviour. Secondly, this can refer to Mkabayi's venture and determination to be her brother's regent, while he was still young. The elderly people disapproved of a woman taking up kingship, which was regarded as a responsibility for men. In IsiZulu it is said: *Umuntu ukhuluma kome umlomo*, meaning she or he speaks clearly leaving no room for misunderstanding and misinterpretations. Possibly this is what Mkabayi did when she announced her intention to become a regent for Senzangakhona, her younger brother and the fact that she will denounce marriage and devote her entire life to building the nation.

In the African society, the old lady in most cases symbolizes female integrity. She is regarded as the custodian of social values. The old women in this praise are appalled by Mkabayi's 'deviant' behaviour. Where women are expected to toe the line, Mkabayi seemed to have 'freed' herself from social expectations. Little (1980:134) mentions this about a free woman as:

By free woman is meant one who flouts or disregards conventional beliefs concerning the proper role and position of the female sex. One of the common of these beliefs is that it is wrong for a woman on her own to take a major decision. This is a male prerogative. It is also wrong to undertake roles, including occupational ones, traditionally ascribed to the male sex. Perhaps the most common belief of all is that a woman's place is in the home and her duty is to marry and have children.

Society predetermines what role girls must play. Every child learns these gender-linked roles from infancy and they are reinforced as she goes through the various stages of her life. This leaves those affected with no choice in the end. This convention did not apply to Mkabayi as she stood her ground.

The following lines commend Mkabayi for her diplomatic skills as she was able to settle the people's problems and she was easily approachable. She was an avenue of advancement for people regardless of status and they used her position as a go between, providing commoners with access to the throne.

*Bayazibamba usezibuka ngamehlo
UVula-bangene-ngawo-onk-amasango,
Abanikazimuzi bangene ngezintuba.*

They catch them and she looks at them with her eyes.
The opener of all gates so that people may enter,
The owners of the home enter by the narrow side-gates,

Mkabayi is depicted as a woman who has a good side. She is approachable as a ruler and her subjects feel comfortable enough to air their grievances. She ruled by the precept: *Inkosi inkosi ngabantu* (a king is a king by its people). A clever ruler will prioritize and make time for his or her subjects. Winning the hearts of the nation through diplomatic skills is an indispensable attribute that a ruler cannot do without.

Subjects like to be in the company of their king, and Mkabayi and King Shaka were always accessible during their reign. King Dingane, unlike his predecessors, recoiled

from the public eye and kept to himself in order to brood on his evil plots without any disturbances. Obviously this conduct did not meet with the approval of his subjects. They started comparing him to Shaka who was always in the company of his people, especially the council. This is why the bard indicates that the people would like to have audience with their king; they would like to communicate with them. These lines suggest Dingane's recoil from the public (Msimang, 1991:57).

Quiet one, he speaks not, he is mouthless;
He is unlike Shaka,
Who finished off the household by chattering
Turner away like elephants....
Rise, O Sun, let the Zulus warm themselves [in you]

These two stanzas show a difference of character between Mkabayi and Dingane.

In the following line:

*UMcindela kaNobiya,
Mcindela, descendant of Nobiya.*

These lines depict Mkabayi as a person who protected others from the displeasures of the King, thereby dealing with very tricky and dangerous situations, as reinforced by the image of the cobra. She is opposing the abuse of power especially when it comes to the protection of the subjects from the wrath of the king. She knew how to handle most of the kings who ascended the throne because she had made most of them. In fact, Mkabayi's word was law.

Mkabayi ruled in accordance with womanist ideas.

Womanists are concerned about the entire community and are holistic in approach, which means that both men and women can come together in a dialogue to define and address the needs of the entire community (Nkumane, 1999:28).

This holistic approach means womanism is a non-elitist movement. It does not prioritise

people's needs according to the particular class to which they belong in society. Hence it is virtually classless. It considers all people in the community, male and female. The recurrent humanist vision is central to black feminism. It is closely associated with human solidarity than anything else (ibid: 28).

The following lines give us another image of Mkabayi

UMhlathuz' uzawugcwal' emini.

The Mhlathuze river will flood at midday.

Mhlathuze river, is used as a metaphor to indicate qualities of size and importance and unpredictability in terms of unexpected flooding. This can be compared with Mkabayi's moodiness and sometimes erratic behaviour.

Reber, as quoted by Nkumane (1999:130), has this to say about hysteria:

Hysteria is kind of emotional outburst and was viewed as a psychiatric female disorder. Hysteria, was, until recently, assumed to be solely a dysfunctional of women caused by a wandering uterus. He continues to explain that the link in psychoanalytic theory has helped in providing a more reasonable etiology but the link between gender and the disorder has not been completely severed, males were rarely diagnosed.

The above quotation confirms one of the many stereotypes that are attached to women. The stereotype that women think with their ovaries is one stereotype that intends to dishearten a woman or to demoralize her when she is faced with a hard decision to make. Since it cannot be proved than hysteria is a female attribute, it would be unfair to conclude that Mkabayi's temperamental behaviour was as result of her wandering uterus. Any person in any leadership position, male or female could be prone to temperamental behaviour since ruling a country as huge as the Zulu nation was a mammoth task.

These concluding lines contain an interesting metaphor used by the *imbongi*. Mkabayi is

likened to a little mouse, allusive and secretive in its movements, an image which depicts her as someone who concealed her true self and preferred to work in secrecy. We are reminded of her status as a mere woman, who was to be the guiding light and power behind the throne of the descendants of Malandela.

*Imbibakazan'eyaqamb' imigqa kwaMalandela,
Yathi ngabakwaMalandela,
Ithi yikhona bezoqananaza ngazo zonk' izindlela*

Little mouse that started the paths at Malandela
And thought it was the people of Malandela
Who would thereby command all the routes

An interesting point to note here is the complete lack of any physical references made in Mkabayi's praise poem. This may be due to the fact that Mkabayi did not have any exceptional physical oddities, and therefore the bard omitted this fact. Although Mkabayi's praise-poem does not mention any physical attributes like bodily beauty and most qualities expected from a Zulu woman, this may be ascribed to the fact that Mkabayi was never really considered as being a woman in the usual sense of women in Zulu society at the time.

The fact is that she shunned marriage and played an active role in the nurturing of the Zulu nation as such, she was regarded as being prince, not a princess, and was accordingly addressed as *Baba*, by all her subjects and her nephews who became the powerful rulers of the Zulu nation. As a result, we find Mkabayi's praises being very similar in content to the large body of praises, that were composed in honour of men and she displays the qualities that are highly regarded among them as opposed to women as we shall later observe when we analyze the praises of women.

Mkabayi's is depicted as a person who is larger than life. This is so because king Shaka, one of the greatest kings to rule the Zulu empire shares his praises with Mkabayi. Shaka's praises were composed in a similar style to Mkabayi's. This is a clear indication that Mkabayi had a massive influence on Shaka. This can be illustrated by the following examples from Mkabayi's *izibongo* in lines 3-6:

*Elidl' umuntu limyenga ngendaba
Lidl' uBhedu ngasezinyangeni
Ladl'uMkhongoyiyana ngasemaNgadini
Ladl' uBheja ngasezanuseni*

Who devours a person tempting him with a story;
She killed Bhedu amongst the medicine men,
And destroyed Mkhongoyiyana amongst the Ngadinis
And killed Bheje amongst the diviners.

Compare this to lines extracted from Shaka's praises, lines 185-196

*Wadl' uNomahlanjana ezalwa nguZwide eMapheleni
Wadl' uMphepha ezalwa nguZwide eMapheleni
Wadl' uNombengula ezalwa nguZwide eMapheleni
Wadl' uDayingubo ezalwa nguZwide eMapheleni*

He devoured Nomahlanjana's son of Zwide of the Maphelas
He ate up Mphepha's son of Zwide of the Maphelas
He killed Nombengula's son of Zwide of the Maphelas
He destroyed Dayingubo son of Zwide of the Maphelas

The second stanza tends more towards ode, which records her in true heroic fashion, as the one who determined the course of history for the Zulu people. In the light that Mkabayi's praise-poem has the qualities that overlap both Shakan and pre-Shakan eras, it is more accurate to regard them as being Traditional *izibongo*, incorporating elements from both periods.

Mkabayi defied all odds and placed herself on par with men, the elite group that governed a country. It takes a radical and strong personality to venture into such a patriarchal territory. Moore (1992:30) has this to say about the radical ideology:

The radical feminists argue that the most fundamental of oppression is patriarchy. In order for women to be free from oppression, the patriarchal structures of society must change. They argue further that women's oppression is biologically based since women are tied to childbirth and childbearing processes, which continually place them in position of dependence on men to survive. They call for the women's movement to participate in a "biological revolution", freeing women from their biological oppression.

In any given cultural context, male and female behavioural patterns are fixed by norms. Mkabayi is depicted as a hardcore feminist, the radical one. She flaunts the conventions of her society, such as marriage and child bearing, obedience and submissiveness. Incidentally, the idea cited above is the one that makes African feminists hopping mad because although they believe that childbearing is the cornerstone of a marriage, child-bearing should not be used to oppress women.

Mkabayi's praises have determined the course of history for the Zulu people. In the light that Mkabayi's praise-poem has the qualities that overlap with both Shakan and pre-Shakan eras, it is more accurate to regard them as being Traditional *izibongo*, incorporating elements from both periods. According to Turner, (1990:50) Mkabayi's praises represents a more acceptable form of the praise poem, containing a more balanced picture of Mkabayi's favourable and unfavourable qualities, despite Cope's assertion that:

The purpose of the praise-poem is to present the chief as an object of admiration, and there is consequently a tendency to maximize praise and minimize criticism. The praiser may mention weaknesses, but otherwise he prefers to overlook faults (Cope 1968:32).

5.5.3 Brief historical background of Nandi

Nandi was the daughter of an important chief, Makhedama kaMgabi (alias Mbengi) of Nguga, Elangeni. It is estimated that she was born in 1764 and her mother was Mfunda who was the daughter of king Qwabe. Other sources maintain that she was the daughter of Bhebhe who died while she was still young. She then stayed with Mbengi who was her nephew. She was the mother of one of the most powerful kings that once ruled the Zulu nation, Shaka. Nandi fell in love with the vibrant Senzangakhona after hearing glowing reports about the young Zulu chieftain, and purposely arranged a meeting with him. The meeting was an intimate one and the result was to make its presence felt three months later, when Nandi realised that she was pregnant. A

messenger was eventually sent to the acting co-regent Mudli, who replied that the girl was harbouring an intestinal beetle, held then as a common cause for the suppression of the menses, known in isiZulu as *ishaka*. However, in due course she gave birth to a son, and a word was sent to Senzangakhona that the beetle has arrived and was awaiting him.

Nandi was reluctantly fetched and installed as Senzangakhona's third wife, without any of the customary feasting and wedding celebrations that befit a chief. Nandi found herself in a position of being unwelcome, scorned by other wives and generally neglected. She found friendship and solace in Senzangakhona's wife Mkabi. She lived with her at eSiklebheni for a few years. In those years that she stayed at eSiklebheni Nandi was blessed with a daughter by the name of Nomcoba.

As years went by the magic of love long disappeared. Nandi was regarded as ill-tempered and argumentative. She was finally expelled by Senzangakhona from his kraal. She returned to Mbengi, among the Langeni, and was to prove to be highly unpopular even among her own people. Shaka's childhood was very unhappy, and both he and his mother were constantly teased and rejected by her clan. In 1802, famine broke out known as "Madlantule" which forced Nandi and her children to re-locate to a better place where she could raise and feed her children. She settled under the reign of king Phakathwayo where she met and wedded Gendeyane. She bore a son, Ngwadi. There for a while she and her family were accepted, but even there, there was no peace. Nandi and her son held no rightful place there, and eventually she sought refuge again, this time with her father's sister among the Mthethwas.

There Nandi and her children were treated well, and they were to remain there until Shaka was taken under Dingiswayo's wing. With the support of Dingiswayo Shaka was able to claim his birthright. On the assumption of the throne, Shaka set up his headquarters at KwaBulawayo, where his mother governed the royal *isigodlo*. Here Nandi resided with her son, and she, like Mkabayi, was held in great awe by the people

at large.

Nandi died of natural causes in October 1827.

Nandi's praises

*USomqeni,
UMathanga kawahlangani,
Ahlanguana ngokubon'umyeni.
UGedegede lwasenhla nenkundla.
UPhoko phalala kuMaqhwakazi,
Angibonang' uphoko ukuphalala.
UMboni wamabhuzenge uSontanti.
USontanti onjengowakwaGwazana.
USontanti kayidl' inkom' ensizwana,
Udl' ubisi lwenkom' enezimpondo,
Ukwesab 'abayisegayo.
Intombi kaMbengi weNguga kaSoyengwase kaMaqamande,
UXebe woMhlathuze
Mfazi ontongande zingamadoda,
Uyishaye yenyus' iSabiza
UMathanga kawahlangani,
Ahlanguana ngokubon' indoda.
Obengabafana baseNguga,
Abeza beluhayizana.*

Father of troubles!

She whose thighs do not meet,

They only meet on seeing the husband.

Loud - voiced one from the upper part of the court.

She who rushed out to Maqhwakazi,

I did not see the millet rush out.

She who sees confusion, Sontanti,

Sontanti who is like the daughter of Gwazana;

Sontanti does not partake of a little hornless cow,

She drinks the milk of a cow with horns,

For fear of those who milk it.

The daughter of Mbengi of the Nguga kraal, son of Soyengwase son of Maqamande

Sweetheart of the Mhlathuze valley.

Woman whose long staves are like those of men,

Who struck it and it went up the Sabiza river.

She whose thighs do not meet,

They only meet on seeing a husband.

She who was with the boys of Nguga,
Who came in a small group.

(Cope, 1968:175)

5.5.4 Literary analysis

Turner (1990: 46) is of the opinion that Nandi's praises were composed long before she became Queen Mother, and they reflect the attitude of the Zulus and the Langeni's. Her greatest disgrace was to have fallen pregnant by Senzangakhona out of wedlock. He never accepted her as a real queen, with full rights. The fact that her praises have survived can be attributed to her later political influence.

Nandi is also addressed in a form normally used for men. Nandi is addressed as USomqeni (father of laziness) and this then sets the tone for the rest of the ensuing criticism, oaths and outright insults which follow.

Lines 2 and 3 are full of sexually ambiguous imagery.....

*UMathanga kawahlangani,
Ahlangana ngokubon' umyeni*

She whose thighs do not meet,
They only meet on seeing a husband.

The ambiguity in meaning involves the word *hlangana* which can also mean 'to have sexual connexion'. These lines may imply that Nandi had widely spaced thighs, quite an unattractive feature or she conducted herself like a man.

According to the Zulu culture, socialization takes place very early in the children's lives, from the time they start playing with dolls and mud cattle. Boys will emulate adult males, visualizing themselves as possessing large herd of cattle while girls will play games that are aimed at improving their supportive role (Mtuzi, 1990:97). The above lines therefore depict Nandi as "social deviant and non conformist". Nandi is aware of the norms and values that govern the behaviour of girls and women, but chooses to ignore the rules. She sits as she pleases. This is an indication that Nandi has a mind of her own and she

will do whatever pleases her in her personal space.

In line 4:

UGedegede Iwasenhla nenkundla.

Loud mouthed one from the upper part of the court

The line refers to the ability that Nandi had to make herself heard on various matters to Senzangakhona and his councillors. It reveals her low esteem or her strong willed and domineering character. This also shows her deviant behaviour again. People, especially women should never raise their voices at the upper end of the arena or courtyard which is a place of assembly.

Zondi (1989:11) mentions that Nandi was easily angered and sensitive woman even when jokes were passed. This may be ascribed to her early miserable life experiences. Some people would gossip and make insinuations about her falling pregnant before marriage. Even her son bore the wrath of the society that always reminded him of the impropriety of her mother's behaviour.

Nkumane (1999:118) posits that:

In any given cultural context, male and female behaviour patterns are fixed by norms. Anyone trying to break these rules can expect to meet with serious problems in the community in which the ruling group produces images and conceptions of the others to legitimise the status quo. This emphasises the connection between people and their social environment, underlining the reciprocity between the environment and personality. Personal and environmental factors do not function as independent determinants; rather, they determine each other.

Nandi paid a high price for breaching the moral codes. In her quest to attain personal freedom, she violates the cultural norms, which include submissiveness which she is supposed to venerate as a bride in her in-laws' home.

Schipper in Jones & Palmer (1987:46) has this to say about outspoken women:

In all cultures, the woman who formulates her own claims or who protests against her situation is given the cold shoulder. If the woman who expresses herself orally is already labelled in a special way, the women who dare fix thoughts for eternity are criticised all more.

In lines 5 and 6

*UPhokophalala kuMaqhwakazi
Angibonanga, uphok' ukuphalala*

She who rushed out to Maqhwakazi
I did not see the millet rush out

The bard levels subtle criticism again by conjuring up the image of the impulsive Nandi rushing out. *Uphoko* is a small species of millet which is used for improving beer and is roasted by warriors when preparing for a journey (Doke & Vilakazi 1972:688). *Phalala* can mean to rush out in haste (op cit: 644). The combination of the two conjures up a vivid image of the ever journeying Nandi.

Line 7 which says:

*UMboni wamabhuzenge uSontanti
She who sees confusion, Sontanti*

This again contains an unflattering reference to Nandi as *uSontanti*, a drifter, making special use again of the masculine morpheme *-so-* perhaps to emphasize her behaviour of wandering around without fixed abode.

The above lines depict Nandi as a courageous and persistent woman. She does not give up hope in the face of misery but she forges ahead. Confused as she is as the line suggests, she is depicted as woman who is capable of facing life without support from the male partner. Her main strength is drawn from the fact that she has to be there for children, the happiness and the well being of children is of paramount importance. One

should also mention that as a single parent she assumed the role of being guardian to her children; a status which was monopolized by men in her times.

Ongunyemi, a womanist scholar (1985: 73) posits that:

A black woman is not as powerless in the black world as the white woman is in the white world; the black woman, less protected than her white counterpart has to grow independent. After each mental upheaval, the black woman knows in her subconscious mind that she must survive because she has other people without resources depending on her. In a positive about-face she usually recovers through a superhuman effort.

In these lines 10 and 11:

*USontanti kayidl' inkom' ensizwana,
Udl' ubisi lwenkom' enezimpondo.*

Sontanti does not take part of the little hornless cow
She drinks the milk of the cow with horns

In these lines, we find the use of language with erotic ambiguity, as *ukudla*, may mean to have sexual intercourse, as well as eat or drink, or conquer, capture, annihilate, achieve, stab etc. Thus, the inferred meaning of the bard here may be that Nandi had sexual intercourse with a chief of importance, and at the same time it carries the meaning that she does not fool around with anyone who is unimportant, a shrewd reference to her burning ambition.

Nandi is depicted as a bold, wayward and uncompromising woman. She breaks societal norms to achieve her goal, of being married to a man of importance. She abdicated her role as custodian of mores of society in order to realize her wish. She gambled with her marriage by having an extra marital affair with her son's arch-rival in the hope of becoming a queen. Her lack of decency and respect for her son, Shaka, depict Nandi as a woman who will eschew the norms and values of society to get what she wants, no matter what the cost.

In line, 13

UXebe woMhlathuze
Sweetheart of the Mhlathuze valley

The bard openly criticizes Nandi when he refers to her as *uXebe* or flirt, a personalised noun derived from the class 5 noun *isixebe* which means a “concubine”.

This may well refer to her alleged affair with Phakathwayo, one of Shaka’s arch-rivals, and the paramount chief of the area in which she resided with her husband Gendeyana. The affair was said to have incensed Shaka (Bryant, 1929:196).

Nandi’s unusual height earns her another slating comment in line 14:

Mfazi ontongande zingandoda
Woman whose long staves are like those of a man

Fynn (1950:12) has this to say about the physical structure and behaviour of Nandi:

She was said to have been masculine and savage woman, ever quarrelling with, and so enraging her husband, that she was compelled to exercise some salutary authority and reprimand her for the impropriety of her conduct.

Turner (1990:44) explains that line contains criticism of Nandi’s fierce temper. She is reported to have struck one of Senzangakhona’s senior councillors in the face, in a fit of rage. This was one of the reasons for her eventually banishment from royal court, for ‘the impropriety of her conduct.’

Nandi is depicted as a bold, scorned and angry woman. A lot of repression and anger has built inside her. The only way to avenge herself and to make her voice heard is to resort to violence. She is angry at the society for being critical and unsympathetic

towards her. Her flawed behaviour during her teens caused her a lot of heartache and she lost the respect of her society.

Nkumane (1999:162) states that:

In traditional African societies, the role of each citizen is to perpetuate the status quo, to assume responsibility for the continuity of the clan, to work within the tradition and to maintain a closed society. Each member of the society has his or her mission which has to be fulfilled to ensure prosperity and survival. There is no room for change in the attitudes for girls. Freedom to choose one's destiny is characteristic of individualism, a concept which is not found in most African cultures.

It would seem as that Zulu society is hard and unflinching when it comes to meting out punishment to women who have breached the norms and values of society. The society does not accept flaws as committed by women. Senzangakhona was not an innocent party as he impregnated Nandi. However, he was not judged as harshly as Nandi. Maybe it is because of the position he occupies in the society. Perhaps the society believed that it is the woman's fault for falling pregnant. Whatever the reason, Nandi was stigmatized as a "fallen woman" and her mistake turned her and her son into cold, sensitive and insecure beings. Nandi was not the only one to suffer shame, but her children were also reminded of their mother's unbecoming behaviour. Shaka's ruthlessness can be ascribed to the bitter life he experienced as a boy and he pledged his life to revenge those who ill treated his mother and himself.

Jili (1995:28) has this to say about pre-marital sex in the Zulu society:

Premarital sexual relations are allowed by the Zulu customary tradition. On the other hand virginal intactness is highly recommended. In what way may premarital sexual relations be permitted while at the same time affirming the values of virginity? In Zulu practice this was done through the practice of *ukusoma*.

Ukusoma involved a degree of sexual license for the unmarried by allowing intercrural intercourse which is usually not coitus. Both the boys and the girls were intensively

trained in this practice because laxity on this issue would result in a pregnancy. Punishment was severe for premarital pregnancy and no one dared overlook this fact. Since many people knew which girl was in love with which boy, their premarital sexual relations were therefore a matter of knowledge.

Line 16 and 17 are a repetition of those occurring in lines 2 and 3, and the last two lines make reference to Nandi's wedding.

*Obengabafana baseNguga,
Abeza beluhayizana.*

She who was with the boys of Nguga,
Who came in a small group.

Cope (1968:175) aptly explains as reference to the day when Nandi was quietly introduced to Senzangakhona's homestead, accompanied by a group of men from the Nguga homestead, where she hailed. She was installed quietly as Senzangakhona's third wife, there being no marriage ceremony for a pregnant bride. This is a mocking criticism as Zulu custom dictates that a bride-to-be be introduced into her husband's-to-be's village accompanied by a large group of men amidst much celebration and festivity.

Nandi's erratic behavior sets her against the whole society. Her actions solicit great agitation and opposition from the community. Norms and values enforce uniformity among all women and men, since the society eschews individualism. Deviation from the mainstream norms and values leads to ostracization and stigmatization. Nandi's erotic freedom came at a costly price. Pratt (1981:120) explains erotic freedom as follows:

When women heroes do seek erotic freedom, which we define as the right to make love when and with whom they wish, they meet all opposition of the patriarchy.

Jili (1995:31) comments that virginity was highly valued in the Zulu traditional sexual practices. This was the pride of each and every girl and to lose it was to lose self esteem. He states:

A limit was set to those pre-marital relations by the rule that girl must not be deflowered, and some of the girl's puberty ceremonies (Venda, Zulu) included instruction on means to avoid this. Among some tribes girls were examined periodically by their mothers or older women to see if they were virgins, and the virginity of a bride was a matter of great moment. If a girl was found to have been deflowered, a fine, in some instances a heavy one, was inflicted on the boy responsible and in the Nguni group this was increased if pregnancy resulted.

The value of virginity is crystallized in the African culture. Girls are encouraged to live virtuously as there are dividends derived from it. Mtuzze (1990:74) is of the opinion that it is important for women to live by a code of conduct because men insist on virginity to ensure that their heirs are legitimate offsprings. Men insist on strict virginity as far as women are concerned while the same rule does not seem to apply so rigidly to men. Philanderers are 'play boys' while women who do the same are labeled with all conceivable derogatory epithets.

Nandi's praises do not reflect any praiseworthy feminine features. Her praises are composed in an exclusively personal and physical vein of pure criticism and disapproval.

5.5.5 Historical background of Monase

Vilakazi (1945:50), in his account of the brief history of Monase, holds the opinion that she was one of the 'harem' girls of Shaka, who was suspected of being pregnant by him. She was given to Mpande by Shaka in marriage before the child was born. As Mpande's chief wife, she bore him four children: Mbuyazi, Mantantashiya, Mkhungo and Bathonyile.

The residence of Monase was established at Mfaba hills on the south banks of the Black Umfolozi River, while a section of Mpandes' family presided over by Nqqumbazi (Cetshwayo's mother) resided on the South of Mhlathuze river. The two sections were thus about 80 miles apart, the residence of the king being between them, at the White

Umfoloji river. Parties began gradually to associate themselves with either of these centers, and gave themselves the names respectively of Izigqoza and Usuthu, the latter being the party of Cetshwayo and the former that of Mbuyazi.

The conflict between the two pretenders finally came to a head at the battle of Ndongakusuka (1856), from which Cetshwayo emerged the victor. After this battle Monase left for Natal where she lived in obscurity until she died (Vilakazi, 1945:50).

The praise of Monase

*USidididi!
Umbilini wezinkabi,
Udladla likha ngomkhonto,
Amakhosikazi edla ngezinqindi,
Umfazi onesilevu njengendoda.*

Creator of confusion!
Like the entrails of oxen,
Thy kraal dips with a stabbing spear/ one who occupies a prominent position
While other women's kraals eat with short-handled spears/ while others occupy
less prominent ones.
The woman with a beard like a man! (Vilakazi, 1950: 50)

The 'praises' of Monase begin with an unflattering reference to her size, a metaphor which is extended by emphasis into the second line, with the entrails of an oxen being used as an image to describe her endless proportions!

Lines 3 and 4 are taken from the praises of Songiya, the mother of Mpande. The use of the metaphor *udladla* also means a powerful or masculine person, which, taken with the last line, is further evidence of the bard's wish to bring home the point of her masculine appearance (Turner, 1990: 49).

It was previously mentioned (chapters 3 and 4) the role that beauty plays in Zulu society. Cope (1968:21) comments that in Zulu society:

broad face, broad hips, firm flesh, especially large firm breasts and buttocks are features that seem to enjoy special attention as far as women are concerned.

Thus a woman who is big with the physical structure that resembles that of a man is looked upon with wonderment. According to social standards, women are supposed to be feminine and petit. It was also previously mentioned that beautiful women play an ambivalent role in our society. They are exalted for their beauty and are enjoyed as attractive beings. Women are however condemned if they use their beauty to deceive or topple men.

5.5.6 The praise poems of married women

Married women usually perform their praise poems in the company of other women. They are performed on a variety of social occasions, sometimes in the privacy of a homestead house, in the open country yard, in the fields or somewhere in the open. Wherever they take place, it is a women only show. A praise poem is a poetic statement of identity: a woman may be widely known among her circle of friends and acquaintances, by one or more of her praise names in her praise poem. She will often be greeted or referred to by her praise names. Thus in a sense, a woman's praises stand as celebration of her personality and achievement (Gunner, 1979:241).

5.5.6.1 The praises of MaCele

MaCele was from Zenzele in Melmoth. The praises were recorded at KwaMagwaza hospital where she was being treated for tuberculosis (Gunner, 1979:241).

*Kunukani kwaZenzele
Upelepele ngamagam' ahlabaya
Aphethe imikhonto nemicibisholo
Kunuka upelepele
Ahlabe enhliziweni yomkhwenyane
Aye ahlabe nasebukhweni lakhe.*

What is smelling at Zenzele?
The pepper is smelling.

The pepper is words that stab,
They carry spears and arrows,
They stab the husband's heart
And they stab at his in-law's home as well.

Gunner (1979:245)

In this poem, the composer alludes metaphorically to a person or group of people who she considers to have ill treated or maligned her. The allusive references are first a means of stating a grievance and secondly a means of attack. Lastly, they may also serve as a means of righting the relation through a public airing.

In 'the bitter tobacco leaf ground and powdered by men and women,' the complaint is generalized and alludes to "men and women", although the composer may have a specific person in mind. The use of "stabbing" metaphor pushes the idea of malicious destruction of relationships that words can cause. The stabbing is first directed at the husband's heart, thus affecting, it is implied, his affection for his wife. It then turns to the wife's own parents, thus implying a threat to the marriage contract to which they are parties.

A complaint couched in these formal, allusive terms can not be taken as an insult, but it may well go some way towards restoring damaged domestic relations. Fortune (1973:74), writing of Shona women's poetry, notes that

a similar socially acceptable way of expressing complaints figures in harvest and threshing songs and in grinding songs. In the latter, young brides may complain of bad treatment at the hands of the mothers-in-law, and in all such songs great use is made of indirection and metaphor.

5.5.6.2 The praises of MaJele

MaJele was from Madondo in the Hlabisa district. She was the third wife of a chief. She had only been married a few years when she recited her praises.

*NgiwuDabuli isiqiwu
Esingadatshulwa intombi
NginguSibindigidi ogidela abathakathi
Uphikelele ngenkani
UZulu wafunga waphindekezela
Ushika amakhosi wazonda abantukazane.*

I am she who cuts across the game reserve
That no girl crosses
I am the boldest of the bold, outfacer of wizards.
Obstinate perseverer,
The nation swore at me and ate their words.
She cold shoulders kings and despises mere commoners. (Gunner,1979:246).

It is normal for married women to put aside the praise poem of their unattached courting days and to start afresh with new composition. These praises are unusual in that they are composed before marriage and the owner has retained them. These praises, were not received by listeners with enthusiasm because MaJele does not make use of the popular complaint statement. She chooses instead to place the emphasis on her personality: her courage, her determination and her independence, possibly because these praises were performed before marriage when the goals of the performer are focused primarily on showing herself off to the opposite sex (Gunner,1979:247).

MaJele is an elderly woman and these praises did not seem appropriate for this occasion as this is customarily the platform where women share marital experiences. There are several reasons why the praises of MaJele did not elicit the desired effect. MaJele did not follow the usual route which is familiar to the spectators. She did not entertain the idea of complaining and for once she forgot about the hardship and miseries that sometimes come with marriage. Although MaJele's praises did not seem appropriate for this occasion where women pour their hearts out about the hardship they are encountering in marriage, MaJele feels that her praises do not need to accommodate her married status and does not want to be bogged down by her marital problems because she still believes that these praises are her identity. She chooses to remain young at heart. In her heart, her personality: her courage, her determination and her independence, are still important to her.

MaJele perpetuates the uncertainties and hostilities that women encounter in a polygamous marriage. It is a dead end situation and the wives can do little to change it. The oppression of women causes suffering that may go unrecognized. It may be argued that women's oppression is biologically based since women are tied to the childbirth and childrearing processes, which make them dependent on men to survive.

5.6 SATIRE IN IZIBONGO

Satire is a feature that is commonly found in praises. Turner (1990:12) defines it as:

an element which is commonly found in praises. Satire is a discourse that sets out to criticize, by comic ridicule, the views or actions of individuals, institutions or groups of people, aiming to expose that which it is attacking to laughter or scorn. It does this either to correct, warn or even simply tease a person or a group of people about unsatisfactory nature of the feature or situation criticized.

E.V. Knox (1951:14) defines satire:

under the simple term of scorn, with the combined notions of ridicule and reproof.

Satire can be summed up as a form of skilful attack on a person, or a situation, which uses any method at hand to discredit whatever the author fears or hates. Satire covers a wide range of subjects, affection and hypocrisy, ambition, avarice and pride, sex and promiscuity. The one ingredient that is common to all forms of satire is criticism. It is common to find the satirist using abusive language directed against the subject or victim in making a sudden, harsh revelation of a damaging truth.

Wainwright (1979: 4) makes a note of the point that although *izibongo* have always been recognized as "praise poems" per se, some of the *izibongo* which have been recorded can be poems which contain criticism, oaths and outright insults. Dingane has several criticisms leveled at him, in the following example:

UNomashikizela

Washiy' impi yakhe.

Restless One
One who left his regiment.

Here the bard exposes Dingane in a cowardly light (reinforced by the use of the feminine marker –No-), as a person who deserted the regiment he was with on a specific campaign, to return and assassinate Shaka, unprotected and unsuspecting. The clever use of the metaphor UNomashikizela also contains the image of 'wobbling buttocks', again an image associated more with women than with men (Turner 1990:27).

Neither does Shaka escape the critical tongue of the bard, who warns him not to continue pushing his men in battle during summer, when they are traditionally rested:

*Mgengi phez' izitha kusehlobo,
Utshani bude buzokugibanisa.*

Trickster, abstain from enemies, it is summer
The grass is long, it will get the better of you. (Cope1968:227)

Extremely remarkable in this sense is a passage of outright criticism leveled at great Shaka for having massacred the Langeni clan as a revenge for bad treatment there during his childhood days:

*Nkosi umubi ngoba kawukhethi, (ibid, 110-111)
Ngoba nabakwanyokolume uyabulala,
Ngoba wadl' uBhebhe umtakaNcumela ngakwonyokolume.*

King, you are wrong because you do not discriminate,
Because even those of your maternal uncle's family you kill,
Because you killed Bhebhe son of Ncumela of your maternal uncle's family

The following 'praises' are an example of satire. These are the 'praises' of uMhlengikazi waseKing Edward, praises of Nomsa, MaMsomi and also of MaKhuzwayo.

5.6.1 Izibongo zikamhlengikazi waseKing Edward

In these 'praises', we find the theme of sexual promiscuity. These praises belong to a nurse who works at King Edward Hospital in Durban and who lives in the infamous 'red light' district in Point Road.

*UMagwaz' ePhoyinti osinqesibomvu
Umubi wengulube!
Ngokuthath'ukiss uwufake odakeni.
Ungan' ayinacala indab' isocansini.
Umlaph' wengculazi kanti uyayifafaza!
Udilozi liyaxega malibon' indoda.
Unto kaThix' ayipheli!*

The one who stabs at Point Road with red buttocks,
You are as bad as a pig!
For taking a kiss and dipping it into the mud.
The child is innocent, the problem lies with the mat.
The healer of Aids while she spreads it!
The panties are loosened when seeing a man.
This thing of God does cannot be exhausted! (Turner, 1990: 118)

The nurse was given these lines from various ex-lovers, and "praises" used by her peers when mocking her unsavory conduct. She is aware of these 'praises', which are often quoted by her contemporaries, as she is notorious for her promiscuity.

The first lines refer to her abode in Point Road, notorious as a place of prostitution. The second line refers to her social conduct, as she is not choosy about the appearance or status of her lovers. The third line seems to reflect the sentiment of debasing sexuality and sexual relations with its expressive metaphor of mud. The fourth line is a jibe at her habit of never sleeping alone. The next line is true irony, although she is a nurse whose profession is to render help and curing people, because of her loose morals, she is actually responsible for spreading disease. The penultimate line refers to the reported affair the nurse had with a male patient at the hospital. The last line is a line that the

woman herself was fond of saying when questioned about her insatiable sexual appetite, implying that no matter how much she engages in intercourse, her sexual organs were indefatigable (Turner, 1990:118).

5.6.2 Izipongo zikaMaMsomi

*UMathanga ayazivulekela
UMazalela ezaleni njengenkukhu.
Akadlulwa bheshu, akadlulwa bhulukwe,
Umubi, umuhle, inqobo uma uyindoda.
Uyindaba izekwayo emadodeni!*

Thighs that open easily
The one who bears children like a chicken
No man passes her,
Whether you are ugly or handsome, as long as you are a male.
All men know about her! (ibid:119)

The bearer of these praises, MaMsomi, is not averse to these lines which criticize her promiscuous behaviour. They are normally recited by her peers seemingly not in a malicious way, but more in a type of barbed teasing manner. Here we find the stereotype of a nymphomaniac, a woman with an insatiable sexual appetite. This is endorsed by the sentence: *amathanga ayazivulekela* which suggests that her thighs always open up in the presence of a man. She uses no criteria for choosing her men, ugly, or handsome, she is not a fussy woman. She is also a subject of gossip amongst men. As a result of her sexual behaviour, she has given birth to many children.

5.6.3 Izipongo zikaNomsa

This is a straight forward attack at the behaviour of a woman who lives in Umlazi. The use of the metaphor *uvovo* is a particularly effective one to describe a person who is an incurable gossip and newsmonger. These praises also carry the same sentiment as the praises of Nomsa.

*Uvovo luyavuzza,
Kadlulwa zindaba,
Kadlulwa bhulukwe,
UMathanga akahlangani
Ayazivulekela uma ebona ibhulukwe.*

The strainer which is leaking,
No news passes her by,
No trousers pass her by,
She whose thighs do not meet
They open themselves when they see trousers. (ibid, 120).

The above *izibongo* were all compiled by women who composed them with an aim to reprimand the subject of praise, mock or even ridicule her. Looking at the above praises, there are sentences that recur in these *izibongo*: *UMathanga awahlangani* (thighs that do not meet) and *kadlulwa bhulukwe* (a trouser does not pass her by). The message conveyed by these praises is that the subject is a gossip monger, a whore or a woman who gives birth incessantly. This type of behaviour is unacceptable in the Zulu society.

Prostitution is deemed as the oldest profession in the world. Be as it may these women or whores do not command any respect from anyone in the society. They are physically and emotionally abused. They are treated like slime, they are seen as contaminated and dirty and they are the scumbags of the earth.

Jarvinen (1993:21) follows feminist reasoning and holds the opinion that prostitution mirrors a patriarchal view of sexuality, where men are defined as sexual and women as asexual. According to the patriarchal sexual ideology, there is a fundamental and immutable gender difference in sexual needs. Normal male sexual needs are described as natural forces that cannot be subordinated to the constraints of marriage and family life or adapted to other societal interests. On the other hand, normal female sexual needs are seen as negligible or at least monogamous in nature and secondary to women's reproductive functions. This lack of synchronization between male and female in the patriarchal view of sexuality results in the designation of a group of women as

public and generally available. In contrast to normal women, these women as perceived as sexual beings, representing the dark, erotically exciting side – but also the most degraded and scorned side of the female sex in society.

Another fundamental feminist point of view is that prostitutes are not mentally or socially deviant in the traditional sense of the word, they are normal women who choose prostitution from a subordinate position in which they face few attractive alternatives. However, this choice entails great costs for many prostitutes: further social and economic marginalization, psychological problems, and substance abuse are reported in many studies.

Finally, various specific approaches to the phenomenon of controlling prostitution distinguish the quite comprehensive feminist literature on this topic. One example is prostitution control and the deviant women. Feminist research often analyzes the control of prostitution as an explicit control of a group of women labeled as “deviant”. In all control systems, the primary target for control measures is the prostitute and not the male customer or procurers. Since female asexuality and monogamy are considered a norm, and the prostitute is depicted as sexual and polygamous, she is by definition, deviant and thereby a natural object for punishment and treatment. In contrast, the customer does not deviate from the norms of his gender; his purchase of prostitution services is merely the result of sexual frustration, be it temporary or long term. Therefore the objective of prostitution control is to protect him against the trade’s harmful consequences, such as diseases and criminality and not to punish him to alter his behaviour.

5.6.4 Izibongo zikaMaKhuzwayo

These praises were recited by this woman’s neighbour, whose feelings about MaKhuzwayo are quite evident here. MaKhuzwayo is not originally from this particular area, but after she has moved within a short space of time, she knew everything about everybody. When ostracized by certain people, who tried to hide the information from her, she would go up and down the streets, asking endless questions, in order to be

kept abreast of the latest developments.

*UPhoshozwayo
Uyazithanda izindaba zabantu.
Akadlulwa ndaba,
Amadlebe afinyelela kuzo zonke izinkalo
Inja yomoya
Izizwa ngekhala izindaba,
Kuthi lapho ingezwa,
Itshikizise umsidlana wayo, ikhonkothe.
Umapheka ibhodwe lize lishe,
Ngoba elibele ukulevuza izindaba.
Useze wamlomo ubhek' ecaleni.
Ukudla akasakwazi emlonyeni.
Udlana nezindaba.
Umaxosha umyeni kusale yena.
Impela, ukhanda limtshe' okwakhe.*

The talkative One!
She likes other peoples' stories,
She does not miss a single yarn,
Ears that reach out to every plateau,
Spying dog,
It smells out stories with its nose,
But once it has heard the news,
it wags its small tail and barks.
One who keeps the pot on fire until it burns
Because she is busy talking incessantly,
Her mouth now faces sideways.
She who eats no food, She devours only stories
One who drives away her husband and remain behind,
Indeed, she is pig-headed (Turner, 1990:113).

The composer has used humorous images in this poem, comparing MaKhuzwayo to a dog, emphasizing her ability to sniff out information. Due to the fact that she is constantly gossiping, her mouth is described as being constantly sideways, like a person who is always whispering secrets. The behaviour of this woman vis-à-vis the expected norm of a woman in the Zulu society, is therefore censured and the exposure of these undesirable traits were aired in the hope that they would shame her into reverting to more acceptable behavioral patterns.

Mtuzi (1990:65) comments that gossip is always associated with women. He also

mentions that women do not only engage in gossip when they are together. They exchange ideas about other concerns in life. Chatting to one another in this way has some therapeutic value as pointed out by Russianoff (1981:21):

Often women believe men when they say “all women talk is silly gossip”. In reality, women listen to each other’s feelings, exchange of information and assuage each other’s isolation and loneliness.... They can ventilate their frustration, while laughing with each other about their problems. Learning to have good female friendships can be one of the greatest therapeutic resources available to women.

MaKhuzwayo, unfortunately does not fall within the category of women who listen to each other’s feelings. She is depicted as a woman who finds pleasure in snooping around. This is an indication that MaKhuzwayo lives an unfulfilled life, she has enough time on her hands to mind everybody’s business. She is the type of woman who will not improve herself nor will she grow mentally and emotionally. She is a woman who does not know what she wants from life, and she cannot even keep a husband because of her attitude.

5.7 IZANGELO

These praises are recited by a mother when she is with a group of married women on a social occasion. In some cases women have a special song that is sung after the praise poem. The poems are also recited by the mother to her child in the homestead where the hidden complaints would carry particular weight. The mother is in sense reciting the praise poem to and for her child, but she is also reciting it for the benefit of whoever else may be listening; if the persons referred to indirectly in the poem hear it, so much the better. The poem, however, is also recited long after infancy, on any occasion when a mother wishes to express, publicly or privately, the emotions of joy, pride, or gratitude to her child. The *izangelo* that will be analyzed here are those for both boys and girls. The aim is to analyze the theme of *izangelo* and not to pay much attention on the subject of praise.

5.7.1 The izangelo of Mphakamiseni Shandu

- 1 *UMashikashika*
Izinkomo ziyenqaba ukukhuphuka Elenjeni
Zigudl' amaqele
Zithi zingasebaleni
Zingasebaleni zithwele amashoba
(Kusho umfo kaShandu-ke)
Ziyenqaba ukuza kwaMadondo
Ziphindela Elenjeni
Ngobe koze kube nini zingakhuphuki
10 *Ukuza kwaHlabisa emzini omkhulu*
Kwala kwaMadondo?

Toiling one.

The cattle refuse to climb up from Elenjeni,
They skirt the sides of the hill,
They head back for the open,
They turn back, their tails up high
(so says the child of Shandu)
They refuse to come to Madondo,
They go back to Elenjeni.
For how long, I wonder, will they refuse to climb up
And come to the great house of Hlabisa,
Here, at Madondo?

(Gunner,1979:256)

This poem was recited by his mother. Through the extended metaphor of the cattle the mother makes it clear her despair over her continuing unmarried state. She may only move from her father's home (at Madondo) to the home of the groom's father (at Elenjeni) when the bride price of cattle has been paid. She can initiate nothing; she can only wait. The perverse, stubborn cattle provide the objective correlative for her emotions. Her despondence and impatience are openly voiced in the last "For how long?". The success of her concealed message was obvious in the sympathetic response of the listening women. There were cries of "Bantu!" and other similar expressions of concern (Gunner,1979:256).

From the above *izangelo* it is evident that the mother of the child is in an anguish and helpless state because she can do nothing to speed up the process of *ilobolo*. This matter is in the hands of her future husband and his family. The woman receives

sympathy from the other women because they understand the frustration she is experiencing due to of her unmarried state. The greatest honour that can be bestowed upon a woman when she gets married. She is accepted by society and she is the pride of her family.

Mtuze (1990:39) comments that:

Women are by and large, defined by their relations to men. They are not defined as persons in their own right but always in terms that imply contingency on someone else, either as 'someone's daughter, or wife or mother.' Perhaps the most striking image conjured up by such women is that of 'shadowy figures who hover on fringes.

Dlamini (1995:95) believes that if some individual woman chooses such a type of life as a permanent bond there must be really an intrinsic reason and interest. She must not do so because of external pressure. She also must be a strong individual who is prepared to make a life long compromise as her marriage will make many demands. There is a point in arguing that the individual getting into such an institution should do so freely, knowingly and willingly.

5.7.2 An extract from Izangelo of Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi

*Umendo ngabe ngiwendile mfana kaShenge
Ukuba angigananga noNombiba
Ngangithi ngilele abengichinsa usengumthini
Nginxanelwe luhududu lunye lungahlali lakwaSondaba
Lungumamba yehlane lakwaSondaba
Yona ilala ohlungwini engethuswa umkhwani
Ngithe mina ngiyahamba yangilum' isandla
Yangilum' unyawo lokunyathela
Ngijjuqwe imamba ehlanzeni
Ngaye ngavuswa isibibi samagceke
Ndansundansu yangishay' intombi yomuntu
Yangishaya yangehlula-ke mina
Angiqondene nalo ngoba angibangi lutho
Mina nginefa lami lokudalwa
Amaxheg' amadala nehlule empini yaseTshaneni
Nisazithembisa nisathi niyabuya kwaNdunu ningahlabana*

*Kanti eyakwaNdunu sekuyintombi kaMamonga.
Shenge!*

Married life would be sweet, son of Shenge,
If only I were not married in the company of the wicked one,
I felt as I was sleeping that an otter squirted me.
I was persued by another long trailing thing that would
Not remain in the [cursed] forest of Sondaba,
It was like a mamba there in the wilderness of Sondaba,
The one that lies in the freshly burnt veld, where
Mealie leaf does not disturb it.
And I felt as I walked along that it bit my hand;
It bit my foot as I set it down.
I was struck down by a mamba there in the thick bush
country
And I was brought back to life by medicine from the lonely highveld.
Touch and touch again, a commoner's daughter struck me.
I don't care in the least
Because I compete with nothing,
I have my own ancient inheritance.

You old dodderly men, you won at the battle of Tshaneni,
You still promise yourselves that you are going back to
Ndunu for another battle;
But I tell you the one at Ndunu is Mamonga's daughter.
Shenge!

(Gunner,1979: 257).

The poem was composed by the chief's mother, Princess Magogo of the Zulu royal house. The composer's contentions that she was bewitched in early pregnancy by a co wife is expressed firstly through the image of the otter squirting her with evil medicine and secondly through the miniature allegory set in a dream. The mamba, an evil destructive force, coming appropriately from the cursed forest of Sondaba, attacks her and she is saved only by journeying to a doctor in a remote part of the Buthelezi territory. The composer then turns to the second co wife "the wicked one" mentioned earlier and the poem becomes more openly aggressive. The attack on her by the "commoner's daughter" (line 11) is contemptuously dismissed, the thin light "switch" suggesting the ineffectual nature of the attack and of the woman herself. To reinforce this, the composer's own royal heritage is referred to, in contrast to the common descent of the other woman. The final three lines attack the speaker's mother-in-law

who is hostile to the USuthu section of the royal house and hence to the performer herself. Just as her father won at Ndunu in his fight against the opposing Mandlakazi group so she, his daughter will win at any second “battle” of Ndunu between herself and her female enemies.

She speaks with the weight of royal authority and past victory behind her. In this way, through skilful rhetoric, she challenges her enemies. The combative nature of a praise poem, such as this one, although it may have served as a highly effective weapon on a domestic battlefield, functions as a celebration of its owner, the young child, in whose honour it is composed, it is his praise poem of infancy (Gunner,1979:257).

The above *izangelo* depicts the unbearable and unhappy life that was led by the chief's mother in a polygamous marriage. She uses this platform to ventilate her anger and anguish. Once again, it is the theme of women at each other's throat in an unhappy marriage. This situation is so bad that one co-wife resorted to witchcraft to eliminate her competition. These uncertainties cause jealousy that is accompanied by rivalry and fear that may result in witchcraft. This is attested by Mtuze (1990:54).

Relations between co-wives are usually bad, no matter what the supporters of this customary polygamous family say. Reciprocal accusations as well as practices of magic intended for another are commonplace.

Women who commit themselves to enter such a marriage acknowledge the existence of hardship they will be faced with and have to endure for the rest of their married life. The chief's mother confesses that she is in no way competing with anybody because she bears a legacy that no one can take from her, her royal blood. Her confidence, because of her royal stature gives her the courage to win the “second battle” against her female enemies because she can never be defeated by a commoner. This in a way is a survival technique that she employs in a hostile situation to keep her sanity and to show her rivalries that she is of a better breed and it will take more than witchcraft to bring her down.

Another thorny issue is the unrelenting mother-in-law. Mothers-in-law play an immense role in the oppression of their daughter's- in- law. Msimang (1996: 219) contends that:

It is quite surprising that even though men think of women as tender and delicate species, once they get to position of power, they tend to be more rigid, more callous and more ruthless than men. Even newly weds will bear me out that if they experience problems and difficulties in marriage often those problems are caused by the mothers- in-law. Thus far from oppression of women by men, we witness oppression of women by women.

This is an undisputed fact. Women in power tend to domineer those who are helpless, which is oppression of women by women. In this particular instance, mothers-in law reign great. One can make a few assumptions as to why mothers-in laws enjoy flexing their muscles.

The bride is expected to prove her worth in the eyes of the mother-in-law because she can make or break her marriage. She is expected to work hard in this new home and prove that she is a good wife. Her relationship with her mother-in-law is the most closely observed feature of her conduct. She is to satisfy her first as to be confirmed as good. If the mother-in-law is not satisfied, this woman may even be disqualified and be kicked out of this marriage. The complaint of a mother-in-law is taken seriously and it becomes an issue to all the in-law society. It must be borne in mind that the mother –in-law gains power from the fact that she belongs to the side of the man this young man is married to.

The jealousy in the mother-in-law is a product of the patriarchal system. We must consider the fact that she herself may have stayed to this age in her marriage for the sake of her children. The son is now the only male she is close to. Therefore, the arrival of the daughter -in-law creates some jealousy as the son now has to concentrate on his wife.

Nkumane (1999:29) draws our attention to the fact that:

The usage of the term womanism has gone beyond Walker's definition. Black women in many parts of the world have adopted womanism as a symbol of their unique experience as women. One of the many issues covered by womanism is the fight of abuse of women by another woman. This is unique to African women because, for example it takes into consideration the situation of women in a polygamous situation where the chief wife has authority over the other wives. It also refers to the situation between the mother-in-law and the bride.

Womanism does not call for an overhaul of the entire marriage system, but prefers to make life bearable for the woman in a polygamous marriage by empowering her to be self reliant, independent and confident in herself. Ongunyemi in Arndt (2000:718) an African womanist believes that the way a man treats you if you are independent is different from the way the man will treat you if you are dependent on him. The first thing is not to be financially dependent on any man because you may not inherit from your father or your husband. That is why a woman must as much as possible, be self sufficient.

5.7.3 The izangelo of Princess Magogo

*Somthambeka' mbululu unamazwela
Kazi-ke baba ingizwe lapho ngithi imbulu
Inxanele indebeshekazi lingadebe zingabululu
Bangiphothel' intambo kaquluselane
Yonk' indlunkulu isingiqulusele
Ngiphumile nomamekazi kaNdaba
Mhla ngiye evunweni ngihlekwe ngamanqe
Ngahlekwa ngamaklekledwane
Ingabuthini-ke wena kimi unyana kaluthi
UKhanda 'gegebu-nje
Ungathi lokhu ngizokuthuka lokhu
Ungathi uyisishwapha sikaZinyo.*

Sensitive one, easily moved.

I wonder, father, if the deceitful creature over there hears my words?

The broad-lipped woman pursued me unmercifully, the one with labia like a puff adder.

They plaited for me the rope of mutual disdain,

All the royal household turned in disdain from me
I have come out with the great mother of the royal line.
The day I walked out to the harvest gathering
I was mocked by the vultures,
I was mocked by the cuckoo shrikes.
And what could you say to me? You with a twig off- spring,
With your lop-sided head.
You're like this and I will insult you like this:
You're like the shrivelled-up buttocks of my brother-in-law,
You're like the shrivelled-up buttocks of Zinyo. (Gunner,1979:258)

This poem was composed by the mother of Princess Magogo, Silomo of the Mdlalose clan, and recited by Princess Magogo. The poem has a complaint motif. It is also no doubt a valuable vehicle for airing deeply felt grievances. Here again we find the perpetuation of the complaint motif of "the marriage from hell scenario". The composer of these *izangelo* shows her disgust and her anger is directed towards one of the co-wives, who is seen as a deceitful creature. The composer states that the co-wife pursued her unmercifully. She is the broad-lipped woman the one with labia like a puff adder. The composer's anger is evinced by the type of bawdy language that she employs. Gunner (1979:241) alludes that:

The women who possess and compose praise poems are married in polygynous households. The tension and rivalries, that often arise among co-wives and between a husband's mother and his wives may find an outlet in praise poems largely through allusive diction.

Again the composer complains about the royal household and the co-wives that were envisaging and plotting her downfall. She says in the presence of the mother in law, she was mocked by the vultures and cuckoo shrikes. Which could mean that she received no protection from her mother-in-law when she was attacked by the other co-wives whose power can be likened to those of vultures. She boasts about her triumph over her co-wives and mother-in-law. She carries on with the insults, insulting the broad-lipped woman, the one with labia like a puff adder. She hurls insults at her and mocks her physical structure, her lopsided head and her shrivelled buttocks that looked like those of her brother-in-law.

It is generally accepted that a woman marrying a man who already has one or more other wives is moving into a hard life that will challenge her. The co-wives present a daunting prospect. She is not sure of her future as she may also be followed by another wife. She knows too that the other wives are not happy about her coming to join them. Besides jealousy for the man each woman is uncertain of her position after the arrival of the new wife, which definitely means more opposition in terms of survival for the man as well as in terms of support and maintenance. The competition becomes tougher as the number of wives increases. The senior wives are also threatened by the fact that she may take the man away from them through witchcraft.

Rivalry among co-wives and in-laws is another prickly issue that the womanist is concerned with. Ongunyemi in Arndt (2000:718) advocates the idea that only African women may be African womanists because womanists are not only concerned about the issue of gender. African-American womanism, like feminism, overlooks African peculiarities. She feels that African women cannot take the African American situation and impose it on Africa. She refers to those relevant issues that are relevant for Africans but not for blacks in America, issues like extreme poverty and in-law problems, older women oppressing younger women, women oppressing their co-wives or men oppressing their wives.

Palmer and Jones (1983:41) argue that:

The issue of polygamy in Africa remains a controversial one. The received African wisdom seems to be that polygamy has distinct social and economic advantages, that its practice in the traditional milieu does not necessarily result in the erosion of the status and dignity of the woman and that it is perfectly accepted by both men and women.

The above view is shared by another scholar. Msimang (1996:130) holds the opinion that sharing a husband has a number of advantages. Firstly, it meant that the husband did not need to look outside his family for company during the time one of his wives had a small baby. Secondly, he could afford to avoid making love to her for at least two years while she was bringing up the baby. This ensured family planning without

resorting to contraceptives. Thirdly, it ensured that in a society with so many more women than men, at least every woman had a chance to marry. In olden days it was much better for a woman to be married to a polygamous family than to grow up to be an old spinster.

With the adoption of Christian monogamous marriages there are many women who lack marriage partners and eventually become a nuisance to married couples. In the fourth place, the distance between the wife and her husband minimized the anxious moments of conflict, jealousy, suspicion and tension which end up breaking marriages. In the typical African culture divorce was unknown.

Finally even the introduction of the White man's migrant labour could not affect families too adversely because the wives were used to staying without the company of the husband over long periods. The men also preferred the celibate life in men's hostels, rather than township houses which lack privacy. With the modern African woman who shares her husband's bed every night even a six month separation for business purposes often results in divorce or adultery.

The above observation should be commended because the above views are a utopia that most women in a polygamous would like to experience. But do the *izangelo* that have been analyzed reveal this pronounced happiness and individual fulfillment? Surely not! Most of these *izangelo* portray women as living a miserable marital life. There are conflicts with co-wives, husbands and mothers-in-law. This is a living hell which most women have to endure with dignity and a straight face.

Ongunyemi in Arndt (2000: 716) attests that in recent researches that have been conducted, there are young graduate women who are behaving differently from their mothers and grandmothers. For example, some young women, did not want to be monogamous. They preferred to marry into polygynous households. They prefer this type of marriage because they do not want to get oppressed in marriage the way their mothers and grandmothers were. They would marry someone who was already married, then they would have their own house and have children. They want children, but they

also want to be free in marriage. That is why they are rearranging marriage. The women, like men are free to come and go. With such an arrangement they do not have to do housework for the man and the extended family. So they are very liberated as far as housework and domestic matters are concerned.

Ongunyemi in Arndt (2001:717) in her concluding argument states that:

And so, this is where feminism is different. Or does feminism mean a woman who is 'modern' will become immersed in something so traditional like polygyny, and turn it around- turn the whole polygynous concept on its head and then totally reconstruct polygynous marriage? I do not call that feminism because if you are a feminist of any branch, I do not think you want to marry somebody who is already married and has no intention of divorcing his wife.

5.8 CONCLUSION

It has been established from the above discussion that *izibongo* or praises have a special role to play in the social life of the Zulu people. The subject of praise covers a wide range, from kings to commoners and to practically anything. *Izibongo zamakhosi* is an aspect that has received much exposure. In this case, the *imbongi* plays a crucial role when praising the king. The bard's task is to interpret and organize public opinion, he also has a mandate to criticize the king when appropriate. Not only are the best qualities of the king applauded, but praises of kings do contain some elements of criticism. Indeed the whole passage can be abusive. Only by praising what is worthy and decrying what is unworthy can a full picture of the person praised be given.

Although an overview of the *izibongo* has been given, the main aim of the chapter is to focus on the praises of women. The theme conveyed in praises of royal women, praises of married women and also the theme conveyed in *izangelo* were analysed. From the royal lineage we have *izibongo* of Mkabayi, Nandi, and Monase, wife of Mpande. On close observation, one discovers that the *izibongo* of Mkabayi are composed in form,

content and style on those of the great Zulu kings and chiefs. Nandi's praises on the other hand do not qualify for this term 'praise poem'. Nandi's 'praises' are entirely lacking in anything which might be deemed praiseworthy. The praises may be regarded as satirical poetry which is regarded as being composed mostly for expressing disapproval of the actions of some of the members of the society. As for the other women of the royal lineage, their praises also do not follow a format of *izibongo zamakhosi*, but dwell more on their physical characteristics and behaviour.

The praises of married women, such as MaJele, also continued the theme of the unhappy marriage. MaJele uses the praises that she used as a young woman which shows that she was strong and she would not be married to a commoner. She sticks to these praises because she feels they are her identity as she still regards herself as independent, strong, confident and bold.

There are also praises of ordinary people called *izibongo zabantu* or *izihasho*. The style of composition of *izihasho* and *izibongo* is the same as far as form and poetic techniques, but differ in content. These *izibongo* are composed in contemporary times by ordinary people. The *izihasho* evinces more elements of satire more prolifically. The praises of a nurse from King Edward, MaMsomi, Nomsa and MaKhuzwayo are examples of satire. Here the composer reprimands these women about the unacceptable lives that they are leading. They are depicted as prostitutes and gossip mongers. By composing these praises for them, it is hoped that they will mend their ways, but unfortunately the nurse feels that she is quite happy with her way of life.

Izangelo, or the poems of the child is another aspect that has been discussed. The poems are recited by the mother to her child in the homestead where the hidden complaints would carry particular weight. The mother is reciting the praise poem to and for her child, but she is also reciting it for the benefit of whoever else may be listening. In all these praises, one common factor was obvious, all these women were lamenting the miserable life they have to endure in marriage with various obstacles that challenged them, such as the co-wives, the bad treatment which was meted to them by the mother-in-law, and the practice of witchcraft in the marriage. Only one *izangelo*, those of

Mphakamiseni Shandu depicts a woman yearning for marriage, her complaint is that she has been waiting for a long time for her boyfriend to pay *ilobola*.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall recapitulate by taking stock of the findings and observations which were arrived at in the foregoing discussions. This chapter will be divided into three subsections: the general subsection, which will summarise the previous chapters; the specific observation subsection, which will give answers to the aims posed in chapter 1; and lastly my own recommendations.

6.2 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Chapter 1 outlined the aim of this study which was to analyze the depiction of women in folklore. This study focussed mainly on folktales, proverbs and praises. The study investigated whether the Zulu culture was oppressive to women or whether women are treated the same as their male counterparts. The traditional Zulu background was provided in an effort to gain a better understanding of the Zulu culture. The study noted the research that has been carried out on feminism and women issues. The scope of this study, as well as an explanation of key concepts, were also dealt with in this preliminary chapter.

In chapter 2 the study showed that Feminism as a movement was initiated in the 1960s in America. The aim of the movement was to place women on equal footing with men. Feminism encompassed divergent schools of thought, including socio-feminism and Marxist Feminism. Although this movement claims to represent all women, it is not accepted with enthusiasm by all the groups it claims to represent. Most of the reasons why this movement is not popular to all women have been furnished. For example, some women equate feminism with radical feminism and hatred of men, penis envy and a total disregard for African traditions. Another argument is the idea that feminism, as an

exported term, is a monstrosity that is geared towards the destruction of marriage in Africa. The study has also highlighted that some African women shun the term feminism because most women want to maintain the status quo and they fear rejection. This may indicate a misunderstanding of the term and the aims of the movement.

One major critique of feminism is that it does not see beyond Western societies, hence it ignores or marginalizes the specific problems of African women. The massive rejection of feminism has caused some African American women to conceptualize alternatives to feminism, such as Black feminism, Womanism (coined by Alice Walker) and Africana womanism (coined by Hudson- Weems).

On the African continent African scholars like Molar Ongundipe-Leslie, Chikwenye Ogunyemi and Kolawole, realised the need for a feminism that is applicable to the African context. This led to the coinage of terms like Womanism, which Kolawole adopted from Alice Walker. Chikwenye, however stated that it was incidental that the term womanism was similar to that of the American author, but her Womanism is nothing like that of the American culture. It concentrates on the issues which are specifically relevant to the African woman.

Molar Ongundipe-Leslie, opted for the term *Stiwa*, which is an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. She believes that, by using this term, she will bypass many problems stemming from the term feminism which makes men feel threatened.

In chapter 3 folktales were analysed. They are uDemane no Demazane, UMamba kaMaquba; UMkhwekazi namasi, UMabhejane, USiwelewele intokazi eyabe iyogana, UNyumbakatali; UNanana Boselesele and Umfazi nemamba.

The folktale uDemane and uDemazane illustrates the strong presence of sexual division of labour in the Zulu economic system. This folktale reveals to us that it is unfair for only the woman to work, the husband should be at her side to ward off unpredictable misfortunes, man and wife must be united and work as a team. The story also shows

that both man and wife enjoyed milk produced by the bird, as a result of their joined efforts. The emphasis in this tale is on the expected care and protection that husband and wife should have for each other.

It has also been shown that as in real life situation, the Zulu culture attaches a great deal of importance to marriage and procreation. At the same time, Zulu society believes that what is of value must not be obtained easily. This is highlighted in the folktale *uMamba kaMaquba* where the heroine had to suffer and make sacrifices in order to qualify for marriage. Some radically minded feminists believe that marriage ties women to men and it keeps them subordinate. They place a great deal of emphasis on the development of a lesbian culture to avoid oppression of women in heterosexual relations.

Barrenness is highlighted in the folktale *uNyumbakatali*. The folktale depicts that Zulu culture places enormous importance on procreation, as a result barren women suffer great misery. The folktale is emphatic to the barren women's plight, for her suffering and humiliations that she had to endure. The message that the folktale drives home is that the *amadlozi* will never forsake their child. In recompense for her misery and humiliation, Nyumbakatali is rewarded with the most precious gift of all, two human babies. This shows that *amadlozi* are aware of the misery of barren women, and they will never forsake them. They have proved that their power is unchallengeable by a man.

UMabhejane and *uSiwelewele* confirm the idea that there are negative stereotypical images attached to women by society. This folktale shows that women are unfaithful beings who practice witchcraft. Although some scholars contend that women use magic powers to transform themselves to escape from male domination, the folktale, however tells a different story. The images depicted in these folktales approximate social reality in so far that it is embedded in the general consciousness that certain women are unfaithful and dangerous to the society, and they must be destroyed if the opportunity arises.

Although feminism has been used as the main framework within which to analyse Zulu

folktales, the framework was complemented by bringing in some views of Levi-Strauss to re-enforce this study. The ideas of Levi-Strauss were applied to those aspects which were relevant to this study, viz *UDemane noDemazane* and *Umkhwekazi namasi*. Levi-Strauss focuses on the paradigmatic structure of the folktale. He finds this approach valuable because it focuses on the sociological message of the folktale. Binary opposites, levels and transformations form the basis of his approach. He attests that binary opposites are pairs of polarities and these polarities must be broken down. The folktale (thesis) must be broken down into polarities (anti-thesis) which must be resolved by mediators (synthesis) with the result that the initial situation is remedied.

When analysing the thesis, antithesis and synthesis as found in *UDemane noDemazane* and *Umkhwekazi namasi*, these deductions can be made. It is revealed in the folktale *UDemane noDemazane* that the division of labour plays an important role in the traditional Zulu society. The man cannot assist the woman because it is not one of his duties to plough the fields. The *amasi* bird, which is the mediator, brings man and woman together. The folktale highlights the fact that society is made aware that it is inadvisable for a woman to work alone, man and woman must join effort and form a unity in combating unforeseen evil circumstances.

The folktale *uMkhwekazi namasi* highlights the idea that the women in the traditional Zulu society were not content with the status quo. *UMkhwekazi* is the type of woman who is outright deviant and who refuses to be shackled by the oppressive social norms of the tradition. She longs to be like men and enjoy all their rights and privileges. This is displayed by the fact that she dresses up like a man and eats the food reserved for men: *amasi*.

The study has also shown that although there are some negative images attached to them by society, women are acknowledged as beings who have courage and who manage to outwit their adversaries. They are also depicted as the great givers of life and it is acknowledged that the whole nation's existence depends on them. This is highlighted by the folktales such as *Umfazi nemamba* and *UNanana Boselesele*.

In chapter 4, it has been shown that proverbs reflect the Zulu philosophy of life. Proverbs are used by all the members of the community because they contain wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views, and are handed down from generation to generation, just like folktales. It was also stated that proverbs are not only the embodiment of culture, but they are used in various situations for teaching, warning, disapproval and their use is to make people conform to accepted patterns of behaviour.

The definitions from various scholars show that the proverb is seen as a summary of the experiences of a given people. They are philosophical and moral expressions encapsulated into a few words. They contain the fundamental truths about life in general and human nature in particular.

The proverbs pertaining to women were analysed. Many of them pertain to women in marriage. These proverbs show that women in a polygamous marriage are often extremely unhappy. This is not to say that a polygamous marriage had no advantages. The proverbs which reflect the philosophy of life and the belief of the society, depict marriage as a monster. Marriage is seen as an institution which breaks women who are cheeky and insolent. It is also used as a threat to keep women in subservient roles. Some proverbs prepare young girls for marriage, they educate her so that she gives due respect to everybody as she does not know who her in-laws will be. Proverbs also warn men about beautiful women as they are seen to be dangerous. Proverbs also warn men of not falling into the trap of marrying a witch's daughter as she will destroy the whole family.

There are also proverbs that exalt the role of motherhood. Mothers are regarded as a haven, the provider of love and security. Children swear by their mother because they are the sustainers and givers of life.

One could say that the analysis of the proverbs shows that women experience pain in marriage. Perseverance is a true virtue which is deemed proper for marriage. Women are doomed in marriage and only the tough survive. Women also stay in marriages

since a woman may hate to disappoint her parents by returning home because she may be regarded as a failure.

In chapter five the focus is on the praises of women. The praises of royal women and commoners were analysed. The bard or *imbongi* plays an important role in depicting royal women. We can refer to Mkabayi, Nandi and Monase. The study has shown that Mkabayi's praises are modelled in form, content and style on those of the great Zulu kings and chiefs. Nandi's praises on the other hand do not qualify for the term 'praise poem'. Nandi's 'praises' are entirely lacking in anything which might be deemed praiseworthy. Similar to the praises of Monase, the praises do not follow the format of *izibongo zamakhosi*, but dwell more on their physical characteristics and behaviour.

Where it concerns married women, MaCele's praise continues the theme of the unhappy marriage. MaJele on the other hand, uses the praises that she used as a young woman which shows that she was strong and she would not be married to a commoner. She sticks to these praises because she feels they are her identity.

There are also the praises of ordinary people called *izibongo zabantu* or *izihasho*. These *izibongo* are composed in contemporary times by ordinary people. The *izihasho* evinces the elements of satire more prolifically because this type of poetry is composed mostly for expressing disapproval of the actions of some members of the society.

The praises of a nurse from King Edward, MaMsomi, Nomsa and MaKhuzwayo are examples of satire. Here the composer reprimands these women about the unacceptable lives that they are leading. They are depicted as prostitutes and gossip mongers. By composing these praises for them, it is hoped that they will mend their ways.

Izangelo or the poems of the child is another aspect that has been discussed. The praises are recited by the mother to her child. The mother is actually reciting the praise poem to and for her child, but she is also reciting it for the benefit of whoever else may be listening.

In all these praises, one common factor was obvious, all these women were lamenting the miserable life they have to endure in marriage. Only one *izingelo*, of Mphakamiseni Shandu depicts a woman yearning for marriage, her complaint is that she has been waiting so long for her boyfriend to pay *ilobola*.

6.3 SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

6.3.1 Which stereotypes are attached to women in folktales?

The study has demonstrated that various stereotypes are attached to a woman in folktales. The images were: woman as a labourer, a witch, the femme-fatale, the bold and the daring, woman who rebels against her culture, the barren woman, and a woman who shows perseverance in marriage, and who is rewarded for that.

6.3.2 Do proverbs, while ascribing the acceptable norms and values that women and girls should conform to, serve as a catalyst to subjugate or protect the young and mature Zulu woman?

It was discussed previously that the Zulu woman had rights in traditional Zulu society. She had the right to property, the right to equitable and fair treatment and also the right to her husband's company. As much as the woman was protected by her rights, she was also governed by the moral expectations of society. There were moral codes to be followed. The proverbs placed emphasis on how women should behave before and after marriage. Marriage was depicted as an institution to tame women and make them toe the line.

Proverbs showed the ambiguous role played by women. They are seen as untrustworthy if they are beautiful, but as mothers they are exalted by society for being the care givers of children. The society thus perpetuates the idea of fear and

subjugation of women. Insolent girls are tamed in marriage and lose their self-worth because of the unpredictability of marriage, which in many instances is unbearable.

6.3.3 How does the *imbongi*, who is the specialist in the history of his people and the genealogy of his chiefs and queens, depict the royal women: Mkabayi, Nandi and Monase in particular?

Mkabayi is depicted as strong, ruthless, manipulative, approachable, allusive and secretive. Her praises are composed in a laudatory, eulogistic vein, like the heroic/epic poetry of the royal men, in keeping with her elevated social position. She was held in high esteem by both men and women and she was never regarded as a woman, as her praises do not allude to her physical appearance.

However, the praises of Nandi and Monase provide an interesting contrast with regard to what is normally contained in the majority of the traditional *izibongo* of royalty, i.e. extensive praising, in that they reveal the existence of a type of poetry that may be labelled satirical poetry. These 'praises' of Nandi detail her favourable and unfavourable qualities in harsh reality, regardless of her royal status. These particular praises, when considered as the praises of royal persona, are not on the same elevated plane as those of their male counterparts. Rather they are typical examples of the praises of the ordinary persona, remaining on the domestic level of criticism and complaint.

Despite of the fact that Nandi's praises are not elevated, she is however depicted as a strong willed, ambitious, tenacious bitter and a caring mother who wants only the best for her children. Her tenacity eventually paid off when her son was installed as king of the biggest empire as the result her unwavering support.

In case of Monase, the poet places emphasis on her physical appearance. She is depicted as a gigantic women and her physical structure was of interest to the bard.

6.3.3.1 How do women commoners depict themselves in praises?

The praises of MaJele and MaCele are self composed. MaJele perpetuates the

stereotype of an unhappy woman in marriage whereas MaJele keeps the praises she composed in her youth. Although she is a married woman now, she still depicts herself as a strong, bold and ambitious woman.

6.3.3.2 How do women praise themselves in Izangelo?

The *izangelo* that have been analysed do not show that women praise their children in anyway. They are used as a channel to air their grievances. The *izangelo* depicts women as unhappy because of the problems with the co-wives and mothers-in-law. The only exception is of one *izangelo*, where a woman yearns for marriage and wonders when her boyfriend will pay *ilobola* and make her a wife.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, the Zulu culture has stressed the status of a woman in marriage as being that of a minor, a little bit higher than that of her female children but less than that of her male children, especially the first born. Cultural sexism does not give the woman a right even to head her family after her husband's death. If she has no adult sons, a male from the family, e.g. her husband's brother, will take over until the eldest son reached maturity. This is the perception that has been carried over from one generation to the other.

Men need to endorse the idea that the status quo has changed, since men and women are now equal in status. Feminism or whatever body of politics, provide the opportunity to re-evaluate the position of a woman in society and to rectify the distorted misconceptions about women. The aims and objectives of African feminism encourage the woman's position as a wife and mother, they also takes into consideration what she considers valuable in her culture. African feminism seeks to bring about the

establishment of more equitable conditions, better understanding and a more cordial relationship between men and women. This is an ideology that should be supported by all, especially women.

It was discussed in the preceding chapters that folktales and proverbs are the externalisation of the philosophy of life in a society. The Zulu society focuses is on the community and not on the individual. It can be deduced that in reality, society is harsh and insensitive to women. They are treated as the “other person”, who is unequal to men. By highlighting this behaviour as the victimization of women, the folktales in particular offer a solution to society. They appeal, albeit very subtly and unobtrusively to the conscience of the nation's custodians of justice and the natural rule of law to reassess society's attitude towards women.

Marriage is a recurring theme in most of the chapters that have been analysed so far. It can be deduced that marriage plays an important role in African societies, and it has been observed that the society's ideologies so condition the view of life that whatever is deemed proper, for example marriage for girls, must be secured at all costs. This is confirmed by the fact that women are expected to display certain attributes in marriage, like submissiveness, kindness, self- sacrifice and perseverance in order to be socially approved. The Zulu society still holds to the belief that all women are destined for marriage. One hopes that such beliefs concerning marriage will alter as society must concede culture is dynamic and it is only fair that women must not be put under so much pressure as far as marriage is concerned. It should be left to an individual to decide what is best for her as marriage should be a blissful experience for women, and not a bondage. African feminism also shares these sentiments.

Society still regards a woman as a dangerous being who should always be eyed with suspicion. Society would benefit tremendously if more people, both men and women, could view women more positively. The world would be a harmonious place to live in if individuals could loosen up and discard sexist, and myopically rigid attributes which are often associated with women. Women, like men, are fallible and are prone to make

blunders in life. Women should thus not be the scapegoats of society, they should also not be blamed for all the wrongs in the society today. Similarly, men should also not be regarded as enemies by women. This utopian state can only be achieved if both men and women become progressive feminists, committed to a socially just society.

The democratic system in South Africa has heralded an era that is having an impact on African society. Men have seen their powers dwindle and there has been a reversal of roles. The man who used to be the head of the family and responsible for taking care of his family is in most cases forced to assume the role of a dependant.

Accepting change is difficult, especially for men who are culturally indoctrinated to believe that they are superior to women. Many of men feel insecure about change which leads to resentment and anger, and ultimately a breakdown in marriage. They do not realize that culture is changing and they also need to adapt to the changing circumstances.

The onus is on women to make a better world for their children, both male and female to survive the challenges that come with change. Mothers should prepare their sons for changed roles, and not to perpetuate the myth that there will always be a woman to take care of them. Today women no longer regard marriage as a state to strive for. Indeed, many women prefer their independence to marriage and motherhood.

APPENDIX

FOLKTALE 1

UMFAZI NEMAMBA (IGODA 19)

Long, long ago there lived a dangerous snake that was an incessant pest to the community. This snake preyed on live-stock of the community. It even attacked human beings. Then there was a volunteer, and it was a woman. This woman promised the community that she will kill the mamba. The people were shocked by the woman's confidence and some of the people thought that she had gone crazy.

The woman then cooked porridge. While the porridge was boiling, she poured it in a calabash. She then put the calabash on her head and she walked as fast as she could, passed the place where the snake usually attacked people. When the mamba saw the woman, it was raving mad and it aimed at striking at the crown. It struck once, unfortunately its head landed in a steamy hot porridge. This is how the vicious snake died.

FOLKTALE 2

UMKHWEKAZI NAMASI (IGODA, 1985:59 - 63)

Once upon a time there was an old woman who was living alone. Since she was lonely she went to stay with her daughter. Her son -in law and her daughter were industrious people. Every morning they would go and work in far away fields while the old woman worked nearer home. There was a lot of sour milk in the house. The old woman liked sour milk but it was taboo for her to eat milk at her son-in law's place.

She devised a plan to get the sour milk by impersonating her son - in law. When her daughter and son-in law came back from the fields they discovered that the sour milk has been eaten. They asked the old lady if she knew what had happened, but she said

she had no idea as to who ate the sour milk.

This disappearance of sour milk went on for some time until the son decided to lay a trap for the person who was stealing the sour milk. As usual, after her son-in-law had left for the fields, the old woman went back to the house for the sour milk. However on that particular day the son-in-law was lying in wait and she was caught in the act of eating the milk.

He decided to punish her by sending her to fetch him water from a frogless river. The old woman went from one river to another only to find that they all had frogs. Eventually when she was so tired that she could hardly carry herself, she found one. She drew some water for her son-in-law and also drank some. She then saw a huge tree next to the river and decided to sit down as she was extremely tired. She later wanted to stand up and leave only to find that she was tied up by its roots. The river that she had drawn water from belonged to the king of the animals. The animals started arriving in the evening to spend the night in the area and asked her what she was doing in the king's river. She replied that she had been resting and was now trapped.

Eventually the king of the animals arrived and became very annoyed to find that woman at his river. He then said that the old woman would be eaten the following day. They all then went to sleep. Among the animals there was a genet which felt sorry for the woman and freed her. She then went home to give her son-in-law the water he had asked her to go and draw. He was very surprised to see her back as he had hoped that she would die.

FOLKTALE 3

UDEMANE NODEMAZANE (MSIMANG, 1986:227-231)

Once upon a time there was a woman who set out in the morning to go and cultivate the land. She cultivated and cultivated and cultivated and then a bird suddenly appeared.

This bird then said:

Tshiyo! Tshiyo!

This is the earth of my father

Which is cultivated by lazy people

Which is not cultivated by diligent people

The soil must go *mbe mbe!* (tight,tight)

The hoe-handle must go *phoqo phoqo!* (break, break)

The seeds must go *chithi chithi!* (scatter, scatter)

Indeed it was so. The soil that had been cultivated became tight again and the grass grew. The hoe-handle broke and the seeds were scattered. The woman was astonished and did not understand what strange events these were that happened to her. She returned home and reported the matter to her husband. The husband reproached her saying that she was lazy. Then the woman was quiet because she did not know what else to say. She woke up the next day and went to the fields again. She cultivated and cultivated and once again, the bird appeared. It sang its song and things happened as on the previous day. Again the woman returned home and reported the matter to her husband. The husband said that he did not believe her story. He said that he will go with her on the following day. Indeed the husband went together with his wife to cultivate. The man concealed himself in the grass. The woman began to hoe. Again the bird suddenly appeared and sang again. The weeds grew and the soil returned. The hoe-handle broke and the seeds were scattered. The man was furious. He set out chasing the bird with the purpose of catching it. The bird flew away. The man chased it. He chased it until it came to a big flight of birds and joined in with them. The man arrived. He saw a bird which resembled the one he had been chasing. He sprang upon it and caught it. The bird pleaded for mercy and said:

Do not kill me,
I am the *amasí* bird.

Then the man said: Bird! Bird! Defecate *amasí*. Indeed the bird went *kla---* and it squirted curdled milk. The man received it in hands and ate. The man was very pleased that he had got himself a "cow" which could produce milk.

On his arrival at home he told his wife about this and then put the bird inside the pot.

The pot was covered and then sealed with cow-dung so that the bird would not flee. The man always took the bird out after the children had gone to sleep and then said:

Bird! Bird!
Defacate *amasi*

Indeed the bird would squirt out creamy curdled milk. They would mix it with thick porridge and eat. They did not give the children and the children were instructed never to uncover the pot. The children's names were Demane and Demazane. The children promised never to open the pot. When their parents had gone, Demane uncovered it. She found that the bird had defacated creamy sour milk in the pot. Demane and Demazane were now devouring this meal because they were hungry. While they were eating, the bird flew and sat on the pot. Demane saw this and said:

Demazane, Demazane,

Here is father's bird going away!

Demazane answered by saying:

Just wait brother,

I am still swallowing a mouthful!

Then the bird flew away.

And the bird flew faster and faster. Demane and Demazane went out and pursued it. It outran them and joined a big flight of birds. Demane and Demazane got there; they the bird which resembled the one they were chasing. They caught it. Unfortunately this was only a wagtail. They spoke to it saying:

Bird, bird,
Defacate *amasi*

The bird went *pa---* and it splashed out birds' droppings. The children realised that this was not the bird they were pursuing. They were confused as to what should be done.

Demazane said they should take it and return home with it. Indeed they arrived and then put it inside the pot. Then they covered it. In the evening, when they were asleep, the man uncovered the pot. He took the bird out and said:

Bird, bird
Defacate *amasi*

It went pa--- and splashed birds' droppings. The man was furious. He told his wife that the children had uncovered the pot. They woke the children up and questioned them. The children denied. The man agreed with his wife that they should let them sleep. But the children were already frightened, they did not fall asleep readily. The man then kindled a huge fire in the hearth. When the fire was a red furnace, he pushed into the fire two awls. The woman then called the children. She started with the boy and said: Come here my child,
Let me kill the lice on your head.

Demane went to her. She killed the lice until he had fallen asleep. Then she went for Demazane and did the same until she slept. When the children were asleep, the man took the red-hot awl and pierced Demane with it. The woman took another awl and pierced Demazane. They pierced them through their ears. The awls went through from one ear to the other. The children woke up and cried. They ran away plunged themselves into a pool. The awls cooled off and slipped off, on their own. The children came out of the water and ran away blindly, not knowing where they were going. They ran and ran until they came to the Stone- of-two-holes. When they arrived there, Demane sang:

The stone -of-two-holes,
The stone-of-two-holes,
It is not opened by human beings,
It is opened by the swallows,
Which fly in the sky!
Open that I may enter!

The rock opened and the children went in and stayed there. The stone became Demane and Demazane's home. On the following morning, Demane woke up and went to look

for food. He came back with beef. They cooked and ate it. On the second day, the boy went away again. He warned Demazane not to make a fire for the cannibals would smell the meat and get there. When the girl felt hungry, she made the fire and roasted a fat piece of meat and ate it. A cannibal smelt the meat and came to the Stone-of-two-holes, and it began to sing in its hoarse voice saying:

The Stone-of-two-holes,
The Stone-of-two-holes,
It is not opened by human beings,
It is opened by the swallows
Which fly in the sky!
Open that I may enter!

The stone did not react. It did not open. The cannibal sang and sang and sang but the stone did not open. Then cannibal gave up and left. Actually it had gone to burn out its voice with an awl. The girl was frightened. She realised that this was not her brother singing. She realised that she had done a wrong thing, and the cannibal would find her by herself and eat her up.

The cannibals travelled and travelled and then made a fire. When it was lighted, it pushed in an awl. The awl burnt until it was red-hot. Then it took the awl and burned its throat. Indeed its hoarse voice became high-pitched. The cannibals went back to the Stone-of-two-holes. On getting there, it sang saying:

The Stone-of -two- holes,
The Stone-of -two-holes,
It is not opened by human beings,
It is opened by the swallows
Which fly in the sky!
Open that I may enter!

The rock opened. When it opened the girl ran to hide in a corner. The cannibal entered and was attracted by the meat, and it took all the meat. However, it did not see the girl. The cannibal went out and left.

Demane then arrived with some food. He got angry when he found that the meat had been taken. He realised that Demazane did roast some meat and the cannibals smelt its smell. Indeed the girl conceded this but promised never to roast meat again. And so they stayed there until they were big. Demazane only left the rock to marry and Demane also married and established his homestead.

Cosu, cosu, iyaphela-ke (Bit by bit the story ends)

Audience: We thank you. What a delightful story!

FOLKTALE 4

UNYUMBAKATALI (MSIMANG, 1986:247-250)

Dumudumu married a girl when he already had four wives. But the newcomer never became pregnant. Those who became pregnant gave birth to crows. Those others laughed at her, calling her *iNyumba-katali* (the barren one). They said: "We (at least) give birth to crows."

When she went out, they would then collect ashes in their houses and scatter them in her house. Even the crows would enter, eat the food she had cooked and scatter the ashes all over the house. On coming she would sweep all the shes. She used to cry. But then they would say: "And so! What is this barren one crying for? She does not even bear a crow!"

The crows gathered at her door crying: "Hhwa! Hhwa! Nyumba-katali!" Indeed, their mothers were amused. Even her husband no longer wanted her. He would look at the crows thinking that they were beautiful simply because he did not know a child. Then one day this woman went to cultivate the fields. There appeared two pigeons. They picked up the seeds where she was cultivating. The woman cried. One pigeon asked her, saying: "Are you crying because we are eating your seeds?"

She said, "No."

They said, "Then why are you crying?"

She said, "I am crying because I am barren."

They said, "You do not bear?"

She said, "No."

They said, "Ever since you arrived you have never been pregnant?"

She said, "No."

The one pigeon then said, "*Vukuthu!*"

The other said, "Why do you say, *Vukuthu*? Why don't you tell her to go home and when she gets there to sharpen a blade?" The woman went back home and sharpened the blade. The pigeons also came and landed at her door-way. She took out sorghum and scattered it. They ate then and they came into the house. They said, "Where is the blade?" She took it and gave it to them. They said where is the reed?" She gave it to them. They said: "Kneel here!" Then they said, "Put a clay-pot here!" and she put it there. They incised her left leg and drew blood. Out came a blood clot which was a boy.

They put it in a clay pot.

Then they incised her right leg and drew a clot. The clot came out which was a girl. It was also put in the clay-pot. Then they sealed up the pot with dung. They said, "Do not open it. We will come to open it." The woman wondered what the effect of this was going to be since even her husband was no longer coming to her. She poured out sorghum for them again. They ate it and left.

She stayed then for some days and the pigeons returned. They had come to open the pot. They found that the children were no longer foetuses. Once again, they sealed up the pot and said: "Do not open it until we come back again.

After a few days, the pigeons returned once again. They opened the pot. They found that the children had grown and were now crowded together in the clay pot. They took them out and put them in a big pot. They said then, "Today we are going away for good. You must not take them out, unless you take them out for feeding, but then you must put them in again. They must not be seen."

Now the woman started to laugh. Since she was all white from having been sleeping in the ashes; now she remembered to wash. When the other women saw her washing and

anointing herself, they said: "What are you washing yourself for since you are barren? You do not bear even a crow." However, she just kept quiet now; she no longer cried like before. In the evenings she would close the door; closing it with mats so that there is not even a hole (to see through). Then she would laugh, talk to herself, and sing:

Hold me, I am going away!
I could tell you a story, *Weyi!*
(But) I am going away with the pigeons.

There was an old man, Somaxhegwana. He was staying at the old woman's (hut). On hearing Nyumbakatali talking, he would go out to listen at the side (of her hut). He would even go to peep at the door but could not see because it was closed up with mats. However, he would hear that she was playing with children. Then he would go back and sleep, never saying anything about this matter. By this time the children were crawling.

On a certain day, Somaxhegwana- who kept hearing this talking in her hut- reported the matter to the chief, saying "Chief, some time at night you must come with me in order that we stand next to Nyumbakatali's hut." The chief said:"What is it, Somaxhegwana?" He said, "Well, chief, you will hear for yourself." Indeed the chief went out in the night. He said, "Come here, Somaxhegwana," and they went and stood at the side of her house. They heard her playing with them. As they played, they crawled and crawled in the house. She was singing for them saying:

Hold me, I am going away!
I could tell you a story, *Weyi!*
(But) I am going away with the pigeons.

The chief tried to peep but could not see anything because the mats sealed off everything. Her children were very beautiful indeed. She had plaited their hair to form necklets which hung to the shoulders. The chief and Somaxhegwana went back. He also did not speak to anyone about the matter. The next day the chief said, "Somaxhegwana, this evening I shall go there and open the door." Indeed they went there. As they arrived, she was playing with them again. The chief

said, "Open the door."

The woman got a fright. She was agitated. She took the children and put them in the pot and then opened the door. Somaxhegwana and the chief entered. The chief asked, "Who are you talking to?" She said, "Who am I talking to?" Am I not the barren one?" Then he said: "Stand up, Somaxhegwana and see if you will not find anything here in the house."

Somaxhegwana got up. He searched and searched. He found them in the big clay-pot. He said, "But where did you get them from?" The woman said, "Whence did I get them? Am I not barren? Did I not fail to bear even a single crow? Can it be really you, chief, who ask me these things?" The chief did not take notice of what she was saying. He simply played with the children. Then he said, "Wife, I had appointed you to be my chief wife. Hide them again. Do not show them."

Indeed! It was known only to the chief and Somaxhegwana. Then the next day the chief called Somaxhegwana. He said he should scoop up some mealies and spread them in the yard. Somaxhegwana got the mealies and gave them to the chief. He scattered them and called the crows. Then he caught each of those crows by their heads and beat them on the ground, killing them. He killed them all. Somaxhegwana then took them away and threw them in a gully. The wives cried out saying: "Oh! chief, you make us the same as Nyumbakatali." But the chief was just quiet.

These women now looked for Nyumbakatali. They wanted to kill her because the chief had killed their crows. Then on the day when the chief showed the children, he called his co-wives together with Nyumbakatali. He said, "Women, do you know the thunder of Mthathanduku who struck Nosikhakha such that he relieved himself while limping along; My ancestral spirit wait, for you have spoiled me." They said, "No chief." He said then, "The lightning of Nosikhelekehele is striking today. It will take those at the door and throw them at the back of the hut, and take those at the back of the hut and throw them to the door. Nyumbakatali is chief all over you today. Go Somaxhegwana and fetch those things." He meant the children.

Somaxhegwana went. He took the children. On entering with them, he gave them to their mother. One woman died of shock. Another packed and went away. The other two remained and became slaves of Nyumba-katali.

FOLKTALE 6

UMAMBA KAMAQUBA (MSIMANG, 1986:259-262)

Once upon a time there was a chief. The chief's name was Mamba (son) of Maquba. On a certain day there was a girl who wanted to marry Mamba of Maquba. Indeed she set out on a journey to marry Mamba of Maquba. Her name was Thokozile. Thokozile travelled and travelled until she came upon an old woman. She said to the old woman: "May you please show me the way, granny? I am going to marry Mamba of Maquba." The woman then said, " *Awu!* My child! You want to marry Mamba of Maquba?" Thokozile answered in the affirmative. In fact Mamba was a chief. This old woman had oozings in her eyes. Then she said, "You see my child, if you want me to show you which way you must take, first lick the oozings from my eyes so that I can see the way properly."

Indeed the girl licked the oozings. She licked and licked until there was none left in the woman's eyes. Then the old woman said, "You see my child, since you have helped me so much by cleaning my eyes, I am going to direct you. You see my child, Mamba of Maquba is actually an animal. When you get there, they will be waiting for you. There are old women who always stay there waiting for the girls who come to marry Mamba of Maquba. On your arrival there they will instruct you to go into a hut. When you have entered that hut you must sit down and keep quiet. You will hear Mamba of Maquba whistling. He will whistle and whistle and then you will hear his rumbling as he enters. At that stage my girl, you must not panic. Just sit still. Mamba will then roll himself and roll himself around until he rests his head against your neck, rolling himself all round your body. You mustn't be frightened at all. When he has finished rolling himself around you, take a bush knife and cut him up. You must chop him and chop him. He won't harm you."

The girl thanked her and continued on her journey. Farther on she met another woman. This woman could not carry a load on her head. Instead she carried loads on her buttocks. On seeing the girl this woman said, "*Hhawu!* Please help me lift up my load, my child." Thokozile did not vacillate, she took the load and lifted it for the woman. The woman thanked her and said, "Go (Well) my child! You will have a happy marriage where you are going to."

Indeed Thokozile eventually arrived at the home of Mamba of Maquba. Indeed she found them waiting for her according to what the old woman had told her. They let her in gave her boiled sorghum to grind and to prepare meal for Mamba's *amasi* (curdled milk). Indeed she ground it. When she had finished, they said that she should go to Mamba's private hut. When she was there she heard shrill and whistling and rumbling as Mamba of Maquba was approaching. The girl was alone in the hut, and above that the hut was closed. Suddenly she saw snake entering through a small hole in the hut. The girl just sat still. The snake came and rolled itself around her but she persevered. She was not frightened. Mamba rolled himself around her and eventually rested his head against her neck. He realised that the girl was not scared of him. He then went out through the same hole by which he had entered. He drove his cattle out to graze. In the afternoon he returned to his private hut and found the girl waiting for him. He lived with her as his wife.

At home they heard that Thokozile had a prosperous marriage. Her younger sister became jealous. She also decided to go to Mamba of Maquba. Indeed she went off. She travelled and travelled and met the old woman on her way. On coming upon her she said, "Granny! Granny! Show me the way to Mamba of Maquba's place." The old woman answered and said, "It is alright my child, but first help me and lick my oozings, so that I can direct you well." The girl exclaimed with astonishment saying, "What! What do you mean? Do you think that these eyes of yours which are so full of eye-oozings are going to be cleaned by me. You will never see me doing that." The old woman then said, "It is alright, my child. I thought you wanted to be shown the way to Mamba's place, for I was going to direct you. The girl proceeded with her journey. She travelled

and travelled until she met a woman who was not able to carry a load on her head but on her buttocks. This woman requested the girl to help lift up her load. The girl expressed great astonishment and said, "Are you sitting here because you expect me to lift your load for you? You will never see me doing that." The woman said, "Go, you presumptuous boaster, but you will not get marriage where you are going to."

The girl proceeded farther until she got to the place of Mamba of Maquba. She found the old women already waiting for her. They let her into the hut in order to grind a meal for Mamba's *amasi*. They told her to make a nice and fine meal. Yet the girl made it very rough. When she had finished they took her into a private hut. It was closed with only a tiny opening high up in the hut. Suddenly the girl heard shrill whistling. She also heard a rumbling noise as Mamba approached his hut. Suddenly she saw the head of a snake nosing through the hole high up. The snake came in and started to roll itself around the girl. The girl began to cry. Mamba of Maquba got angry. He slashed the girl with his tail. He slashed her and slashed her. Eventually the girl reached the door and pulled it open and then ran away. Mamba followed her all along still slashing her with his tail. She ran, screaming all the way to her home. Mamba then turned back and returned home.

By then Thokozile was already pregnant. She gave birth to a beautiful girl. On a certain day she asked for permission to visit her folks at home. Mamba of Maquba consented, and said that he would go with her in order to send them *lobola* cattle. The girl was happy but apprehensive about what they would say at home since her husband was a snake. She then remembered that the old woman had said that she must chop up the snake with a bush-knife. Indeed on a certain day while Mamba was rolled up around Thokozile, she took the bush-knife and cut him up. She cut him and cut him to pieces. Suddenly she saw the pieces changing into a handsome young man. Indeed Mamba of Maquba had been transformed into a snake through witchcraft.

It was good when Mamba of Maquba had been transformed into a human being. He went with his wife to visit his in-laws. Mamba of Maquba was driving many cattle and Thokozile carrying their baby on her back. They arrived at home and there was great

rejoicing.

Bit by bit, the story ends!

FOLKTALE 7

UNANANA KASELESELE (MSIMANG, 1986:223-225).

Once upon a time there was a hungry elephant which went looking for food. When it could not find it, it travelled and travelled and travelled until it got to a homestead very far away. When it came there, there was nobody to find except the children. It said to them: "Whose children are you?"

They said, "We are the children of Nanana of Selesele.... who built on the path on purpose, because she relied on her cunning."

Again the elephant said, "Whose children are you?"

They said, "We are the children of Nanana of Selesele, who built on the road because she relied on her cunning."

Then it swallowed them and departed.

In the afternoon, Nanana arrived. Whichever house she entered, it was dead silent. As she was walking towards the gate of her homestead, she saw elephant's hoof-prints. Then she was convinced that her children had been taken by elephants. She went into the house. She tied to her body blankets, pots, firewood, axe, fire and a knife. She then set out following the elephants. After walking a short distance, she came upon a buffalo. She enquired from it, saying.

"Buffalo, (please) tell me - tell me which elephant ate my children?"

The buffalo jumped about, dancing for her, and then said:

It is far away, at the elephant's lakes,

Where it rains in fine drizzle.

Then it went *bheku-bheku* with its hooves and proceeded onwards. Thus Nanana continued on her journey. Then suddenly she came upon a duiker, and she said:

Duiker, Duiker, (please) tell me - tell me which elephant ate my children.

It said to her:

It is far away, it is far away - yonder,
At the elephant's lakes,
Where it rains in fine drizzle.

It went *bheku bheku*, flicking its tail and plunging and kicking with its hooves, proceeded onwards. Farther along her way, Nanana came upon the white rhinoceros. She said:

Rhinoceros! Rhinoceros! (please) tell me - tell me which elephant ate my children?

It said:

It is far away, it is far away - yonder,
At the elephant's lakes
Where it rains in fine drizzle.

It went *bheku bheku* (i.e plunging and kicking) and proceeded onwards. And she proceeded on her journey. Then on a certain day, she suddenly came upon an extensive valley which was full of the lakes of the elephants. She came upon one elephant and said:

Elephant! Elephant! (please) tell me -
Tell me which elephant ate my children?

It said: "You will identify it by its protruding stomach."

Then it went *gada-gada*, plunging with its hooves on the ground. It passed onto the others. As it was saying that, it looked about hither and thither.

When she took a good look at them, she saw a huge one with a full protruding stomach. She approached it and said:

Elephant! Elephant! (please) tell me -
Tell me which elephant ate my children?

It was silent. It kept on eating.

Again she asked:

Elephant! elephant! (please) tell me -
Tell me which elephant ate my children?

It raised its trunk, it replied in a fury and said: "I am going to gulp you down."

She said: "Do gulp me down so that I may be able to see my children." It went *gimbilici* as it swallowed her.

There inside, she found everything that the elephant had been eating: herds of cattle, people, sheep, goats, what not. *Awu!* How happy were her children when they saw her! Then she stayed there. She untied the pot, the axe and firewood; the knife, and she kindled a fire. She cut a portion of the liver, lungs and what not. She cooked and ate. She also gave others to eat. Then suddenly this elephant informed others that it was ill. After a short while it lay down. it said that it was ill, had stomach-ache.

Mamo! Indeed it died.

Nanana then cut and punctured it and out she came with her children and everything that was inside the elephant. Then she came back with herds of cattle, sheep and goats.

FOLKTALE 8

UMABHEJANE (MSIMANG, 1987:84-87)

Mabhejane was a woman and she had a long horn on her head. She gave birth to a girl.

This girl went to marry a chief. The chief's name was Mahlokohloko, son of Sikhulumi, a very kind chief. The girl got there. People were sent to report (that she had arrived). The people then set out; the ten of them. They arrived at her place.

They were told to go into the upper house. On the next morning, her mother, Mabhejane entered. She threw ashes upon them and said, "Go and take the cattle out for grazing. People must herd at our place." That woman was killing people. Then they went out. While they were on the mountain, she said: "Let the lightning of our place at Mabhejane come!" The lightning struck and it killed them all. The message was sent that they had died.

The chief then sent the others. There were ten of them. They arrived there. It was said that they should go to the upper hut. Her mother entered. Again she threw ashes upon them, saying: "Go and take the cattle for grazing. People must herd at our place." Indeed they went out to herd cattle. While they were on the mountain, she said: "Let the lightning of our place at Mabhejane come and destroy them all!" The lightning struck and killed them all, at that place. Again they sent the message that they had died, and that the chief and the girl should now come for the wedding. Indeed the chief invited people so that the wedding should take place.

They set out. The girl's place was very far away. They travelled and travelled. They came upon an old woman, and she said: "Greetings." They said, "Yes (we greet you too)."

"Where are you going, gentlemen?"

They said, "We are going to a wedding."

"Where are you going to celebrate the wedding?"

They said, "We are going to the girl's place."

She said, "What is her clan?"

They said, "She is of the house of Mabhejane."

She said, "Is she the one who has married Mahlokohloko?"

They said, "That is the one."

She said, "*Hha!* Oh for the chief's son! But where is he?"

She said, "Come, Sir!" He approached the old woman. She said, "Please lick my eye-oozings."

Indeed the chief licked the old woman. She then said to him, "You see chief, I am going to give you the gall-bladder of a hose lizard. It will tell you everything. But when you get there you must go and stand above the homestead. When they show you the upper house, do not go there, rather go into the house which is by the gate, the one whose thatch is stripped by cattle." They continued on with their journey. They arrived there and waited by the homestead.

It was said, "Come in here bridegroom's party."

The gall-bladder said, "Go and enter at the gate." Indeed they went and entered by the gate. The others said, "What are you doing bridegroom's party? Why do you enter by the gate? Why do you make the chief enter where it is filthy?" They simply kept quiet. Mats were brought in so they could sit on them. The gallbladder said, "Refuse the mats. Sit on the floor." They refused them. They said, *Hhawu!* Bridegroom's party, why are you sitting on the floor?" They just kept quiet. Beer was then brought in and it was full of cockroaches, flies and ants; yet another pot contained nice and tasty beer. The gall-bladder said, "Leave this beer alone. Drink that which is full of cockroaches." Indeed they drank the beer that was full of cockroaches. The others said, "*Hhawu!* You make the chief drink filthy stuff!" They just kept quiet. These said, *Hhawu!* What are we going to do since they are so cunning today." They then brought blankets for sleeping. Then the gall-bladder said, "Do not sleep! Go out and sleep outside until the next morning." Indeed they went out. They stayed outside until the morning dawned. In the morning they entered the house. They said, "*Hhawu!* Why should you sleep outside; are you cattle?" They simply kept quiet.

Her mother entered. She threw ashes upon them. She said, "Go out and take out the cattle for grazing. People herd here at our place." Indeed they went out. The gall-bladder said, "You see, when the storm comes, you must conceal yourselves under the (standing) cattle. A huge hail-storm will come." Indeed they drove the cattle out. They came to the veld. Her mother went out and said, "Let the storm of our place come and

destroy them all." Indeed the storm came. They crept under the cattle. It hailed and hailed and then cleared. They said, "Wo! It has killed them. We are satisfied now because even the chief himself is dead." While they were saying this, they saw them suddenly appearing with the cattle. They said, *Hhawu!* But what should we do?" By what means can this man be killed?" The mother of the bride said, "I shall eventually triumph. I shall ultimately kill him, no matter when."

They arrived home and a beast was slaughtered in their honour. The gall-bladder said, "Do not eat it; the bride must not eat it either. You must give it to them." Indeed they finished skinning it and cooked it; it was taken off the fire; and they brought it in. They gave it all to the people. They said, *Hhawu!* People of the bridegroom's family, for whom did we slaughter this beast which you are not eating?"

They said, "We are eating it since the people are eating it."

The gall-bladder said, "Take the bride along, do not leave her behind. As for you chief, you must not walk in the path, the mother of the bride is going to follow you. If you walk in the path, she will bewitch your foot-print, and thus kill you, if she can see where your foot-print is." Indeed they set out.

He walked at the side of the path all time. And indeed the bride's mother was following them. When they were halfway between her place and their destination, he walked in the path. The bride said, "*Hhawu!* My chief, how you get me into trouble! Why do you walk in the path since my mother might still be following us?"

The chief said, "She is far behind by now."

Yet, when her mother got there, she saw the foot-print where he had trod. She incised and cupped it. Then she went back. By that time, the chief began to say, "I am tired." He said, "My sticks are too heavy for me." The people took his sticks. They carried them. He walked a little. He said, "My karos is too much for me." That is the skin cloak which he had on. The people carried it. He travelled a little distance. He said, "*Hhawu!* Men, my skin buttock-covering is too heavy for me." The people took it. He travelled a little distance. He said, "*Hhawu!* The gall-bladder is weighing heavily on me." He gave it to

the bride. Then he said, "My body is too much for me." They said, "Chief, let us carry you on the back!" Then the girl was crying, and she said, "Chief, you really got me into trouble by walking in the path." They carried him on their backs. They walked a little. He said, "Take me down, I am scared of you." They brought him down. They said, "Chief, what are going to do? It is well that we should carry you even though you are scared of us, you must go and die at home." As they were saying that, he changed into a beast, a black bull.

They chased him, and he said as he went along, "Do not hit chief Mahlokohloko!" They chased him. He eventually arrived at his home. He went into the cattle-kraal. He slept there. All his people were then sleeping in the cattle-kraal. His wives blamed this bride. The bride was silent. She thought of a plan; of what she could do. The gall-bladder said, "Take a short assegai and go and stab the chief." The bride said, "How can I go into the byre?"

It said, "If they say, "Why do you enter the cattle-fold of your in-laws? Then you must say, "I do not know who I am still married to." Indeed she took the short assegai in the morning. They saw her going out. She entered through the gate. She went up.

The men said, *Hhawu!* Here is the bride entering the cattle-kraal!" She said, "I don't know whose bride I am since the chief has turned into an animal." While they were still expressing astonishment at that, she stabbed the chief with the short assegai. The people fled, i.e those men who were sitting with the chief. Then the gall-bladder said, "Go and collect fire-wood, and you must accumulate a huge heap of them." She went to collect fire-wood. The gall-bladder said, "Ask them to help you carry them." Indeed they helped her carry. They took the bull outside, taking him out of the cattle-kraal. They kindled a huge fire and burnt him. He burnt into ashes. Then the gall-bladder said, "Throw them in the water. Indeed, at dawn she took the ashes and threw them in the water.

Then at night the gall-bladder said, "Get up and put on your festive clothing." She got up and adorned herself in beautiful finery. It said, "Go out and sing the song he used to sing. His wives will also come out and join you. You must proceed to the river before

dawn." Indeed she went out and sang. The women also came out and joined her. They accompanied her in song. They made for the river. She sang, saying:

A pile of spears,
Ndaba arms himself and attacks!

They then accompanied her in song. Then suddenly his head emerged from the water. They went on singing that song. Eventually half his body emerged above the water. Then he stopped moving. They kept on singing but the chief did not come out of the water any longer. Then the gall-blader said, "You must say:

He is rolling the grinding stone,
They are going to die,
Here are the destroyers.

They then said:

He is rolling the grinding stone,
They are going to die,
Here are the Destroyers!

The others said

They are coming! Here are the Destroyers!

At last he emerged completely out of the water. By then, even the men had come. Then the chief began to sing, saying:

Our fortress which we found.
It was not like this!

Then the people said:

The guests are coming.

They then proceeded home. It was very pleasant. They did not blame bride for having killed the chief any longer.

The story ends here.

FOLKTALE 8

USIWELEWELE, INTOKAZI EYAYIYOGANA (MABUYA, 1988:48-51)

Once upon a time there was a lad who had reached the stage of manhood. His parents encouraged him to take a wife. They loved him so much that they made it their duty to choose a wife that would benefit their son. The lad was not happy about his parent's wish. He opted to go and propose to a girl of his choice, a girl that he will love endlessly.

After his parents had agreed that he could choose a girl of his dreams, he then woke up at dawn and set out on a journey. He travelled and travelled, looking for a girl that he could marry, until he reached a country he did not know whose inhabitants looked like real people. He was deluded into thinking that the inhabitants were real people. But alas! This was world of witches whose bodies were covered with hair.

As he was travelling towards a river, there suddenly appeared a group of breathtakingly beautiful girls. He looked at the girls admiring their beauty, until he saw one that stole his heart. The girl's beauty was unsurpassed. He proposed marriage to the girl. The girl accepted the lad's proposal. The lad was overjoyed. He was taken to the girl's place. As a traveller and a future son-in-law, his stay was made comfortable and hospitable. He stayed a few days until it was time for him to go back home. When he arrived home, he informed his parents about his journey. His father suggested that, because he was now old and sickly, it would please him if *lobola* would be paid so that he could see the bride before he dies. The cattle for *lobola* were driven to the girl's home. They were amazed to see such a large herd of cattle because they did not expect him back so soon. All the formalities concerning *lobola* were carried out. When everything was done, they set out on a journey to the groom's place. On their arrival, there was joy, women ululating and men shouting praises. Everyone was commenting about the bride's beauty. The groom's parents were excited to see such a beautiful bride. The name of the bride was Siwelewele.

Siwelewele stayed indoors for a few days, then she was expected to go with the girls from the neighbourhood to collect wood. Indeed, they went. Siwelewele was very excited to get this opportunity because she would see where the forest was. When they had finished collecting wood and were ready to leave, Siwelewele went to a secluded spot and she was heard singing:

I am Siwelewele, they don't know who I am
They see me with a shock of hair
They say I am a bride
Whose bride are you Siwelewele?

As Siwelewele was singing, suddenly her hair started to grow and it covered her body. She also grew horns on her head that resembled those of a goat. The girls just stood there, shocked. After sometime, Siwelewele started grazing. She grazed and grazed until she was enough. Within a wink of an eye, she changed back to a beautiful girl. The girls could not explain the miracle they had just seen. They thought that telling Siwelewele's husband will be a futile exercise because he would not believe them as Siwelewele was too beautiful. They went home and kept the secret to themselves.

Siwelewele also had to go and fetch water from the river. She was accompanied by her bride's maid. As they were drawing water from the river, filling up their pots, they heard a frog croaking. Siwelewele changed into a stork. Her mouth was as long as that of a bird, and she had long thin feet. The little girl looked at her, shocked at what she was seeing. Siwelewele began singing her song and said:

I am Siwelewele, they don't know who I am,
They see me standing with my long thin legs, they don't know me
They say I'm a bride, they don't know me
Whose bride are you Siwelewele?

When she had finished eating the frogs, she turned back into a beautiful girl. From then on she kept on disappearing at night. Her husband would search for her but all in vain. Siwelewele would come back when she had grazed and eaten frogs to her satisfaction.

Rumour started spreading in the neighbourhood about Siwelewele's mysterious behaviour. Some people discussed their experiences with her at the forest and at the river, while others would express their shock at their encounter with her at night. As the days went by, the husband began to have suspicions about Siwelewele. His suspicion was raised by the fact that when the sun was setting, her eyes would flicker like a spark of fire, and the hair covering the body will just turn hard. The husband once overheard her singing her favourite song. From then on, he became indifferent to Siwelewele.

Siwelewele's husband was annoyed about Siwelewele's disappearing acts, and he decided to watch her every move. He then followed her one night. He followed her not knowing where she was going to, until she arrived at the forest. She then saw wild animals. Siwelewele was jubilant and she greeted them singing:

I am Siwelewele, they don't know who I am
They see me with a shock of hair
They say I'm a bride.
Whose bride are you Siwelewele?

She moved from that place, unaware that her husband was still following her. She travelled and travelled until she arrived at the river. She heard a frog croaking. She stood there, and suddenly she changed into a stork. Then she sang:

I am Siwelewele, they don't know who I am
They see me standing with my long thin legs, they don't know me
They say I'm a bride, they don't know who I am
Whose bride are you Siwelewele?

When she had finished eating the frogs, she changed into a beautiful woman and decided to go home. She got a shock of her life when she saw her husband standing there, staring at her. Her husband was furious and he asked her to sing her song. Siwelewele was numb with fear. She could hardly utter a word. Her husband attacked her, punching her and eventually stabbed her with an assegai. Her body was thrown in the river where animals devoured her.

End

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