

***A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE DILEMMAS OF WOMEN IN RELATIONSHIPS:**

A STUDY OF RENEILWE MALATJI'S *LOVE INTERRUPTED*

by

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MINI-DISSERTATION

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ENGLISH STUDIES

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(School of Languages and Communication Studies)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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2019

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my deceased little brother, Tshepo Phetola Maenetja. You were gone too soon; I know you are looking down on me.

Declaration

I declare that the research report titled: **A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE DILEMMAS OF WOMEN IN RELATIONSHIPS: A STUDY OF RENEILWE MALATJI'S *LOVE INTERRUPTED*** is my work that has been submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of **MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH STUDIES** where all the sources used or quoted have been duly acknowledged and that this work has not been submitted to any other institution for examination purposes.

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MAENETJA NELLY

[REDACTED]

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DATE

Acknowledgements

- To God Almighty and my ancestors for bestowing me this gift of life.
- My gratitude and appreciation go to my Supervisor, Dr MJ Mogoboya, for assisting me with this study until its completion. The road has not been easy but you encouraged me still. Thank you.
- To my Co-supervisors:
 - Ms DL Watt-Gowans, for being my personal mentor. I would love to extend my gratitude for all the encouragement you gave me, for helping me finish this study even when the times were tough. You were patient with me and kept on telling me to continue striving towards the finishing line. Thank you a million times.
 - Dr NE Nkealah, for being my mentor, god-mother and pillar of strength. Your advice and care did not go in vain. Thank you a million times.
- To my family, thank you so much for the support you have shown me in my studies.
- To my partner, Kgaudi Dikgale, for the encouragement and advice on how to finish this study. Your support means a lot to me. Thank you.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to analyse and investigate the dilemmas of women in relationships in the literary text *Love Interrupted* by Reneilwe Malatji published in 2012, using the feminist framework. The study explores how women are negatively affected by their relationships with their partners/husbands. Furthermore, the study focuses on how they are disadvantaged by cultural and societal expectations and how difficult it is for them to live with their in-laws. The primary text, *Love Interrupted*, is analysed to answer the three research questions that this study raises. The three research questions are: (1) Does the influence of culture and society affect the women in the short stories? (2) Do the perceptions that extended family members have of women undermine and diminish their sense of self-worth in the short stories? (3) In what ways are the children in the short stories used by the women in adulterous and abusive relationships? Because the short stories are written by a woman writer, the anthology gives first-hand experience on the dilemmas that the women in the short stories find themselves in as far as relationships, cultural and societal expectations are concerned.

This study employed a qualitative framework which applied critical content analysis in interpreting the short stories. The analysis focused on four short stories in the anthology: “Love Interrupted”, “The Things We Do for Love”, “Lebo’s story 1: A Young Girl’s Dream Interrupted” and “My Perfect Husband” set in the Bapedi culture of the Limpopo province. The findings of the study are that women, especially those in the rural areas of South Africa, are expected to be submissive and subordinate to their spouses. As a result of this, cultural and societal expectations have disadvantaged them greatly. They find excuses to put up with their abusive and adulterous husbands in the name of raising their children with the male figure around, and mostly they stay in these relationships in order to earn respect from community members. The study also found other reasons why women in the short stories are forced to stay in the abusive and adulterous relationships with their spouses: financial instability, stigmatization of unmarried and divorced women, and cultural and societal expectations to be strong women.

This study employed feminist theory in the analysis of the dilemmas of the women in the selected short stories. Feminist theory provided a lens through which to understand the women's dilemmas. Through feminist theory, it becomes apparent that the women are subjected to male dominance and societal expectations which prescribe submissive roles for women. Thus, they are not in a position to question or challenge the cultural practices which denigrate them. Their opinion in matters is never sought; they are simply expected to comply with the interests of men. The feminist analysis of the short stories suggests that there is still a great need to continue the fight against gender inequality in South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In most societies, girls and boys are differentiated by the way they should conduct themselves and how they should behave. Society ensures physical and mental superiority for boys because when they are 'fit enough' they are required to acquire formal education that will enable them to be thinkers and leaders. For instance, in the novel, *Nervous Conditions*, Nhamo was granted the opportunity to acquire formal education for several reasons. Firstly, he was the only boy amongst girls which meant that he was the important heir. Secondly, so much hope was upon him to become a powerful and dignified young man who would be able to care for his family when he completed his education (Dangarembga, 1989: 09). This indicates that for a man to be powerful, he has to acquire formal education. It is this acquired education that will enable him to think and lead. Girls, on the other hand, are encouraged to play with dolls and do anything that is beneficial in the house, because they are practicing to be wives and mothers. The implication here is that girls are not permitted or expected to acquire education like the boy child. Nhamo had the privilege to acquire education with the help of his uncle, Babamukuru. Tambu, a girl, also needed education. However, her father blatantly asked: "Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (Dangarembga, 1989: 15). This implies that Tambu's desire to acquire education was not fulfilled because the societal and cultural expectation that she only learn how to cook and clean for her future husband. The male gender is placed in the public sectors while the female gender is based in the private sector. The words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the Women's Liberation Movement Campaign which emerged in the late 1960s, to encourage women to define their purpose as women and what that purpose meant (Moi, 1989: 116).

Feminism aims to understand the nature of inequality where men are perceived as superior and women as inferior. Gender inequality promotes unequal powers between

men and women because it places men in the public sectors where most privileges such as education, work opportunities and culture are a benefit. Men are perceived as rational beings because they are heads of the households, the leaders and they are able to reason and make decisions. A woman's role within the society is perceived to be private and the advantages are the control of the home, where she is expected to bear and nurture children, care for the husband and their extended families. Women are perceived as emotional beings and unable to make decisions. Hall (1990:17) supports this argument, when she points out that: "women are treated as unequal in most settings, and their activities are restricted to specific locales or functions such as child bearing". Restricted settings for women in the society encourage gender imbalance between men and women. Thus, the mandate of the feminist theory is to strive for a balance in opportunities between men and women and to fight for gender equality.

Hall (1990) also considers that history and culture limit the role of women in the society, where the highest achieved role of a woman is in marriage and childbearing. She further asserts that in most settings women are treated as unequal human beings (Hall, 1990). This view is supported by McDowell and Pringle (1992) who indicate that women are affected by male dominance, where they, the women, are unable to be independent because they are considered to be dependent on men, be it financially or for protection. They also point out that women are defined in familial terms where their identity and status is that of mothers, daughters and wives and that their dominant place is at home. The role of the in-laws is considered to be important for the newlyweds' family as indicated by Bryant, Conger and Meehan (2001). The in-laws are the ones that cause stress for the couple because they demand recognition and attention.

The situation of many women is that of oppression and subjection, whereas a man's position is often dominant. According to Mayor (2009: 632), "Feminism is defined as the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men". In addition, the feminist theory is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways in which women have contributed to the society (Crossman, 2014). This suggests that women are also entitled to as much of a voice or an opinion as men. It must be noted and emphasised that there are ways through which women can express

their opinions, where they stand as critical thinkers. Women are capable of making rational decisions. As such, women can contribute to the society as much as men.

Abbott and Sapsford (1987:151) support the idea that women have been regarded as part of the 'household', placed by their husband's occupation and presumably sharing his image. This implies that women are defined by their husband's status and position of financial power. Society may define a woman as an individual who looks after the family, bears children and is submissive to her husband. de Beauvoir (1975:15) points out that the reason a woman is imprisoned is because she has ovaries and a uterus which restrict her within the limits of her nature. A woman's body is perceived as a reproductive machine and this becomes a liability.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite four decades of fighting for women's rights, women knowing their constitutional rights and being aware of the many laws in their favour, women still choose to remain in abusive relationships.

In this study, the researcher analyses the short stories "Love Interrupted", "The Things we do for Love", "Lebo's story 1: A Young Girl's Dream Interrupted" and "My Perfect Husband" set in the Bapedi culture of the Limpopo province. These stories are found in the short story collection *Love Interrupted* by Reneilwe Malatji published in 2012. The analysis will be done in order to investigate why, despite the inroads feminism has made in modern thinking, the women in the short stories, as it appears, still feel obliged to be submissive to male dominance, abuse and subjugation. The culture, seemingly gives more preference to the male gender than the female gender and this affects women negatively. They do not only feel obliged to acquiesce to male dominance but also to be submissive to their in-laws as well.

1.3 BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

1.3.1 Feminism

Historically, the concept of feminism has been divided into three waves which have different aims in emancipating women from their disadvantaged situations. The first wave was in the 19th and early 20th century in the United Kingdom and United States aimed for women's suffrage: the right to vote and property rights for women (Walters, 2005:41). The second wave, between the 1960s and 1970s, aimed for equal rights between men and women in terms of marriage, family and the work place. Women were fighting for their rights in sexuality, reproduction, the role of a woman in the society amongst others, and they initiated the Women's Liberation Movement to encourage women to define their purpose as women and what that purpose meant (Walters, 2005:97). Presently, feminism is in the third wave that started in the 1990s with the continuation of the aims that were not met in the second wave and are more radicalised. This is true of both an African and an international context. The African context is of particular interest in this study as it is the focus of the short stories set in the Limpopo Province, in South Africa.

1.3.2 Male Dominance

In the above mentioned short stories, chosen for this study, it is clear that gender inequality is still a problem. Dayimani (2014) points out that 'men are taught to be dominant and women are taught to be submissive'. It appears that the women in the short stories are influenced by the Bapedi culture and a society that promotes male dominance, as well as permits adulterous and abusive relationships. It seems women in these short stories are unequal to their husbands because the Bapedi culture elevates men above women. Women are perceived as incapable and unable to take care of themselves; their independence and way of thinking is limited.

McDowell and Pringle (1992: 02) state that "women have been defined as dependent on men, both financially and in the sense of being under their care and protection, rather than as independent individuals". Women are categorised as dependent human beings because they constantly need to be 'protected' by men in various sectors. It appears

that women in these short stories are not only controlled by their husbands but seemingly by culture and extended family members, where their voices or opinions are often not recognised because they are regarded as incapable. Turner, Young and Black (2006: 589) in their article suggest that the tension between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law [as an example] is caused by the fact that they are both seeking a place within the family realm; a daughter-in-law seeks her independence in her new family while the mother-in-law seeks to have an influence in her son's family.

1.3.3 The Role of the In-laws

The tension between the mother and her daughter-in-law can be caused by their need for son/husband's attention in the family. The in-laws desire to have a role because they perceive themselves as an important and dominant part of the family. Bryant, Conger and Meehan (2001: 614) suggest that the in-laws are considered as a major source of stress in the couple's relationship. It appears that the Bapedi culture also plays a significant role in the suffering of women in marriages and that their identity is defined by cultural expectations: as a wife, she is expected to respect her husband at all costs, bear his children and listen to the in-laws. The study strongly holds the view that the wife is entitled to receive from those she respects and not to be devalued like an object. Lastly, these expectations placed on a woman should not in any way encourage her to sacrifice herself as an individual in order to please the husband, the extended family members or even the society she lives in. The researcher believes that the self-worth of a woman is as much important as that of men; hence a woman should not sacrifice herself for the sake of seeking approval and acceptance from the extended family members and the society at large.

1.3.4 Children

African culture normally applauds a woman who is able to bear children and who respects her husband. It would seem that as Afolayan (2004:181) points out that "among the people of South Africa...marriage is directed at producing children, thus ensuring biological generation and genealogical continuity". A woman would have to produce children who will be the heirs of the husband's clan so that the continuity of

their generation is ensured. Respecting her husband would mean she has to live like a subject, a subordinate and less of a human than man; she is perceived as less important and less capable because she has a man who is the head of the house. Hall (1990:02) indicates that:

...the main generalization and assumption is that historically and culturally women have been socialized to fill subordinate and restricted roles...the highest status for women is still achieved through marriage. The role of wife and mother are idealized and sanctified both in modern industrial and in less-developed societies.

However, in reality the role of the mother and wife are not as perfect as one would imagine. This dichotomy seems to put women in a position where it appears as though they are appreciated in their house-hold and yet they are not. In the countries that are in the third wave of feminism where the protest is to find equality between men and women in terms of marriage, family and work place, not much has changed because women are still suppressed and they are still subordinated by the dominance of men. McDowell and Pringle (1992:03) support this view when they indicate that:

Women are constantly defined in relation to men. Whether they are similar to men, different from or complementary to them, men, masculinity and male behaviour are always the reference points. Women are defined in familial terms as carriers and nurturers. Their identity and status derive from their relation to the explicitly gendered categories of mothers, daughters and wives. Women are thus defined not only on relation to men, but as dependent on men and subordinate to them

Women's abilities are not visible anywhere except in the household or under a male's control, as if they are unable to be successful without men. Women are symbolised as objects that are controllable by men. They are perceived to be constantly subordinated and suppressed by men because somehow the male phallus is predicated as a symbol of power that controls and owns a woman. Thus, seemingly what a woman can do best is to bear children, nurture them and care for them and not to question the husband. According to McDowell and Pringle (1992:04), "women represent what men are not;

thus reason and emotion are treated as incompatible, home is presented as the domain for women". Women are considered to do better in their homes than in other sectors. A more detailed literature review is presented in Chapter Two of this study.

1.3.5 Summary of selected stories from *Love Interrupted*

1.3.5.1 "Love Interrupted"

Anna is married to her drunkard husband Leshata who cheats, abuses and constantly treats her with contempt. She is married following the traditional route where *lobola* is paid and in her new family she is expected to work like a domestic worker within the households, to respect her in-law family members and husband despite the difficulties they are putting her in, in order to be considered as a well behaved daughter-in-law.

1.3.5.2 "The Things we do for Love"

Mosima is married to Ngwato, and is in a similar predicament as Anna. He drinks, has mistresses, neglects and dishonours her. Ngwato comes back home late at night after satisfying his mistress, and expects and does find, his food prepared in the oven because it is the responsibility of the wife to take care of the husband, regardless of his behaviour and attitude. Mosima is expected to understand and accept cheating in her marriage because she is a woman and she is unable to provide for herself and her children.

1.3.5.3 "Lebo's story 1: A Young Girl's Dream Interrupted"

Lebo is a young girl whose dreams have been interrupted by Lucky, her boss. She grew up in poverty but worked hard to achieve her desired goals which would make her a successful person in her family and community. Lebo believed that her boss, Lucky, would make her dreams come true despite being used as a sex object when his wife was at work. When Lebo discovered that she was pregnant, Lucky avoided her and offered to provide money for abortion. Lebo refused to abort the unborn baby and as a result, she was kicked out of the house and lost her job because Lucky accused her of trying to ruin his marriage.

1.3.5.4 “My Perfect Husband”

The story’s narrator was expected to lie and cover up for her husband after he had cheated on her and was involved in an accident with his mistress, Matodzi Mulaudzi, who died in the crash. Her in-laws ordered her to lie to Matodzi’s husband, Mark, telling him that when his wife died in the accident she was present. Her opinion and feelings were not considered at all; she was simply an object that was controlled. When she discovered that her husband had children with his deceased mistress, she was expected to understand and give her husband the support he needed to look after the children without Mark knowing.

1.4 **ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY**

The theoretical framework used in this study is the feminist theory which is a broad subject. Feminist theory points out that in many cultures women are subjugated to men. The subjugation of women can also be influenced or caused by cultural norms, standards and beliefs in as far as male and female relationships are concerned, and this might be the influence on women in the short stories where culture plays a major role.

The Women’s Liberation Movement Campaign became active in the 1960s and 1970s during the second wave of feminism with the mandate to change a number of factors. Firstly, the Movement questioned what it meant to be a woman, how femininity and sexuality are defined. Secondly, the Movement campaigned against the objectification of women as sex objects solely for male gratification and finally campaigned against rape, pornography and other forms of violence against women within and outside the family (Weedon, 1987:19). Although the Women’s Liberation Movement was an historical event which took place more than four decades ago, the struggle for women’s equality with men still continues in the present day.

Part of this theory fights for equality between men and women in terms of marriage, family, reproduction, and job opportunities. Feminist theory and the ideas of the above

mentioned authors will be used in the study to demonstrate that women in the selected short stories have choices in their disadvantaged situations. Despite factors that might affect them, they have the right to stand up for themselves in the adulterous and abusive relationships. Feminism endorses that: a) men and women are equal and therefore should have equal power and opportunities; b) gender inequality should be eradicated at all costs, particularly where men are considered suitable for public sectors where benefits like salaries and promotions are given and women suitable only for private sectors where there are no benefits; c) the treatment of women by men should be changed, where men perceive and use women as objects to satisfy their male ego; and d) feminism is against men who rape, beat and cheat on women because they (women) are regarded as non-humans.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore reasons why women in the selected short stories stay in adulterous and abusive relationships. This study further seeks to investigate the challenges that these women face in their daily lives.

Research Questions

- a) Does the influence of culture and society affect the women in the short stories?
- b) Do the perceptions that extended family members have of women undermine and diminish their sense of self-worth in the short stories?
- c) In what ways are the children in the short stories used by the women in adulterous and abusive relationships?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will use the qualitative research approach. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006:64) define qualitative research as research that is concerned with collecting and analysing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth'. Qualitative research is mainly concerned with achieving the

depth of the content where the details are explored as much as possible. According to Krippendorff (2013:22), all the reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers. In the study of literature, the concept of qualitative description “offers a comprehensive summary of events in the everyday terms of those events’ and that ‘researchers conducting qualitative descriptive studies stay close to data and the surface of words and events” (Sandelowski, 2000:336). Krippendorff (2013:89) further states that qualitative researchers tend to acknowledge the possibility of multiple interpretations of textual units by considering diverse voice (reader), alternative perspectives (different ideological positions), oppositional readings (critiques), or varied uses of the text examined (by different groups).

Qualitative description wants the researcher to “be in the shoes” of the participant, to understand the participant’s experience and to understand the subject’s viewpoint. Therefore, this study uses the qualitative content analysis approach to analyse the short stories in *Love Interrupted* in order to explore the ways in which the short stories suggest reasons why a woman stays in an adulterous and abusive relationship. Krippendorff (2013:89) points out that “qualitative content analysts support their interpretations by weaving quotes from the analysed texts and literature about the contexts of these texts into their conclusions, by constructing parallelisms, by engaging in triangulations, and by elaborating on any metaphors they can identify”. Qualitative content analysis aims to support the interpretations which can be themes in a text and to reach conclusions from the text.

1.6.1 Research Design

According to Msweli (2011:58), a research design “is a plan of how to go about addressing research questions”. Qualitative research has five designs, namely: case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography and content analysis (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013:06). Of these five research designs, the one that suits this study is content analysis. Content analysis refers to the detailed and systematic examination of a text in order to deduce themes and patterns, is typically performed on forms of human communication and involves the greatest amount of planning at the front end of the

project (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013:11). This means that the issues that women face in their adulterous and abusive relationship will be analysed in depth.

Researchers conducting qualitative studies want, as suggested by Sandelowski (2000: 336), to collect as much data as they can that will allow them to capture all the elements of an event that come together to make the event what it is. Sandelowski further states that in qualitative research, information is captured to make the events in the study as visible as possible and that qualitative descriptive studies offer a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events. Literature captures and imitates everyday life events that provide the researcher with inclusive information for his or her research study.

1.6.2 Data Collection

The chosen text will serve as the primary text for the whole research. There will be no field work required for this study. "In qualitative descriptive studies, language is a vehicle of communication..." (Sandelowski, 2000:336). Literature studies require qualitative description because only information from the text, that of the researcher and supporting sources, serves the purpose of the study where language is important. The study will investigate the texts from the viewpoint of the third wave of feminism where the focus is on creating awareness regarding the way women still perceive themselves as dependent, despite the four decades in which women have had an increasing understanding of their rights.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

The study uses feminism as the theoretical approach to analyse the text. As noted earlier, the feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality where men are perceived as superior and women as inferior. The study follows an in-depth analysis of the reasons why women stay in their adulterous and abusive relationships.

1.6.4 Quality Criteria

This study seeks to investigate without bias and will meet the demands of credibility and reliability.

1.6.4.1 Credibility

In addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. To allow transferability, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to [any] other setting (Shenton, 2004:63). The findings from the study will represent the reality and truth of how women are treated within the text.

1.6.4.2 Dependability

Although similar to reliability, the meeting of the dependability criterion is, as indicated by Shenton (2004:63), “difficult in qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study”. The research conducted will be as objective and free from bias as possible within the bounds of the qualitative descriptive method used.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The text is written in a South African context where third wave feminists struggle to be heard. It is assumed that till this day some women are living with the perception that force them to be subordinates and objects of male dominance, although women in Africa and internationally are on the third wave of feminism fighting for women’s rights. This may also indicate that women are still denied a voice or opinion. Hence the significance of this study further aims to highlight for women that they have rights, they are supported by feminism.

The significance of this study lies within creating new knowledge about a phenomenon that is very common in South Africa, with the possibility that a better understanding of the phenomenon will lead to more enlightened responses to the plight of abused women, whether by individual women, government departments or civil society. This study seeks to analyse women in the selected text and inform women in reality, that

there are possibilities of leaving their adulterous and abusive situations and there are supporting organisations to help them.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to highlight the struggles and disadvantaged situations of women in South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world. It also aims to point out that women are perceived as inferior. This perception was existent in the previous decades, and is still prevalent in the present day context. The disadvantaged situations that women found and find themselves in seem to be influenced by factors such as male dominance that leads to patriarchy, culture, male chauvinism and social expectations where women's opinions and rights are limited or often less heard. Seemingly, society classified women as weak in most situations apart from child-bearing and the benefit of the home which are mainly in the private sector while men are perceived and encouraged to be the strongest because their physical and mental part allows them to be, hence they are mainly found in the public sector. Women felt the obligation of being submissive to the above-mentioned factors which caused a sense of self-pity to most women. This mindset has proven to be trans-generational. To this present day, women still feel the obligation to be submissive to male dominance, culture, male chauvinism and social expectations despite the effort of feminist organisations, governments and other groups that try to lift up the status and well-being of women because culture and society seem to be playing a major role in the subjugation of South African and African women.

It seems as if men have to be and act dominant towards women while women have to be submissive to the authority and rule of men and at times physical and verbal violence tend to be used by men as a method intended to remind women on how to behave and be in the 'their' place as women. In most cases, the dilemmas that most South African and African women are faced with are in relationships with their partners/husbands and striving to comply with the ways of cultural, traditional and societal expectation towards them. Although, there might be ideological ways that try to influence those situations, many women have changed for the better. Current writings such as *Love Interrupted* by Reneilwe Malatji depicts the ideology of male dominance in a negative way. The short

stories in this text prove that women, particularly in rural areas of South Africa, are not yet emancipated. These short stories concur with novels like *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangerembga and *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Bâ to mention but a few, which are written by women clarifying the difficulties that women struggle with in their daily lives in both the African and South African context. This continues to occur despite the efforts that feminism puts to advocate for the right of women worldwide so that they also can be recognised in the public sectors just as men are recognised.

2.2 FEMINISM

The theory of feminism has existed for decades and its goal has been to emancipate women. This theory so far has been through three waves and many scholars have written about it to indicate the significance it holds not only to women but also to men and on society at large. Each wave had its own mandate which was to find ways that women can be regarded and treated as humans. History, dictates that the first wave arose in the 19th and 20th centuries where its mandate focused on overturning the legal inequalities so that women would be granted the right to vote.

According to Stone (2007:01), the second wave feminist philosophy arose in the early 1970s [which dates back to the 1960s to 1980s] and has developed most strongly in Western Europe, North America and Australia. In these regions, the feminist philosophy has become a major sub-discipline within the philosophy. The main mandate of this second wave was to change the role of women in the society and to grant them equal cultural opportunities. Walters (2005:97) outlines that the second wave took place between the 1960s and 1970s with the aim for equal rights between women and men in terms of marriage, family and work place. Feminism as a theory is perceived as a broad area of study that has been in existence for decades with the mandate to emancipate women in the world from the disadvantaged situations they often find themselves in. Feminism aims to understand the nature of inequality where men are perceived as superior and women as inferior. Gender inequality promotes unequal powers between men and women because it places men in the public sectors where most privileges such as education, employment and advancement are accessible. This theory is now

on the third wave that started in the 1990s to the present day with the continuation of the aims and objectives that were not met during the second wave. The third wave is more radicalised, to a point that women across the world are willing to take part in making their situations better. The aim of women was to be recognised in public spheres like men are and to fight for their rights in terms of sexuality, reproduction and their roles in the society.

2.2.1 Early history: First wave of feminism

As stated above, the first wave of feminism dates back to the 19th and 20th centuries with attempts to offer women the opportunity to vote and to overturn legal inequalities on them. Walters (2005:41) states that it was during the second half of the 19th century that organised campaigns particularly for better education, for the possibility of women working outside the home, a reform in the laws affecting married women and for the right to vote began to emerge. She indicates that the right for women to vote, their disadvantaged conditions of education and their duties at home were beginning to take a positive turn. Girls did not receive the same education as boys because the decision-making and having an opinion was not made available for girls but for boys. Walters (2005:43) further states that during this wave, a married woman living in a 'shackled condition' has no rights over her own property; even the produce of her own labour is at the disposal of her husband who can, if he chooses, take and waste it in dissipation and excess. Moreover, her children as well as her fortune are the property of her husband. Male dominance proved then that a woman will own nothing under a man. Even when women were living in restricted conditions where owning something could at least have been an achievement to them, men still had the right to take anything including property and children that women had.

2.2.2 The second wave of feminism

During the second wave, women initiated the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s to encourage women to define their purpose as women and to discover what those purposes mean (Walters, 2005:95). The purpose that women were defining would help in emancipating them from gender inequality, patriarchy and male dominance

which seemed to be the key elements that affect and suppress women negatively. In line with this, Weedon (1987:19) suggests that the Women's Liberation Movement became an active force for change and included a number of factors. Firstly, the Movement included campaigns against the objectification of women as sex objects solely for male gratification, campaigns against rape, pornography and other forms of violence against women within public and private spheres. The campaign was designed to end the mistreatment of women by men. This was to put a stop to the practice of men only perceiving women as sex objects that could be used to satisfy their sexual desires and male ego. Secondly, the Movement was concerned with the oppressions of patriarchy, compounded for many women by class and race (Weedon, 1987:19). Despite the years that this Movement has been in existence, the struggle still continues because the world seems to be owned by men: every 'wise' decision is made by men even if it is about women. The male gender is at most perceived as the superior and women as inferior or "the other". Hence, men suppress women from every angle, be it at home, in job opportunities, education or freedom of expression.

2.2.3 The third wave of feminism

The emergence and continuation of the third wave of feminism aims to provide women with the same opportunities as men. The mandate of this wave is to eradicate the ideology of men perceiving women as the objects, non-human and "the other" in the human race. De Beauvoir (1949) in Stone (2007:193) highlights that women have always been viewed as "the other" by men. That is, women have always been thought to exist only in relation to men and to be an inferior version of men. She implies that men are chauvinistic and sexist towards women, where women are perceived and treated as less important because they are unable to do most of the things that men can do and that women's duties are confined to child-bearing, housekeeping and serving men amongst others. Women are perceived as mediocre to men because men are greater. Surprisingly, to this present day women are still victims of abuse, male dominance; cultural expectations and they are still perceived as the second sex to many public spheres. This indicates that little has been done from the 19th century to the present day to emancipate women from disadvantaged conditions because current texts

such as *Love Interrupted* indicate that women are still abused by men, cultural and societal expectations. This means that the road is still rather long. It is agreed that women are granted opportunities in the public spheres and they have the right to vote and to have an opinion however there are many cases reported that women are battered, raped or bullied by their partners on a daily basis.

2.2.4 Types of feminism

There are several types of feminism that work hand in hand to challenge male dominance, patriarchy and gender inequality. Motto, Fominaya, Eschle and Cox (2011: 06) note the emergence of several types of feminism such as radical feminism, liberal feminism and socialist feminism, all of which are aimed at changing the position of women in the world. Women encouraged each other to change their situations and get recognition for the work and tireless effort they exert into their personal development.

2.2.4.1 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism arose in Europe with the argument that women are as equally capable as men in as far as the reasoning capacity is concerned. The argument was based on the fact that women deserve education, equal rights to own property, deserve to be economically independent and have careers (Stone, 2007:11). Liberal feminism instigates that possessions and responsibilities between men and women should be equal: there should be a 50/50 share of everything. Women should be in a position to access opportunities that the public sphere offers them rather than simply attempting to fulfill their lives in private spheres. Thus men and women should be perceived as equal and equal opportunities in life should be granted to both.

2.2.4.2 Radical feminism

Radical feminism emerged from North America, with the conviction that women as people are dominated by men (Stone, 2007:12). Male dominance leads to patriarchy and sexism in the society where men are perceived as the rulers and controllers of women. This type of feminism argues that women should also have their fair share of independence and recognition where not only men are perceived as significant,

excelling in public sectors while women are confined in the private sectors such as house-keeping and child-bearing. This type of feminism is best known for its goal to eradicate the concept of patriarchy and male dominance where men are the rulers and controllers of women. McDowell and Pringle (1992:127) add that radical feminism is concentrated on the eradication of patriarchy. The concept of patriarchy births the notion that women should be dominated by men in terms of sexuality and gender, that women are subjugated and oppressed by men. Thus, radical feminism stresses that patriarchy oppresses women in terms of their gender simply because they are women.

2.2.4.3 Social Feminism

According to Stone (2007:13), Socialist feminism arose in the late 1960s and 1970s and tries to combine insights from radical feminism and from Marxism. The mandate of Socialist feminism is to reveal that women are not only oppressed in their households but they are also oppressed economically, socially and psychologically. In addition, Socialist feminism stresses the value of arguing for equality, particularly in the political sphere and labour market (McDowell and Pringle, 1992:14). Political spheres are perceived to be made for men and not suitable for women because the assumption is that women do not have the capacity to reason intellectual matters in the same way as men.

The point that women are or should be confined in private spheres such as home indicates that women are continuously oppressed by male figures. Stone (2007:14) adds that women are exploited by having to perform unpaid 'domestic labour' in the home. Women's labour at home is not recognised because it is not considered worthy. Thus, women's duties at home are supposed to be those that are done for free because women are designed to occupy and look after the home and not to be exposed to the public domain. Socialist feminism advocates that gender inequality should be downgraded at all cost, particularly in situations where men are considered suitable for public sectors where they earn a salary and situations where women are considered suitable only for the private domain where there are no benefits.

2.3 MALE DOMINANCE

According to O'Connor (In Crow, 2000:171), human economic organisations have been based on the class division between sexes, with men in the position of the ruling or owning class and women in the position of the oppressed or exploited class. This implies that in terms of class division women were more disadvantaged than men because men were the rulers and owners of class. This class division encourages male dominance to a point that men uphold themselves as more important and powerful than women. Hence, women have to be the subordinates and act submissively to men and have no opinion that they as women express in the presence of a man or in public. Traditionally, women are more associated with the private spheres where they have to care for children and perform household chores while men are more associated with public life and its ensuing social roles.

In the analysed text, *Love Interrupted*, men assume the characters of rulers and powerful positions where culture and society is in favour of them. Their positions are associated with being the respected pastor in the community, respected teacher and minister of public works. These powerful positions that they hold allow them to constantly abuse and mistreat their wives and are unapologetic about such behaviour because they are superior. Atkson (In Crow, 2000: 83) highlights that women have been massacred as human beings over history and this predicament is entailed by their definition of being inferior. History has had a negative impact on women to the extent that women had no choice but to accept the disadvantaged conditions they found themselves in. Thus, every individual man has greater access to scarce goods and resources than any individual woman. All women must perform some kind of labour for a man or men in order to survive (O'Connor, 2000:171). It seems that the opportunity to be in a position of influence in the public sphere for women is rarely made available. Women are owned by men. Women have to work extra hard to satisfy men.

2.4 THE ROLE OF THE IN-LAWS

Generally, the role that the in-laws play to the newlyweds, especially the daughter-in-law, is that they have to be caring and supporting towards her as she is the new member in the family. But in most families, particularly in the rural places, it is not the case that the in-laws are supportive, they instead become abusive and demanding on

the daughter-in-law. It seems that the reason that the in-laws become unsupportive towards the daughter-in-law may be that they are also dependent on the husband/son and they feel that they are going to be considered second in terms of needs, especially financially. According to Turner, Young and Black (2006: 588), the bond between the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law is also critical in kinship management. The mother-in-law is forced to make a bond with the daughter-in-law so that she can have access to her son and grandchildren even though she does not want to because there is an additional member in the family. Therefore, the way that the mother-in-law feels will make the relationship between her and daughter-in-law unhealthy and stressful. The mother-in-law becomes jealous and makes things difficult for the daughter-in-law because she feels that the son will be directing all his attention to his wife.

The in-laws in the selected short stories are mistreating and abusing the daughter-in-law for various reasons. For instance, in "Love Interrupted" Anna as the daughter-in-law is told by the mother-in-law on how she should conduct herself and on how to address her family in law. The mother-in-law is supported by a traditional song that indicates that the mother-in-law should free herself from all the chores and household responsibilities because the person responsible has arrived. This means that Anna has to go to work and come back home to be the wife and the daughter-in-law that will have to please the husband and the new mother by performing the household chores. Furthermore, she was not given a break when she fell pregnant. The mother-in-law is constantly competing with Anna for her son's attention and she ends up abusing Anna emotionally when she could not win the attention of her son (Malatji, 2012:26). In "My Perfect Husband", the narrator grows to accept the norm that 'a man has to cheat' because it is in their nature to act in that way and tradition encourages such behaviour from men. The married woman has to stay and put up with the man's promiscuous behaviour to prove her strength as a woman. The narrator is treated like an object by her male in-laws and she is not allowed to have an opinion in her own house because she is a woman married to a traditional family (Malatji, 2012:152).

2.5 CHILDREN

Kilgore (1992:01) highlights that economic dependence often keeps battered women tied to their men despite the abuse; a battered woman does not always find the support to leave her abuser because she always hears messages that produce guilt from the people who are close to her. Women, in some cases, do not find the support and the encouragement from their family or people in the community to leave the abuser; instead they are told to stay because they chose to be with the abuser in the first place. Hence, they feel obliged to stay because they want to be perceived as strong.

They stay in these abusive relationships because they are financially unstable and cannot look after themselves and their children, should they leave. They are also afraid of raising their children alone without their husband because they need to be respected in the community and having a male figure gives them that status. In *Love Interrupted*, Leshata keeps on beating his children, claiming that he is teaching them how to respect him as their father and as the head of the house. Anna is able to care for her children financially, but she stays in the marriage assuming that if she walks away from the abuse she will not be respected in the community like she was in her present circumstance. Hence, she stays in an abusive and unhappy relationship with her children for the sake of belonging and being respected in the society and also to keep her self-image (Malatji, 2012).

In “The Things We Do For Love”, Mosima stays with her abusive husband because she has no financial security. Hence, she uses the children as the reason why she is still staying with Ngwato. She also blames the women that her husband cheats on her with, believing that they bewitched him so that he could leave her and the children to suffer. She finds excuses to cover up her husband’s behaviour. She held on to the husband because she could not afford to leave the luxurious life and the fact that children were going to a good school. She was affected both emotionally and psychologically and yet she found strength to stay and still indicate that she could not raise her children alone as a single parent with any financial security (Malatji, 2012).

2.6 CONCLUSION

Feminism is one theory that is used in this study to highlight that the abuse and unhappiness that women in the short stories experience have a way of changing for the better and that they are allowed to walk away from such relationships. The mandate of feminism is to protect women across the world and to give them the recognition and rights equal with men in the society. This theory started from the first wave to the third wave with the mission of equalising the rights of women with those of men. And those women should also get the same cultural and professional rights as men and that women should be recognised as important in the community and to be treated with respect as human being, not as objects. Liberal feminism strives for equal powers between men and women across traditional, cultural, social, professional spheres and in the home, while radical feminism gives the women the opportunity to overpower men as they have been disadvantaged for long. Social feminism strives for equal rights between women and men in the social setting where responsibilities are shared equally.

Male dominance suppresses the rights of women and allows men to perceive women as objects to be controlled. This concept provides men with the authority to see women as lesser beings. The men in the short stories perceive women as objects that they can control because they, as men, have financial power and that culture and societal standards are at their advantage. Men are placed in the public spheres because they are the supposed rational beings, while women are placed in the private sector because they are the emotional beings. On the other hand, the in-laws mistreat the daughter-in-law because the notion is that she has been bought as if she is a commodity. The mother-in-law becomes the problematic person because she fights for the attention of her son with the new daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law is treated like an additional member in the family and is constantly abused and mistreated in her new home. The women in the short stories experience all sorts of ill-treatment and yet they find the excuse of staying with their abusive husbands, because they have children with them and if they alone, it is assumed that they are unable to raise the children once they leave their marriages.

CHAPTER THREE

DOES THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY AFFECT THE WOMEN IN THE SHORT STORIES?

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the selected short stories, women regularly find themselves in multiple dilemmas where they have to choose strategies that will be beneficial to their spouses, children, culture, religion and the society in general. In the stories women are subject to the power of culture that promotes male dominance and patriarchy within the society. They are perceived as sub-human and objects that need to be controlled by men, culture and society. These women may be expected to make sacrifices such as complying with the rules and influence of culture where their self-worth is diminished or not considered. Kanengoni (2013:1) notes that many men invoke culture to justify unhealthy masculine predilections that take away the freedom of many women and girls. She proposes that men at times use their physical power to over-rule women by taking away the freedom that women are entitled to.

It seems that the dilemmas that women face are those that may be influenced by culture and male dominance. The concept of culture is widely researched in the field of Anthropology and as such, anthropologists do not seem to agree on a single, ultimate definition of culture. Hence, each scholar came up with his or her own definitions which are connected by a thought or idea. For the interest of this study, a few definitions of culture will be provided. Firstly, the concept of culture may refer to:

The way of life of a specific group of people. It can be seen in ways of behaving, beliefs, values, customs followed, dress style, personal decoration like makeup and jewelry, relationships with others and special symbols and codes...Culture is not static but always changing as each generation contributes its experience of the world and discards things that are no longer useful to them (South Africa African History Online, 2005).

The way people portray themselves and the way they behave may be influenced by culture. As a result, in the South African context, culture is perceived as significant, and it is possible to say that culture is not stagnant; it changes as the world changes. The way that customs, for example, were implemented in the past may not be relevant to what is happening in the present-day South Africa, because South Africa is turning into a modernised country. Seemingly, the expectations of women decades back may not be relevant to the present day. However, despite the moves towards transformation, the notion of gender equality is constantly discouraged and denigrated. Women should not be perceived as sub-human and objects to be controlled by men, culture and society.

The second definition of culture includes its features as “a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of the society” (Kottak, 2011:27). The idea that is derived from this definition is that ‘man’ is used synonymously with human beings, but relating this idea to the gender it implies that women are not recognised. Kottak indicates that ‘man’ is the one being that has to practice all the knowledge, belief and other aspects found in culture. Men are given the privilege to practice culture than women, which makes women to be perceived as insignificant beings within culture and society. This is an indication that even in recent studies women are still not given preference when it comes to culture and they are still perceived as ‘the other’ in the society.

Male dominance and the influence of culture and society in South Africa are at times considered important, especially in rural areas and villages. Within such areas and villages, men are worshiped and respected like gods by the people within the community. This kind of worship and respect is what culture and religion enforce and it encourages women to believe that men are the superior sex. Women are subjugated and overpowered by male dominance and patriarchy because religion and culture elevate men as superior and women as inferior. Thus, a woman who respects and understands culture and religion is at times considered by her society to be much more of a real woman than the one who challenges these customs.

In patriarchy, as suggested by Rakoczy, the male is superior and the female is understood to be inferior in every way, which implies that all women are inherently inferior to every man (2004:30). Thus, Rakoczy implies that men feel that they have the right to control women and to treat them like objects. Women suffer because of their gender and because they are considered weak in certain aspects, such as thinking and making beneficial decisions. Women's responsibilities include being mothers, wives and home administrators. In these roles, they undertake all domestic duties, including cooking, feeding the family members, keeping the home tidy and above all, childbearing (Machaba 2011:02). This is evident in the selected short stories where women are expected to play roles of being the perfect wives, daughters-in-law and child bearers, and to manage the households and every family member within the family. The collection is titled *Love Interrupted* which consists of short stories that articulate the voices of abused and cheated black South African women by male figures in their lives, either their husbands or men in the community.

These women are obliged to tolerate their husbands' mistresses threatening the wellbeing of their marriage and children and they have no support from the society and the extended family members. Hence, some women turn a blind eye on their abusive relationships by insisting on staying in such relationships with the excuse of providing their children with a better life while others turn to church for survival. Among the themes within these short stories are patriarchy and male dominance. In some short stories, patriarchy and male dominance are promoted, where women are treated as inferior and sub-human because they are considered as weak human beings. Despite their professional occupation outside the home, they are still expected to perform household chores such as cooking and cleaning. Women's abilities are considered to be strong in terms of monitoring the household, handling family members and reproducing children, being part of the household management instead of being the head of the household. Feminism suggests that men and women are equal and therefore equal power and opportunities should be granted to both despite the expectations of certain aspects such as culture.

Although, women may be important, powerful and influential, it seems that relative to men of their age and social status, women everywhere generally lack recognised and culturally valued authority (Rosaldo, 1974:17). Rosaldo implies that women may have positions or recognised occupations which may give them power and influence, but culturally these women are in some way subordinate to men. Men have power and status culturally than women because women are regarded as inferior in as far as cultural standards are concerned. Considering women as the weaker sex within the society promotes the notion that men are the leaders culturally and women are followers of men and culture.

3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED SHORT STORIES

Women in the selected short stories, “Love Interrupted”, “The Things We Do For Love”, “Lebo’s Story 1: A Young Girl’s Dream Interrupted” and “My Perfect Husband” consider themselves fortunate to have been married. Hence, they acquiesce to domestic violence, where they are abused emotionally, and sometimes physically, by their husbands who cheat on them. Although these women experience emotional trauma, they still decide to stay and hold on to their inconsiderate men. Often, such women feel helpless and are afraid to be judged by community members and extended family members and to be beaten up by their cheating and inconsiderate husbands. Hence, McDowell and Pringle (1992:09) argue that “men’s sexual and physical violence is supported by the institutional power...a man is entitled to respond violently if his wife attempts to depart from very narrowly prescribed norms of marriage and motherhood”. It is assumed that physical violence is what will make a woman behave in the manner that is expected from a wife, that is, she will respect her husband at all times, at all costs. Each selected short story was analysed to investigate whether the influence of culture and society affect women in the short stories.

3.2.1 “Love Interrupted”

The short story “Love Interrupted” is set in Modjadji village, Limpopo, where culture and society are significant and play a major role. A daughter-in-law is perceived to be a

domestic worker in her new family. Her duties, as the married woman, are to bear children, respect the mother in-law and every member of the family and most importantly, to do her chores as the daughter-in-law.

3.2.1.1 Sacrifice of the self

Generally, women like Anna with occupations are obliged to be selfless because culture and society perceive them as lesser beings. Although Anna has a job and is able to take care of herself and her children financially, she would still not be recognised as woman enough in her community without a man or husband in her life. Despite the fact that her husband abuses and cheats on her, she has to portray a picture of a strong and understanding wife within the community and that is where she is sacrificing her own happiness and reputation for the sake of being accepted in the community by having a male figure in her life and staying married.

Anna is a professional teacher married to Leshata who becomes an abusive, cheating and alcoholic husband. Leshata constantly abuses and cheats on Anna and she keeps quiet about it because she considers herself as one of the fortunate women who is married in her community. Societal expectations allow her to consider herself as privileged to have a husband and that her children will not grow up fatherless. She is even confident to think that: "I was fortunate to have a husband. Most women were struggling to find a man to marry them. Their children were being raised fatherless. I should be counting my blessings, I thought" (Malatji, 2012:27). Her marital status and the perception of the community force her to accept her husband's behaviour because she does not want to end up like other women in her community who are without husbands or male figures. She makes her marital status a priority before her individuality and abilities as a woman.

Hall (1990:02) suggests that most women in the world live at levels of subsistence survival. Their energies are consumed by making ends meet. Women have no time to call their own and little opportunity to assess the quality of their lives or status. Furthermore, they are socialised to accept restrictions and still consider themselves

fortunate. Anna is one of the women who considers herself fortunate enough to have a husband, and this kind of status makes her forget her inner ability as a woman and the profession she occupies. She forgets about herself and puts great effort into the survival of her marriage, her children and keeping her husband to herself despite the treatment she is receiving from him. Hall (1990:51) indicates that history has placed women in a high state of self-sacrifice and selflessness. Anna is in the position where she accepts and understands her husband's behaviour because she is a woman (the inferior being) as culture and society insist she is.

3.2.1.2 The perception of women within culture

The idea of Kottak (2011:27) indicates clearly that culturally, women appear to be perceived as the object, the other being, a lesser being. The 'man' is the one that acquires all the necessary knowledge of culture and by having such knowledge, he is perceived as an important member of the society that ought to control the woman because the woman has not been given the opportunity to learn the ways of culture. Hence, she is compelled to comply with the standards culture prescribes for her. The perception of women within culture is that women are supposed to be selfless, bear children to make heirs for the man, and care and respect their husband/man and his extended family members no matter the circumstances.

Anna is one woman who is obliged to comply with the ways of culture as the daughter-in-law because she is perceived as the domestic worker in her new family. Even in a situation where she is pregnant, she is still working and still expected to perform all kinds of chores in the house. She indicates: "I was always tired from having to go to work and then come back home to chores. My swollen feet and stomach did not help" (Malatji, 2012:27). The fact that she is pregnant and she needs time to rest does not make any difference because she is the daughter-in-law and she is a woman. This means that her husband does not take any part in helping her with chores around the house and the mother-in-law is instructed to leave the chores in the house because the person responsible for them has arrived. Culturally, she is perceived as the domestic

worker who is supposed to comply with the ways of her new home and what culture expects from her as a woman.

Her duties as the daughter-in-law and wife include waking up early to cook for her husband despite the fact that she is heavily pregnant. Such duties are expected from her by her mother-in-law because if she fails to do her duties, the mother-in-law will take over and mock her for being an incompetent wife to her son (Malatji, 2012:30). In addition, Anna as a woman and a wife is expected, culturally, to reproduce children so that she is perceived as a real woman. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974:1) add that women are viewed as passive sexual objects, and devoted mothers, and as dutiful wives. They imply that a woman is categorised within three features which are being the sex object that reproduce children, being the dedicated mother that cares for the children and always keeping busy with chores around the house. In addition, the novel titled *The Joys of Motherhood* by Emecheta (1979:62) clearly outlines that traditionally in Ibo society, a woman is perceived as woman enough if she is able to produce children for her husband, especially a boy who would be the heir of the husband. This traditional expectation has even drawn conclusions that a woman who is unable to bear children for her husband is a failed woman. This implies that a woman's worth is judged by how many children she can produce for her husband. Thus, the worth of a woman is determined by cultural expectations.

Reproducing children for a woman like Anna comes with difficult circumstances where she is not allowed to come into contact with her husband as long as she is breastfeeding because if she comes into contact with her husband it is assumed that the children might be affected, or worse they may die. Anna's mother-in-law indicates that "It's our tradition. You can't sleep with your husband until you stop breast feeding. Otherwise you will kill the babies" (Malatji, 2012:33). This gives Anna's husband, Leshata, the opportunity to be away from home often because he goes to other women to satisfy his sexual desire while his wife cares for the children. Such behaviour seems to be accepted culturally and in Anna's society. Although she is aware that her husband is after other women, she is obliged to be silent. Her silence makes her to be perceived as the good and matured wife within the society.

3.2.2 “The Things We Do For Love”

The short story, “The Things We Do For Love”, is set in a context where Mosima is unemployed, which makes her a stay-at-home-mother. She is married to the Minister of Public Works, Ngwato. She is another woman who has to deal with dilemmas such as her drunk and cheating husband who comes late at night, mistresses that threaten her marriage and the livelihood of her children, neglect by her husband, and disrespect by the husband’s mistress. Mosima is expected to understand and accept cheating in her marriage because she is a woman and she is unable to provide for herself and her children.

3.2.2.1 Sacrifice of the self

For a woman who is not working or unable to provide for herself financially, it means that she has to be dependent on any man she finds herself with. She would have no choice but to be selfless and trade her worth just to have a male figure in her life despite the level of stress she experiences. Mosima has no financial income to look after herself and children because she has no job; hence, she tolerates the husband who is always away and hurting her. She stays because the husband provides a better life for her financially.

Her unemployment gives her time to be a mother and take care of things in the house while the husband is at work and providing for the family. She becomes the care-taker of the household to the extent that she surrenders to the whole notion. Mosima perceives herself as alone in her marriage, but because she also perceives herself to be the strongest in the relationship, she feels obliged to stay in the marriage and put up with her husband’s behaviour. The story states: “Mosima was a woman of strength. There was a dignity about her...” (Malatji, 2012:110). The kind of dignity that she holds as a woman is that of being strong, of having the strength to deal with her husband’s behaviour and attitudes and that makes her forget that her inner self exists. When her husband comes home late at night and drunk, she does not tell him how his behaviour affects her wellbeing and marriage. Instead, she feels obligated to cook for him and put the food in the oven for him because he is the husband, the man. For instance, “His

coming late was no longer an issue. It was something she was used to. She turned over and went back to sleep. He has his own key and his food was in the oven if he was hungry” (Malatji, 2012:108). The neglect and disrespect that her husband keeps on showing does not provoke her to leave, instead she stays and cares for the children and the property and waits for him every night to come back home.

Dayima (2014:1) indicates that in many cases women stay in abusive relationships because they do not have a job or other resources. She implies that it is often that women who do not have any source of financial income choose to stay in abusive relationships because without the male partner who is the provider, they probably will not survive. Mosima sacrifices her happiness for her marriage because she convinces herself that she is the one that loves her husband for who he is and his behaviour, not for the money he earns as the Minister of Public Works. She is even confident to say: “I will never leave my husband over some cheap tickiline. I don’t think she loves him. She is only in it for the money” (Malatji, 2012:118). Mosima feels the need to stay with her husband because she tells herself that she loves her husband more than the girlfriend does. She thinks that the girlfriend is dating her husband for money rather than for love; hence, she is willing to stay with her husband even if it makes her unhappy.

To her, her happiness is not important because at times she blames and tortures herself for her husband’s behavior. She feels it is her fault that her husband’s behaviour is the way it is. She feels as though she is being punished by God for taking Ngwato from his fiancée years back. She does not blame him for his infidelity; instead, she makes endless excuses for them and punishes herself more.

3.2.2.2 The significance of marriage

In an African context, marriage plays a significant role culturally and in the society. However, the outcomes of being married offer different circumstances based on gender, where men are at the advantage of being favoured by the ways of culture and having the opportunity of suppressing their wives in the name of culture, while women find themselves at the disadvantage of being unfavoured by culture and for that they are abused and treated as lesser beings.

According to Link (2010:02), historically, upon marriage, a daughter leaves her natal home and moves to live with her husband's family, and comes under the authority of the mother-in-law and the husband. Link suggests that a daughter does not belong to her biological parents any longer because she will be married and that makes her belong to the family where she is married and will be under the power of the husband and the mother-in-law. She will be told how to conduct herself and how to behave as the bride. Therefore, the bride has to be committed to her marriage and give all her effort so that she is regarded as the well-mannered daughter-in-law, who respects and loves her husband even when he is behaving disrespectfully towards her and mistreating her.

The new bride, like Mosima, is committed to her marriage and always finds excuses for her husband's behaviour. She cannot leave her husband because she made a vow to love him until death do them part. However, this becomes an unbearable burden because she has to deal with her husband's mistress which degrades her self-image as a woman (Malatji, 2012:121). It seems as though she chooses to be a fool like Anna in "Love Interrupted", yet in her situation is even worse because Ngwato is the provider and she has no source of income with which she would be able to look after herself and the children. She depends entirely on Ngwato financially and it seems she does so emotionally and psychologically as well.

Mosima is an unhappily married woman, yet she does not leave her marriage and husband because she is afraid of leaving the lavish lifestyle accessible to the wife of a public figure. She lives in a mansion with the latest and most expensive cars, she has a chauffeur who drives the children around, and she and the children have the privilege of spending holidays in expensive and first-class hotels simply because the husband can afford a materialistic lifestyle. However, he cannot be there for them as a father and husband because he is preoccupied with mistresses and late night parties.

In addition, Mosima feels that she needs her husband more than she needs anything else because if she has her husband to herself and at home at all times, her children will grow up with both parents. As a result, she ends up degrading herself in front of Ngwato's girlfriend in the name of love, marriage and her being the wife, the mother of Ngwato's children. She feels the need to talk to Maphefo, the mistress, woman to

woman. When she meets her, Mosima tries by all means to convince her that Ngwato belongs to her because she is the wife and she has borne children for him. She indicates that “I came here to you about my husband. In case you have forgotten, I want to remind you that he is married to me and that he has three boys who are still growing and need him. You can’t keep on making him stay away from his home. God will punish you for your cruelty” (Malatji, 2012:119). She tries to make mistress to see that she, Mosima, needs Ngwato more than the mistress and that Ngwato has responsibilities as a married man and it is wrong of Maphefo to keep Ngwato away from home, where he belongs. When Maphefo refuses to leave Ngwato alone, Mosima beats her up and promises to kill her if she does not leave her husband alone (Malatji, 2012:120). The sacrifices that Mosima makes for her marriage demean her and turn her into someone who is dependent on her husband in order to live. Marriage seems to be more important to Mosima than her life and freedom and the lives of her children. She is willing to do anything in her power, even kill someone, in order to keep her marital status.

3.2.2.3 The cheating and abusive husband

Culture seems to have a way of disadvantaging women and advantaging men, where patriarchy becomes the system that gives men the authority to rule women through political, social, economic, legal, cultural and religious institutions (Wilson, 2013:6). Ngwato cheats on Mosima and does not make his infidelity private because he is the man and the provider. It seems as though, culturally, it is acceptable for him to have more than one partner because even those who are aware of his cheating take it as a norm that should not be questioned or corrected. Mosima is aware of her husband’s unfaithfulness and she still chooses to stay with him because she is afraid of being alone and raising his children as a single parent.

Ngwato’s cousin, Phuti, knows about Ngwato’s cheating and she advises him to consort with more secretive women than the one he is currently dating. Phuti indicates that “if you really have to cheat, couldn’t you do it with someone more respectable? Like those ladies from parliament, they can be discreet” (Malatji, 2012:115). This implies that cheating is acceptable when the man does it with women who are discreet and will

make themselves invisible in the presence of the wife so that they do not hurt her feelings.

Ngwato justifies his cheating by explaining to his cousin that he is a better man because other men in parliament have more than one mistress and it is the African culture, the way people used to live in the past (Malatji, 2012:115). Hence, culture approves his cheating and he is not ashamed and is prepared to flaunt his mistress publicly. He ends up not coming home to his wife and children but living with Maphefo on a fulltime basis. He neglects his wife and since she does not leave the marriage, she makes excuses for his behaviour, saying that he is bewitched. Mosima alludes to superstition as the cause of her husband's behaviour and stays in her relationship, waiting for him to come back to her (Malatji, 2012:110)

3.2.3 “Lebo’s story 1: A Young Girl’s Dream Interrupted”

Lebo, the main character in this short story, is a young woman who grew up dreaming of a better future. She grew up working very hard to prove herself that she could have a better life than her mother, grandmother and every woman in her community. She foolishly believed in her boss, Lucky, who was only interested in using her as his sex object while his wife was away at work. When she eventually discovers that she is pregnant, Lucky offers her money to abort the baby and when Lebo refuses, she is fired from her work and accused of ruining Lucky's marriage. Her dreams of becoming a better person are interrupted by a man whom she thought would assist her in brightening her life. Instead, he robbed her of her life by lying and using her to satisfy his sexual desires.

3.2.3.1 Striving for independence in the African context

African culture and tradition had a way of placing women in the lower level of the society hierarchy. In that level, women were limited or denied from dreaming about bettering their lives other than being wives, mothers and daughter-in-law. African women were not given the opportunity to dream of any occupation than household responsibilities and caring for the internal and external family members. Gradually, women saw the

need to be outside the home and to be in the public domain where they were able to dream of becoming independent individuals. Lebo is one of the many women who saw the need to be independent despite the hardship of dealing with the challenges of male dominance, culture and tradition in order to achieve her dreams.

Lebo grew up in a poverty-stricken home under the care of her grandmother, uncles and aunties while her mother was a domestic worker. However, Lebo always viewed her life as being better than those in her family. Hence, she worked hard and did every given task to perfection. At the age of eight, she was able to do all the chores in the house including cooking (Malatji, 2012:57). She worked very hard to learn as much as she could because she did not want to end up like her mother or grandmother. She helped at her teacher's house with chores and looking after children and most of the time, when she was left alone, she would fantasise about how rich she would be and that one day she would be a boss who orders people around.

She impressed her mother's bosses with her hard work to the point that her food was preferred than those of her mother (Malatjie, 2012:60). Her desire for a better future included her having no contact with boys or men because they would impregnate her and rob her of her dreams: "I think boys will spoil my future. I will have a boyfriend when I'm done with school and have started my own business", she would say (Malatji, 2012: 70). She had always been inspired by women she often came into contact with: teacher Mangena, Sindi and her mother's madam.

3.2.3.2 Control of the body

Generally, society has its own way of shaping the lives of people who live in it, and this includes what is considered a desirable woman's body and how a woman should conduct herself (Calef and Simkins, 2009:7). Calef and Simkins (2009) note that a woman's body is perceived to be controlled by society. For instance, Lebo's grandmother had a baby when she was thirteen years old and her own mother had her when she was fifteen. Lebo thus plans to have a baby only when she is successful and owns her own business. However, along the way she is robbed of her future and ends

up pregnant at the age of eighteen (Malatji, 2012:73). It seems that these women's lives are controlled by reproduction. Calef and Simkins (2009:8) add that women's efforts are often focused on reproduction and the health of the family. It seems as though women are good at doing two things in their lives: bear children and look after the family members. It is as if women have been indoctrinated on being dependent on what society and culture tells them to do.

Male dominance is encouraged by culture and tradition and men are socialised to perceive women's bodies as objects to satisfy their sexual desires. Hence, Lucky sees Lebo's body as an instrument to satisfy his sexual needs by lying and manipulating the young girl to a point that he impregnates her and then provides an escape route for himself by offering financial assistance for her to abort the child. The story states: "He promised her that he would help her achieve her dreams because he loved her. He would redeem her from her poverty. He made all the promises that every man who wants sex would make" (Malatji, 2012:71). Lebo thought of Lucky as her saviour from her disadvantaged situation, one person who would help her to become a better person. She falls in love with him because he offers her support and he believes in her dreams. While he makes her believe that she is in love with him, he interrupts her dreams by giving her the baby she is not ready for.

Lebo's dreams of becoming an independent woman are not only interrupted by Lucky but by her mother as well. When she thinks that she would be a woman that does not depend on men and not be a domestic worker, her mother tells her that those are just illusions because she, her mother and grandmother, have worked as domestic workers which makes the job inevitable for Lebo. Her mother encourages her to be like other women in the society, including herself and Lebo's grandmother, by accepting not to be independent, not to dream as a young girl. Lebo's mother says to her mockingly:

Dream on, my girl. Your children will wash underwear because there will be no one to wash them for them. You will never be rich. If it was that easy, we would all be rich. These people did not become rich by themselves. Their grandparents' grandparents were also rich. And wena [you], who has ever been rich in your

family? You are going to follow the same road as me and your grandmother. You can't escape it. The sooner you accept that, the better. I am just happy that you are not lazy: you know the white man's work. Your children won't die of hunger. (Malatji 2012: 62)

The fact that Lebo is a black woman makes her future path to be defined and concluded that she should not dream of being rich because she would end up as a domestic worker. However, Lebo thinks about this and sees herself differently from what her mother sees her and she is determined not to end up like her mother and grandmother. Hence, she stops sharing her dream with her mother because she discourages her.

3.2.4 “My perfect Husband”

The short story “My Perfect Husband” is set in Sibasa Township in Limpopo. In this township, men cheating and having adulterous relationships is accepted as one of the normal things in the community. Married women are aware that their husbands have mistresses and children outside their marriages and yet they stay with their cheating husbands because they believe that culture and tradition have always encouraged men to have multiple partners. Therefore, these women make excuses to stay with their spouses because the husbands provide and they are ‘men’. A woman who leaves her husband because of adulterous behaviour is considered a fool (Malatji, 2012:152).

The narrator's husband, Mashudu, is involved in an accident that kills his mistress, Matodzi Mulaudzi. The narrator, being the wife, is expected to lie and cover up for him after he has cheated on her. Her in-laws order her to lie to the mistress' husband, Mark, and tell him that when his wife died she was present. The narrator is ordered by her in-laws to lie to Mark and cover her husband's mess because in her marriage, her opinion and feelings are not considered important. She is perceived as an object to be controlled. When she discovers that her husband had children with his deceased mistress, she is still expected to understand and give her husband the support he needs to raise the children without Mark knowing. Thus, her unhappiness in her marriage makes her to add in the number of *nyatsis* in her community by being close to Mark.

Nyatsi is a South African word that means a mistress or a woman who dates other women's husbands.

3.2.4.1 The silenced voice

The narrator in this short story is perceived as an object that needs to be dictated to by the husband, the in-laws and the society. Her value as a human being is considered unimportant because her name is unknown throughout the short story; hence, she is devalued as a woman. Her body and her voice are controlled by these people, and, because she is married, she has to be subjected to her husband and her marriage bond in order to be accepted in the community. Dayima (2014) notes that in the case where women are married, they stick it out in relationships regardless of the circumstances as they feel that they will be blamed if they leave their husbands. When women are abused by their husbands, they are expected to understand and stay because if they leave their husbands they will be accused by their in-laws and the community at large for being traitors. Hence, they have to find the means to stay with their husbands and find happiness in the situations they find themselves in, even when they are aware that their partners cheat and deceive them.

Women in this short story have accepted that their husbands have mistresses and they somehow make peace with the situation because they are afraid of being treated like outcasts in the community. It does not matter how they feel as long they are able to accept the mistresses and allow the husband to provide for the children in and outside the marriage. And those who keep quiet about their husbands' *'nyatsis'* are considered well-mannered. Malatji (2012:153) indicates that most women know their husbands' *nyatsis*. Some women fight tooth-and-nail with them, but those who do not are considered to be well-mannered and mature. Most women live with the pain of sharing their men and family resources with these *nyatsis*. A woman who is aware or knows about her husband's affair and keeps quiet about it is perceived as mature. That means she has to bear the pain, hurt and disrespect so that her children do not starve and so that she may not be vilified by the society should she attempt to leave her husband.

How a woman feels in the relationship is not important as long as she is lucky enough to have found a man who married her. Hence, the best behaviour she can give her husband and in-laws is to be a silent partner that asks no questions. She is not given the time to ask questions or to even digest that her husband whom she loves was cheating on her, but she is expected by her in-laws to act immediately so that her husband is not perceived by the society and Matodzi's husband, Mark, to be in the wrong. Ntakuseni, Mashudu's twin brother, is worried about his twin brother's reputation and well-being. Ntakuseni asserts: "It will look bad if they [Mark and the community] are told that it was just the two of them in the car. Mark might be suspicious or angry. You know how people are. They could interpret it negatively and Mashudu might be in trouble or, worse, they might even kill or bewitch him. My dear sister you know how the Venda people are" (Malatji, 2012:159). The narrator is expected to save her husband so that he will still be respected in the community. Culturally, she is powerless because she is the daughter-in-law and her duty is to obey her authorities, the authorities being her in-laws and her husband.

The African culture has a way of sending a message to women that they are expected to accept their husband's infidelity and at the same time be the weak person, the dependent one trapped in relationships where they feel like they do not have a choice of leaving. When women are married, they have the expectation of turning a house into a warm, loving and caring home. However, the home, which should be a place of safety and security, is particularly a dangerous place for women since it is there that so much violence takes place (Rakoczy, 2004:34). Women are constantly abused and ill-treated in the place where they should be safe. They are often abused by their cheating husbands who expect them to stay and make peace with the situation. They are verbally abused by the in-laws, making married women feel worthless and useless if they do not have the strength to be with their husbands when they do them wrong.

Women are continually expected to sacrifice their selves in order to keep peace and harmony at home by being as silent as possible. When the narrator is told about the accident and that her husband had been unfaithful to her all along she indicates that she needs time to think on her own without the influence or voices of her in-laws and

husband but she is told that there is no time to think. Ntakuseni is a chauvinist brother-in-law who does not seem to understand the worth of a woman; he treats his sister-in-law like some property that has no feelings and mind-set. He arrogantly points out that “There is no time to think. A person is in the mortuary and her family has not been informed. We must go now, before this thing turns into a mess” (Malatji, 2012:160). The narrator is not given the time or space to think about the whole situation and she is expected to act fast by assisting them to sort out the mess.

3.2.4.2 The Cheating husband

Malatji’s story suggests that society has a way of making certain behaviour by men the norm. This behaviour is embraced and honoured even when it has a negative effect on other people. The notion of male dominance is encouraged by the society where men are perceived as god-like and women as worshipers. Adulterous men are encouraged because the more women one man has, the more he will be respected in the community. The mistresses are treated with the same level of respect as the woman married to the man, in such a way that the family member of the man takes the opportunity to support the mistress and her children. Women in such communities are taught that there is no man who does not cheat, hence the best thing a woman can do, especially a married woman, would be to let the man be the man. All she should appreciate is the fact that the husband has not left her and the children. This is evident in Malatji’s story in the following quotation:

A man cheating on his wife in our community did not make headlines. Infidelity was as common place as taking a bath in the morning. In most cases, the girlfriend automatically assumed the status of deputy wife. The community accepted her as the official nyatsi even though the man did not marry her. She could even conceive two or more children with the man and he might provide a house for them. Then she would be accepted by the man’s family, especially the parents and siblings. Any woman who left her husband because of a nyatsi was considered an idiot. “Where does she think she would get a man who does not cheat? All men cheat, it’s in their nature” (Malatji, 2012: 152).

Many of these married women accept that men cheat and any one that leaves a man because of his infidelity is mocked by the community. Cheating within this community is accepted as a norm where the man's family members support him with his multiple partners and several children outside the official relationship that he has. Male dominance is condoned in rural areas in such a way that women have to bow down to one man who is the provider to all of them. According to Dayima (2014:01), men are taught to be dominant and women are taught to be submissive. Men are perceived to be the leaders while women are perceived to be the followers. Women are objectified as silent beings and accept it when the man they love cheats on and abuses them.

Men are understood to be the leaders because in most cases they are the providers. They are understood to be thinkers and independent individuals in various situations, and if the man is financially stable, he is allowed to take as much advantage of the lives of women as possible because he is able to support his multiple women. Mothers-in-law would encourage new daughters-in-law to stay in a relationship where the husband cheats; the important thing is that he has not abandoned her and the children. The mothers-in-law set themselves up as examples that their husbands cheated on them with as many mistresses as possible and yet they stayed because the husband did not allow the children to starve. Similarly, the daughters-in-law have to find a way of staying in a cheating relationship. Malatji (2012:152) points out that:

The more affluent a man was, the more women he would have. The chances of finding a man who did not have a nyatsi were as slim as winning the Lotto. Men now felt even more justified because President Zuma had four wives and possibly a higher number of nyatsis. It was simply accepted as African culture. Some women had tried to take it up with their mothers-in-law and all they got was: 'He is better, he has only one nyatsi. His father had five nyatsis. And look! I am still here. You just have to live with it. Be grateful that he is still supporting the family'.

Patriarchal structures within the African context are those that have a way of undermining the dignity and the worth of a woman. When men are practising lifestyles that negatively affect the well-being of women it is simply accepted as African culture

and when women try to voice out their feelings they are considered disrespectful and ungrateful. Despite having a varied number of *nyatsis* while he is officially married, a man has to be granted respect and understanding and the person that has to understand the most is the wife. If the wife agrees with her husband's behaviour, she will be respected by the community members. Even the South African President is granted respect and praise by men as it is believed by some that his manhood is defined by the number of wives and mistresses he has. Hence, this gives other men the opportunity as well to have as many partners as possible; such behaviour is merely dismissed as African culture.

The oppression of women through patriarchal social structures increases even in the religious contexts since the presumed 'maleness' of God and the male identity of Jesus are used to justify women's subordination (Rakoczy, 2004:31). It is therefore evident that women are oppressed and subjugated in the name of religion and African tradition where they are perceived as objects rather than human beings. Opinions and emotions of women are not considered in the face patriarchal structures such as male dominance, African culture and religion. Hence, when a man is cheating, a woman has to find an excuse to stay in such a relationship because she wants to be accepted within the community.

In addition, the story shows that women who are wise enough not to confront their husband's mistresses are considered well-mannered as they are able to share their men with other women. In the story, it is assumed rare or unbelievable that a man raised in a context where male dominance, culture, religion and patriarchy are dominant would not have multiple partners. Women's well-being is violated and abused simply because they are women, the dependents and the helpers. Rakoczy (2004: 31) indicates that the position of a wife to her husband is that of subjugation. A man in the relationship is assumed to be the head and his duty to the woman is simply to provide for her; his fidelity to his wife is not a requirement as a husband.

3.2.4.3 The influence of the in-laws and community

In African cultures, girls grow up conscious that their stay with their immediate family is only temporary because when they are mature enough their identity will be defined by the in-laws (Link, 2010:5). Link (2010) suggests that girls are groomed to be aware that their biological family is only a transitory place for them since they will grow up into women and get married where they will form additional members of their in-law family.

The in-laws take over the life and well-being of the daughter-in-law because *lobola* has been paid for her. The husband perceives and treats her like his property and controls her. However, initially *lobola* was paid to show gratitude to the family of the woman and to indicate that the husband will take full responsibility of caring and protecting the woman. Hence, the money paid did not mean buying property that will be abused. In Malatji's story, however, we see how this traditional concept of *lobola* has been defied. When the well-being of the daughter-in-law is violated, the family and members of the community do not discourage the wrong behaviour of the husband; instead, they justify it by saying that it is traditional or cultural for a man to behave in such a manner. For instance, the mothers-in-law encourage the daughters-in-law to stay with their husbands when they cheat on them as long as the husband is still supporting the children (Malatji, 2012:153). However, in most cases the tension grows between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law because they both seek the attention of the husband/son. The in-laws, particularly the mother, presume a role in the newly-weds' marriage because they perceive themselves as an important and dominant part of the family. What is given the attention is the fact that the man is still able to provide for his initial family even when he has mistresses outside.

Community members consider such behaviour acceptable because structures such as patriarchy, male dominance, religion and African culture endorse it. The narrator in the story does not bother to learn how to drive herself to the various places she desires to go because she has a man who is able to drive her. Society encourages her to consider herself privileged because she has a man who is always there for her. In fact, other women wish they had a man like Mashudu (Malatji, 2012:154). However, the main issue is not that the narrator is incapable of driving herself; the main issue is that she is a woman, the weak and the incapable human being. On the other hand, Ntakuseni

assumes his right to direct the narrator's actions because he is the man and he is the brother-in-law which gives him the right to perceive his sister-in-law as an object (Malatji, 2012:156-157). Not only does her brother-in-law dictate her behaviour but her father-in-law as well when he says: "Mashudu promised the police that he would inform the family in person, as well as family and friends. So he cannot go there alone to report this. It won't look good" (Malatji, 2012:159). The fact that she is the daughter-in-law limits her voice and opinions within her new family because the African culture gives more power to the in-laws and the husband and less power to the wife as the daughter-in-law. Thus, it seems as if women are expected to suffer in silence because their voices are not worth hearing.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Based on the stories analysed in this chapter, it seems that the influence of African culture and society has a way of disadvantaging women than men and such disadvantages affect women negatively. The findings in this chapter are that the African culture, till the present day, promotes male dominance and patriarchy with the support of culture where the needs and well-being of women are often compromised. Although women may be given the opportunity to play roles in the public sector, they are still perceived as less important culturally. For instance, women like Anna, Lebo and Mashudu's wife are considered fortunate to be able support themselves financially but they also want to be part of the society where they are obliged to have the male figure in their lives so that they can be regarded as good women. Having male figures in their lives grants them the chance of gaining respect in the society. Thus, men tend to be worshipped like gods despite their promiscuous and abusive behaviour. As has been demonstrated, women in the selected short stories are influenced negatively by the expectations of culture and the society at large. They have no platform to raise their voice, and at times they are forced to stay in relationships that are not favourable to them. They have a need to be part of the society; hence, they comply with anything that culture offers them, even if it means suppressing their sense of self, voice and happiness.

Rosaldo (1974:21) indicates that it is a fact that everywhere men have some authority over women, that they have a culturally legitimated right to their subordination and compliance. She indicates that women are suppressed by men in favour of cultural standards and stereotypes. Hence, women become subservient. These women are suppressed because they consider themselves as being fortunate to have been married to any man despite the behaviour and manner that he conducts himself (Malatji, 2012). They then portray the image of being the perfect wives, mothers, child-bearers, daughters-in-law, and still manage the household and extended family members. Culture, society and men perceive women as sub-human and as objects that need to be controlled. Women have no other turning point but to have the strength to stay in such relationships because they are perceived as inferior and men as superior. In this respect, Malatji's stories suggest that the feminist struggle is far from over. The next chapter will discuss whether the perceptions that the extended family members have towards women undermine (diminish) or enhance women's sense of self-worth in the selected short stories.

CHAPTER FOUR

DO THE PERCEPTIONS THAT EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS HOLD UNDERMINE AND DIMINISH WOMEN'S SENSE OF SELF-WORTH IN THE SHORT STORIES?

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, it was discussed that the influence of culture and society has a negative influence on women in the selected short stories. These women consider themselves to be fortunate enough to be married because culturally a woman who does not have a male figure in her life is perceived as an outcast and is not respected in any way. Their marital status compels them to portray a picture of perfect wives, daughters-in-law and responsible mothers. This they do in order to please not only their husbands but their in-laws and society as well. Culturally, male dominance and patriarchy are still promoted to this present day, to a point that women who have professional titles and are able to care for themselves financially are still perceived as lesser beings in their respective cultures. Women are disrespected in their marriages in the same way they are in their societies.

In an African context, extended or in-law family members play a major role especially in the girls' lives. Girls are taught and trained from childhood on how to be the mature daughter-in-law or wife when they are married. This is why they are trained as early as possible at the home on how to carry out household chores and to be as respectful as possible towards the extended family. Women in the selected short stories are not only affected by cultural and societal expectations but by the perception that the extended family members have towards. The perception towards women is negative. Extended family members, particularly in the rural areas, form part of the newlyweds' lives, where the mother-in-law's duty is to teach the daughter-in-law on how to conduct herself as a married woman. She is taught how she should treat and respect her husband and bear children to increase her husband's clan. However, it turns out that the mother-in-law ends up mistreating her daughter-in-law instead of supporting her because they both seek the attention of the husband/son. Jackson and Bery-Cross (1988: 293) indicate that the survey of married men and women identified the mother-in-law as the most

difficult in-law, with the wife experiencing the majority of the mother-in-law's problems. The mother-in-law competes with the daughter-in-law because she feels threatened that all attention will now be given to the daughter-in-law instead of her. And some of the male extended family members become difficult for the daughter-in-law to deal with because of the chauvinist behaviour they extend towards the daughter-in-law.

According to Falola and Amponsah (2012: 44), women are always expected to be fertile and bear enough children for their husbands. One can then assert that the value and status of a woman acquired in a society largely depends on her fertility. Falola and Amponsah (2012: 44) suggest that the woman's worth is determined by her fertility where the number of children that she bears will indicate if she is woman enough. In addition, for the woman to be accepted by her extended family members, she does not only have to prove it through her behaviour but she also has to be in the position to bear children so that the mother-in-law will become the grandmother. Women are obliged to bear children especially when they are married so that they may be perceived to be the productive daughter-in-law/wife. She is valued and respected because of her ability to bear children for her husband. Often the misconception that the extended family members and the community have is that the woman they married and paid *lobola* for is 'bought'. Thus, they believe they have the right to do as they please with her because she is their possession. Part of this transaction involves her taking her husband's surname.

In this chapter, the researcher investigates whether the perceptions that the extended family members have towards women undermine (diminish) or enhance women's sense of self-worth in the selected short stories. Each short story is analysed to validate or nullify the assumption that the extended family members have a role to play in as far as the respect or degradation for the woman's self-worth is concerned.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED SHORT STORIES

4.2.1 “Love Interrupted”

In this short story, the mother-in-law becomes the enemy to the daughter-in-law, Anna, where she makes her new daughter’s life unpleasant. The mother-in-law is instructed to leave the household chores to the daughter-in-law because they are her responsibility. The mother-in-law also seeks her son’s attention which results in her constantly competing with her new daughter-in-law for his attention. She does this by pointing out her daughter-in-law’s faults. Anna is in this way portrayed as an incompetent wife and daughter-in-law. Anna, however, chooses to stay despite the way she is treated by her mother-in-law.

4.2.1.1 The perception of the in-laws

The opinion that the in-laws hold towards the daughter-in-law determines the life that she (daughter-in-law) lives with in her new family. The perception is often an unpleasant one. The daughter-in-law is often perceived as a mere additional member of the family in her extended family. Most women value their marriage in as much as they value their relationship with their extended family members. Married women are expected to build bonds with their in-law family members despite the difficulties they face in their new home. When they do so, they uphold their marital status and gain some measure of respect within their community. Jackson and Berg-Cross (1988: 293) propose that strong extended family ties are an important feature of black families. Hence, the way that the in-laws think and perceive women may affect married women either negatively or positively. In this short story, the daughter-in-law is perceived as nothing other than the domestic worker that performs all the household chores in the presence or absence of her mother-in-law (Malatji, 2012:26). She becomes the new daughter that takes over the responsibilities of cleaning, cooking and taking care of her husband, her mother-in-law and all the extended family members she finds at her new home.

The mother-in-law, in as far as the Bapedi culture is concerned, is supposed to be the second mother to the daughter-in-law where she (daughter-in-law) turns to for support

and advice in matters related to marriage. However, the mother and daughter-in-law in the black community often fight. As a result, they rarely build strong relational bonds between each other. The mother-in-law still vies for her son's attention even when she knows that he has a wife who equally, if not more, deserves his attention as well. The mother-in-law then becomes the major enemy of her son's marriage (Jackson and Berg-Cross, 1988:293). Jackson and Berg (1988) point out that instead of the mother-in-law showing the daughter-in-law the ways of marriage, she ends up destroying their chances of bonding as mother and daughter.

When Anna gets married (at a young age and fresh from university), she needs guidance and support from her mother-in-law. But the lessons she receives are dependent on her mother-in-law's mood at a particular moment. Sometimes the mother-in-law would be in a good mood and offer help but on other days, she would be indifferent towards Anna and her plight. Anna's mother-in-law is the right person to teach her how she is expected to conduct herself as the daughter-in-law. Anna reveals that "as *makoti*, I was instructed by my mother-in-law to address everyone in the family and all the relatives in the plural. The same way Julius Caesar addressed himself as we, us, our and so on. If someone asked me where my mother-in-law was, I had to say "they" went to the shop" (Malatji 2012: 26). As the new daughter-in-law within her marital family, Anna is given no option when it comes to respecting her extended family; she is perceived as the other daughter that needs to be told on how to address members in her new family.

Anna is not given the option to defy the instructions from her new mother because she is trying to be the good *makoti*. Falola and Amponsah (2012:44) suggest that a woman is expected to prove her value by being shy, respectful and hardworking. They suggest that a woman has to be the domestic worker in her new home, where she complies with the rules no matter the circumstances. This is the dilemma that Anna finds herself in, where she has to stay with her extended family members although she is unhappy and her sense of self is lost within her marital relationship.

The mother-in-law loudly gossips with her neighbour on how she used to look when she got married as a way of publicly mocking, criticising and diminishing her daughter-in-

law's sense of self-worth. The mother-in-law says: "You know what, MmaTlou? ... Me? When I was a young woman and I dressed up to go somewhere, you could never tell that I have given birth to eight children. My waist and curves remained where God intended them to be. My tummy was as flat as a fresh virgin's. You could not struggle to tell the difference between my back and my front" (Malatji, 2012:37). The mother-in-law despises her daughter-in-law. She sees her daughter-in-law as a rival who came to compete with her for her son's affection and attention. Anna gains weight after giving birth to her four children and instead of being sympathetic her mother-in law criticises her and reminds that she is no longer beautiful enough because her body shape has changed (Malatji, 2012:36). Thus, the mother-in-law does not have a healthy relationship with her new daughter.

The relationship between these two women is characterised by constant fights and tension. The mother-in-law's anger and hate towards her daughter-in-law goes as far as spitting saliva on her which is an indication that she is disgusted by her daughter-in-law and thus giving the impression that she perceives her as trash. Her daughter-in-law is constantly unhappy as a result of this ill-treatment. She actually says:

The tension between me and my mother-in-law intensified. Every time I walked out through the kitchen door, I would find her seated under the *marula* tree weaving her mats. Whenever she heard my footsteps approaching, she would pause and gather as much saliva as possible in her mouth, then when I come into her sight she would spit. The spit would land at my feet and I was followed by a sucking sound from her mouth. (Malatji, 2012:36)

This behaviour is evidence that Anna's mother-in-law undermines and diminishes her worth.

4.2.1.2 The position of the daughter-in-law in her new home

In many cases, it is rare for the daughter-in-law to be accepted and loved by the extended family members, especially the mother-in-law. A healthy and affectionate relationship between the daughter-in-law and her extended family members occurs by luck and oftentimes, it is non-existent. Mostly, there are constant fights where the

daughter-in-law is often reminded that she joined the family by being bought and not by blood. Hence, the position she holds is that she is the 'bought daughter'.

Women in situations similar to Anna's still find themselves committed to their unhappy marriages. The major reason for this is that they fear alienation from society. These women lose their individuality because they try to portray the picture of being the well behaved daughter-in-law/wife. However, the position of these women in their extended families is as good as being domestic workers or a mere additional member in their new home. There is even a song sung that indicates that the daughter-in-law takes over the duties that the mother-in-law was performing. This song becomes the words of welcome for the new daughter-in-law while relieving the mother-in-law from all the chores around the house. The song is sung as follows: "*Matswale tlogela dipitsa, mong wa tsona o fihlile*- mother-in-law, stop doing household chores, the person responsible for them has arrived" (Malatji 2012: 26). The daughter-in-law automatically becomes the servant in her new family where her duties are to perform household chores to her level best as alluded to by the song. Her diligence in doing the chores will have her perceived as the perfect daughter-in-law. If her mother-in-law and the extended family members are impressed by her diligence in executing her stereotyped duties, then she will be considered a worthy daughter-in-law. Falola and Amponsah (2012: 44) indicate that women are responsible for household or domestic duties such as fetching water, firewood, cooking and cleaning. Women are expected to prove their value to their husbands, extended family members and society by being submissive, respectful and hardworking, and in many cases they are not given the alternative to disregard the instruction. If the daughter-in-law fails to perform the duties delegated to her, she would either be perceived as being not good enough or the mother-in-law will take over the duties to discredit the daughter-in-law and subsequently give an impression that her daughter-in-law is incapable of performing her duties and incapable of looking after her husband (Malatji, 2012:30).

"Love Interrupted" shows that the position of the daughter-in-law within her new family is not only that she has to be the domestic worker but that she has to play the role of a stupid and less informed individual in her new home despite the education she might

have acquired. The fact that Anna has a professional occupation means that she is able to care for herself financially, yet she becomes submissive in her in-law family and husband because she is fighting for the title of being regarded as the good daughter-in-law (*makoti*)/wife, while the mother-in-law keeps on making demands on what duties the daughter-in-law should perform and how she should perform them.

Anna is a pregnant woman who goes to work as a teacher and comes back home to perform household duties. Anna tries hard to prove to her mother-in-law that she is capable of becoming the good daughter-in-law by performing all these tasks on her own. She suppresses her individualism for the sake of belonging and of receiving her mother-in-law's acceptance. She constantly fights with both her husband and mother-in-law and somehow finds excuses to stay and tolerate them because she feels that she would not be able to cope all by herself. She is made to feel like 'the other' in their yard. Yet, she stays because she is afraid of being alone and of raising her children alone since a woman with no male figure in her life is not given the respect due to her when compared to one with a man (Malatji, 2012:41). Anna tries as hard as she can to be the respectable woman in her community, envied by other women for her success in marriage. She wants to be perceived as a woman who has a husband to look after her children and a 'caring' daughter-in-law.

Anna is unhappy and chooses to stay in an unhappy marriage where she is constantly mistreated by her mother-in-law and verbally abused, but she always finds an excuse to stay because she is afraid of living as a divorcee with four children. The relationship she has with her mother-in-law and her husband degrades her womanhood. Anna says: "I did not know what else to do. For me a divorce or a separation was not an option, though it was clear that I was married to a borderline case" (Malatji, 2012:40). In her unpleasant relationship, she remained the mute individual who restricted herself from leaving because of the way she would be treated when she is out of her marriage. Hence, she stays in such dilemma because she needs to belong and to be perceived as a strong woman in her society. Kilgore (1992:1) states that divorce may be against a woman's religion [culture or belief]. Separation may involve more responsibilities that she would not know how to handle. These women often do not have the self-assurance

and the survival skills needed to establish independent lives. As Malatji's story shows, women are afraid to leave their husbands because of the stereotypical notions that divorce is against religion or culture, especially in black communities, and that women are always dependent beings. Hence, they stay put in their abused relationships because they grew up with the mindset that they cannot survive alone: they need the male figure to make it in the world. Turner, Young and Black (2006:588) assert that women have been described as the kin-keepers of family relationships, the bridge between generations. It seems as if women are designed and destined to keep the family together despite how they feel in those family relationships.

The importance of marriage and the perception of the in-laws towards the daughter-in-law define how women value and perceive themselves within marital relationships. Daughters-in-law such as Anna allow their in-laws to treat them as the domestic worker, stupid individuals and mute women who are unable to separate themselves from their unhappy relationships. The reason for this is that they are in need of belonging – to belong in the community and to have a male figure who determines the respect she receives from other women who are not married. Anna is unhappy in her extended family. Therefore, the perceptions of her mother-in-law towards her undermine and diminish her sense of worth as a woman because she abuses and makes demands that reduce Anna to a mere domestic worker.

4.2.2 “The Things We Do For Love”

In this story, Mosima seeks approval from her extended family members, especially from her husband's cousin, Phuti. Mosima tries too hard to be perceived as the good wife and the good woman for Ngwato. Hence, she puts up with his behaviour and she is desperate for his acceptance as the only woman for him. She is dependent on her husband financially and for emotional support. She depends on her husband's cousin who perceives Mosima as stupid when she sees her defending Ngwato's behaviour and constantly agrees to help because she feels pity for Mosima. She becomes a liability to her husband who never forgets to remind her that he is the provider in the house and that she brings no income in the house.

4.2.2.1 The perception of the in-laws

The perception that Mosima's in-laws have towards her, especially from the cousin, Phuti, is that of being a nice, sweet woman that she is eventually depicted as stupid for tolerating Ngwato's behaviour. Mosima tries so hard to build a home with the husband who is never around; she looks after the children and property while Ngwato is partying with his mistresses. She constantly seeks approval and support from members of her family-in-law. In this case, she seeks counsel and comfort from her husband's cousin so that she can be perceived as the loyal *makoti* and wife (Malatji, 2012: 110).

Phuti pities Mosima because of how her husband behaves, yet she, as the cousin, has no right to tell Mosima to walk away from such a marital relationship. Phuti is aware that Mosima is often neglected by her husband which is why she calls Phuti to come and solve the problems caused by her own husband. Phuti becomes the problem solver who pretends to be on Mosima's side while secretly encouraging Ngwato to cheat even more. Thus, Ngwato neglects Mosima deliberately because he claims that he is the provider in the house and Mosima has no idea where the money he has comes from. He calls his wife an 'idiot'. He says: "that idiot wife of mine wanted to call the police. What does she know? She does not even know how much all these things cost me" (Malatji, 2012:113). The implication here is that a man who is financially stable, like Ngwato, can call a woman who depends on him financially any name, even if the woman is his wife. Calling her 'idiot' implies that he sees no quality in her and he has no sense of respect for her.

Ngwato expects to get advice from his cousin about his behaviour and how he perceives his wife, even when he is wrong. He justifies himself for cheating on his wife by pointing out that he is better than other men in parliament because he has only one mistress while other men have several (Malatji, 2012:115). Phuti is aware that Ngwato cheats and she knows the person whom Ngwato cheats with. Instead of telling him to stop the affair, she encourages him to do it secretly so that he can show a sense of respect to his wife. She advises him that "if you really have to cheat, couldn't you do it with someone more respectable? Like those ladies from parliament, they can be

discreet. And save your wife the humiliation that this stupid girl is putting her through” (Malatji, 2012:115). The implication here is that Ngwato is allowed to cheat on his wife because of his status as long as he keeps his infidelity a secret. Hiding his extra-marital affair will be an act of ‘respect’ towards his wife. On the other hand, Mosima is expected by Phuti to be strong and tolerate such an abusive marriage and not compare herself with the mistresses since she is the ‘wife’. Phuti encourages Ngwato’s behaviour. Cekete, editor of *Move Magazine* (2017:4), adds that “as women, we are always expected to be strong no matter what and not to show any signs of pain even when things are tough. We are expected to pretend that everything is fine even when things are falling apart”. Phuti promotes her cousin’s adulterous behaviour behind Mosima’s back, thereby contributing to the degradation of Mosima’s sense of self-worth.

4.2.3 “My Perfect Husband”

The narrator’s in-laws have no sense of respect for her. They take her for granted and perceive her as some sort of an object that is not allowed to have any opinions or ask questions about the situations that affect her as a woman. She is ordered by her in-laws to lie to Mark about his deceased wife (Matodzi) who was Mashudu’s mistress for years. She is pressurised by her mother-in-law, father-in-law and brother-in-law to fix Mashudu’s mess in the name of ‘protecting her family’.

4.2.3.1 The perception of the in-laws

The in-laws perceive their daughter-in-law as a possession that they own because the belief is that they ‘purchased’ her. They disrespect her and object to the notion that she may have her own ideas on how to deal with issues that affect her directly. It is evident when Ntakuseni (the brother-in-law) says to the narrator: “Mashudu is fine, but there is a problem. Don’t worry. It’s a solvable one. But only you can solve it. We will talk at home” (2012:157). The chauvinism and disrespect that Mashudu has towards his sister-in law is beyond comprehension. Her in-laws demand that she solve a problem that she is unaware exists. Her emotions and thoughts are not considered under any circumstances simply because she is the daughter-in-law in the family.

It seems the narrator's family-in-law has total control over her and her husband. They make the decisions on their behalf. Mashudu seems incapable of handling his own family issues despite the status he holds in the community, and he involves his family to solve a problem he created. In turn, his own wife is not given the opportunity to express herself because they overpower her. When the narrator asks for a private moment with her husband, they abruptly interrupt them, insisting that there is no time for them to be discussing the issues that can be discussed at a later stage. While she is about to discover why Matodzi was with Mashudu, the father-in-law interrupts by suggesting: "let's try to solve this issue *mazwale*. The other things we will fix later. You need to protect your family, for your children's sake' (Malatji, 2012:160). She is told that she needs to protect her family as if she is the one who created the whole mess. The in-laws blatantly undermine and diminish their daughter-in-law's sense of self-worth and they do not apologise for that.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In summation, it is evident that the perceptions that extended family members hold indeed undermine and diminish the sense of self-worth of the women in the selected stories. In-laws have a tendency to intimidate their daughter-in-law by constantly reminding her that she joined the family by being bought. Thus, she is nothing but an object to them. Women like Anna, Mosima and Mashudu's wife in the short stories are aware of such treatment, yet they decide to accept how they are treated because they believe that they do not have the choice to walk away. They are obliged to stay and tolerate their in-laws because they are part of their new family and are given no choice to decide otherwise.

These women are perceived as the 'other' members within the family and as a result they do not have the freedom to express any idea or opinion on how their family should be built. They do not even have a say about their husbands' behaviour, neither do they have control over their own bodies and children. Anna in "Love Interrupted" lives with her in-laws, but she is constantly verbally abused by her mother-in-law and has to put up with this. She is not expected to question or challenge this treatment.

Mosima in “The Things We Do For Love” is given false support by the in-law she trusts and tries hard to prove that she is a good *makoti*. Phuti, Ngwato’s cousin, promises to help Mosima fix her marriage but encourages her cousin to continue his extra-marital affairs, as long as he keeps it discreet, for the sake of his wife.

The narrator in “My Perfect Husband” is treated as the least important family member who needs to be controlled like an object in her own house. She is denied an opinion and is unable to solve her own family matters her way. She is discounted in the family because she is a woman.

The way in which the women in the stories are perceived by their in-laws clearly illustrates that these women are merely chattels in their new families. The next chapter discusses whether the women in these stories use their children as the excuse to stay in adulterous and abusive relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

IN WHAT WAYS ARE THE CHILDREN IN THE SHORT STORIES USED BY WOMEN AS AN EXCUSE TO STAY IN ADULTEROUS AND ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The findings of the previous chapter indicate that the in-laws have an upper hand in the life of the daughter-in-law. This creates a situation where she can be verbally abused, blamed and sometimes neglected because she is an 'additional member', who ought to be controlled. The ways in which culture controls a married woman are clearly related to how the in-laws behave. While these women are abused and controlled by culture, society, their husbands and in-laws, in some way or other they still find the courage to stay because they are afraid of leaving. They are also afraid of being judged, to start life alone where they will have no financial stability to care for themselves and their children. Women in the short stories constantly find the excuse or sometimes the reality that they have no source of income to look after themselves and their children. Hence, their choice is to stay in their unhappy and abusive relationships. Those who are able to provide for themselves and their children financially still feel the need to stay in abusive relationships because they need to belong; thus, they portray a fake image to the public to gain respect.

In cases of abusive relationships, husbands and partners swear at their wives and physically abuse these women in front of their children. Children do nothing about the abuse endured by their mothers because in most instances, they are too young to defend their mothers. Thus, they grow up traumatised, angry and bitter. Moe (2009:01), in her study, indicates that there are findings that 64% of the children of battered women witness the abuse by the age of 3 years. She continues to add that 30-60% of children whose mothers are abused are also directly abused. She states that it is not only the mother/wife who is physically and emotionally abused but the children also experience the same abuse from their father. Children might grow up unhappy and hating their father because of the abuse.

This chapter investigates the two short stories, “Love Interrupted” and “The Things We Do for Love” to determine whether the women in these stories use their children as the excuse to stay in adulterous and abusive relationships.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT STORIES

5.2.1 “Love Interrupted”

This short story is set in a rural village called Modjadji in Limpopo. In this village, a woman has limited opinions, especially when she is married and staying with the husband and in-laws. For instance, the husband, Leshata, beats his wife, Anna and children, declaring that he is teaching them how to ‘respect’ him. He drinks alcohol and comes back late at night and swears at his wife and children. His children are so afraid of him that it is only when he is not around that they are happy and able to play around the house.

Domestic violence in South Africa is extremely high, where the majority of women and children are being abused by their loved ones or close family members whom they trust and who are supposed to protect them. It seems that men use their strength, patriarchal privilege and financial status to physically, emotionally and verbally abuse their children and wives. Often, women are afraid to report such cases to the law for a number of reasons: they stay because of their need for financial survival through the abuser; they stay for the sake of their children’s welfare; if they decide to leave they are afraid to be judged by their family members and the society. Parker (2015:7) states that “victims of domestic violence can face emotional barriers such as low self-esteem, self-blame, fear, guilt, love and commitment as well as the practical, financial or physical barriers to extricating themselves from an abusive relationship”. Parker asserts that victims of abuse find it easier to blame themselves for the suffering because they seek financial survival from the perpetrator. Sometimes some women do not seek financial security from their abusers (husbands); they seek to uphold their self-image to their family and society.

A woman like Anna in “Love Interrupted” can look after her children independently because she is a school teacher. Yet, she stays with her abusive husband who beats

both her and her children. She constantly justifies her husband's behaviour because she thinks no man would want to be with her when she already has four children. This is why she would rather stay with her husband for the sake of the children and her image because a woman who is not married and has children in her village is not respected. She indicates that "no man would marry me with four children. And single life was not appealing because people just didn't respect women who were not married" (Malatji, 2012:56). Anna's four children are used as an excuse for her to stay in an unhappy relationship because she is more worried about what people would think of her and the fact that she would not find another man to marry her with such a number of children.

Anna measures her happiness in terms of the presence of a 'man' in her life to such an extent that she is willing to tolerate abuse just to maintain her conviction. She makes this sacrifice for her children and for the preservation of her reputation in the society. Anna uses the number of children she has borne as the motivation behind her stay in an abusive and adulterous marriage. Her need to maintain "the married woman status" is also another reason she stays in the marriage. She does not want to be judged and mocked by society, should she leave her husband.

The need to preserve self-image upheld by Anna and staying in marriage for the benefit of her children is also demonstrated by Ramatoulaye in the novel *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Bâ ([1979] 2008). She, like Anna, is also a teacher and has twelve children with a man who decided to marry a younger girl (who is the best friend of his daughter) and yet she stays married to her husband. Staying married to her husband causes her emotional stress because when the second-young-wife was taken she was not properly informed by her husband of the impending marriage; instead her husband's friend gave her the news on the day of marriage. She feels betrayed. Her daughter encourages her to leave the marriage. Ramatoulaye's response is an emotional one: "...leave? Start again at zero, after living twenty five years with one man, after having borne twelve children? Did I have enough energy to bear alone the weight of this responsibility, which was both moral and material?" (Bâ 2008:41). It seems that the number of children that Ramatoulaye has with her husband and the thought of starting over scares her as a

woman. Adding to this is the fact that she will not be respected or appreciated; so she decides to stay in a polygamous marriage.

The number of children that both Anna and Ramatoulaye have can be supported by the money they earn from their professions. They are both teachers and so their financial status is stable. However, because they are both women and fighting to be recognised, appreciated and respected by their society and culture, they seem to be obliged to stay married to their unfaithful, abusive and chauvinistic husbands and resign themselves to their husband's behaviour.

5.2.2 "The Things We Do For Love"

Mosima is not part of the working class women but she is married to a public figure, Ngwato, and they are blessed with three boys. Ngwato publicly cheats on Mosima when he buys his mistress a house and takes her on endless expensive holidays while Mosima stays at home to look after the children. In one instance, Ngwato had both his family and mistress in one hotel on a vacation. Mosima does not have any option but to stay and wait for her husband because he is the financial provider.

Mosima is emotionally and mentally tormented: her husband's cheating has made her blame herself for his behaviour. When Ngwato drives into their house and is found naked on the veranda the next morning, Mosima cries that her husband is bewitched (Malatji, 2012:110). She blames superstitions for Ngwato's behaviour. She believes he is bewitched so that he can cheat on her. Mosima feels the need to save her marriage so much so that she hunts, finds and beats the mistress, because Maphefo (Ngwato's mistress) threatens the livelihood of her children and hers by keeping Ngwato away from home. Mosima is unemployed which implies that she needs financial security from her adulterous husband for the support of her three sons. Therefore, she stays in her marriage because she wants her children to have a better life even when it means she suffers emotionally for it.

Mosima's emotional suffering seems to have affected her psychologically to a point that she can no longer draw the line between right and wrong. She is hopeless because she is unemployed and so she has to rely on her husband for financial support. Her visit to

the mistress also reveals her desperation: “I came here to talk to you about my husband. In case you have forgotten, I want to remind you that he is married to me and that he has three boys who are still growing and need him. You can’t keep on making him stay away from home. God will punish you for your cruelty” (Malatji, 2012: 119). Her plea to the mistress is that her children need their father because they are still young. She also needs financial security. One can then say that Mosima stays in her marriage because when her children are taken care of financially she will be cared for as well. Although she is not happy, she still deems it necessary to stay in the marriage so that her children can be cared for financially.

At times, women who have children and are not financially stable become vulnerable to abuse by their husbands. Their husbands cause them emotional stress by cheating on them and physically abuse them and yet these women still try to find a reason to stay and hold on because they are afraid of raising their children alone, of being judged and disrespected by the society. They go through all the suffering because they need to belong in the community they live in.

There is a similar situation in Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*. Tambu’s mother, Ma’Shingayi, is aware that her own sister is sleeping with her husband, Jeremiah, in their house and yet she still chooses to stay. Her reason for staying is that she has children with the man and she has nowhere else to go. She has no money to care for herself and her children. Hence, she stays with both her sister and her husband because her husband’s brother Babamukuru provides for them financially (Dangarembga, 1989: 140). Like Dangarembga, Malatji paints a very bleak picture in her stories to show the extent of women’s entrapment in patriarchal systems that undermine and diminish their self-worth.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The women depicted in “Love Interrupted” and “The Things We Do for Love” use their children as the reason for their stay in adulterous and abusive relationships. They also value their need for belonging in society. As a result, they put up with their husbands’ behaviour because these men are the financial providers at home. A woman such as

Anna has financial security, yet she stays with her abusive husband because she needs to be respected by the members of her community. Thus, she values her image as a teacher and a married woman. Mosima stays with her cheating husband because she has no source of income to care for herself and her children; she becomes desperate to a point of fighting with her husband's mistress. Mosima is aware that if Ngwato stays away from her for too long he would forget his responsibility to look after her and their children. Thus, she tries as hard as she can to tell Maphefo to leave her husband. These women dread the thought of leaving their husbands because they assume no other man will marry them because they already have children. The men in the short stories are portrayed as insensitive, abusive and unfaithful to their wives. The women are therefore compelled to use their children as a means of maintaining their social status as married women.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter sums up the findings of the previous chapters where it was shown that female characters in Malatji's short stories are given insignificant, trivial and very negative roles as compared to men. They are given stereotypical roles, which oppress them. These roles paint them negatively and also degrade them in the society they live in. The analysis has shown that in the selected short stories female characters are portrayed as puppets of the male characters because they are constantly being abused, cheated, used and disrespected. They are projected as inferior because they are not considered as rational enough to be able to make decisive and wise decisions because they are women, the inferior beings. Women are considered to be most effective only at home, where their responsibilities revolve around house chores and caring for children and the extended family members. It is here where they are also expected to put up with their husbands' promiscuous behaviour and abuse. Cultural and societal expectations contribute significantly towards the degradation of women in society. Culture and societal expectation seem to be in favour of men as they encourage them (men) to be and to feel superior while women are constantly abused and made to feel inferior.

In "Love Interrupted", Anna feels obliged to stay in her abusive and unhappy relationship despite the fact that she is financially able to care for both herself and her children, simply because she needs to belong, to be accepted and to be respected in the community as a strong woman who stays in her marriage under any circumstance, however dire. Leshata keeps abusing Anna and she puts up with his behaviour because *lobola* has been paid for her. She seems caged because she is married in a cultural family and society, and thus has to uphold the cultural and societal standards even to her own detriment. Hence, she strives to paint a picture of the perfect and well-behaved daughter-in-law.

In “The Things We Do for Love”, Mosima displays the role of a woman who wants to belong because she is financially unstable. She entirely depends on Ngwato, the husband who cheats and comes home late at night, because he has a prominent career and he caters for Mosima financially. Hence, she stays because Ngwato affords her the luxurious lifestyle and their children have the privilege of going to a posh school. When she encounters marital problems, she turns to Ngwato’s cousin, Phuti, who thinks that Mosima is stupid to tolerate such a behaviour from Ngwato.

The dilemma of the narrator in “My Perfect Husband” is similar to the dilemma faced by Anna and Mosima in their unhappy relationships. Her husband has an extra-marital affair and gets involved in a car accident with his mistress. The mistress dies on the scene. The infidelity, however, has to be covered up to such an extent that the narrator has to lie for her husband because he is a respected man in the community and the church. She is never asked how she feels about her husband’s infidelity, but she is instead ordered by her family-in-law to lie to the mistress’s husband to save her marriage. Her opinion and feelings are disregarded by her in-laws and Mashudu. The other factor is that she plays a nameless character which, by implication, diminishes her identity and self-image.

In “Lebo’s Story”, Lebo is robbed of her chance to become a successful young woman in a black community by a man who sells her false promises and impregnates her. She becomes a sex object to Lucky whilst his wife is at work because she believes that Lucky would help her attain her goals and rescue her from poverty in her family and community.

It seems that all the four women in the stories have one thing in common: they suffer in the hands of the men they love, trust and believe in. The stories reveal that a married woman, especially in a typical rural area in South Africa, becomes a victim in marriage once *lobola* is paid for her. She is instructed or expected to be silent and never to express her opinion in the presence of her husband and the in-laws. She has to obey the rules in her new home and do all the duties that are due to her as the daughter-in-law, such as cleaning, cooking and caring for children, her in-laws and the husband. She is made to believe that her in-laws and the husband own her because money has

been paid for her to her family. Thus, she is continuously abused, verbally and physically, and she still puts up with the treatment because she is convinced that she should be treated that way in order to gain respect in the community. However, the feminist theory perceives things differently. The feminist movement stands against the injustices and ill-treatment faced by women, not only in South Africa but in the whole world. The main aim is to stop the oppression that women live under because they are considered as weak and inferior beings. Therefore, feminism believes that women should be granted the same opportunities as men across all sectors, be it private or public. Women should be perceived as human beings with dignity and treated as such.

6.2 CONCLUSION

The first objective of this study was to show that culture and society have negative effects on women in the selected short stories. The study has shown that culture and societal expectations demoralise married women because *lobola* has been paid for them to become the lawful wives. For instance, Anna in “Love Interrupted” is ordered to perform all the household chores as she is the new daughter-in-law and there is even a song sung on the day she is welcomed in her new home that tells the mother-in-law to leave the household chores because the person responsible for them has arrived. Although Anna has financial stability to be able to care for herself, she still has to be the obedient and submissive wife and honour both her husband and her mother-in-law despite the treatment they give her. She has no cultural support to emancipate her from the misfortunes she finds herself in as a woman, and society expects her to be a ‘strong’ woman so that she will have self-respect and acceptance.

The second objective of the study was to explain the perceptions that extended family members have about women that undermine and diminish their sense of self-worth in the short stories. The extended family members in the selected short stories perceive women as objects that must be controlled and disrespected at all times. For instance, in “My Perfect Husband” the narrator is forbidden from having an opinion in a matter that involves her and her feelings are not considered because she is a woman whose *lobola* has been paid. When she needs to understand why her husband was with the deceased Matodzi, both her father-in-law and brother-in-law tell her that they would deal

with the issue after she has lied to the mistress's husband that she was with them when the accident happened. Her self-worth is taken for granted and she is constantly undermined in her own house in front of her husband.

The third objective of the study was to establish ways that women in the short stories use children as the reason or excuse to stay in their adulterous relationships. Women in the selected short stories are afraid of raising their children alone as single parents, hence their excuse is that children need to grow up with both parents. Thus, to have a male figure in their children's lives, even though these male figure abuse them as women, is important. For instance, Mosima uses her children as the reason why she stays with her unfaithful husband, because she is unable to care for them financially since she is not working. She constantly makes excuses on how her children need a father figure in their lives at the expense of her happiness.

On the whole, the study has shown that women are suffering because of cultural constraints, societal expectations, the inhumane treatment from their extended family members and the fear of raising their children alone. They seem to be aware that they need to emancipate themselves and extricate themselves from the suffering they face in their daily lives, yet they are unable to do so. Feminist theory has enabled us to understand that patriarchal values are primarily responsible for the way these women see themselves and respond to their dilemmas. One, therefore, concludes that Malatji's stories demonstrate the need for the feminist movement to continue so that women's self-worth can be restored and women in abusive and adulterous relationships can fight for their dignity.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study are that women in the selected short stories are obliged to stay in their abusive and adulterous relationships because they need to belong and be respected in their community. Feminism firmly opposes these attitudes since they help men to have the upper hand over women and to continue to mistreat them. Therefore, the study strongly recommends that literary texts should continue to be written to show the subtle and overt ways in which male dominance and culture continue to degrade

women in South Africa in the 21st century. Additional research can be conducted to show how female characters can launch their resistance to male dominance and cultural expectations and ultimately assert themselves. The study, therefore, highly recommends that there should be feminist investigations that will focus on the agency of female characters in women's literary texts.

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