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**Textual Representation of the Social Construction of Womanhood and
Gendered Identity: A case of selected Eswatini Women Poets**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(ENGLISH STUDIES)

School of Arts

University of KwaZulu-Natal

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2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I give thanks and adoration to the Almighty Jehovah God who bore me on 'Eagles' Wings' as I carried out this study. It is by the grace of God that I managed to overcome every obstacle that stood in the way of me completing the research and ultimately attaining my PhD. God, You Are Good!
- To my supervisor, Professor Bernard De Meyer, your expert and gentle guidance has been invaluable. Having a supervisor of your calibre has been a humbling experience - you have impacted me greatly! Your outstanding professionalism has inspired me to aspire for greater heights in academic scholarship.
- To Glory Mamba, Sarah Mkhonza, Sisana (Mdluli) Dlamini, Cynthia Hlophe, Fikile Mnisi and Thembekile Msibi, the courage that your poetry portrays is admirable. Thank you for having paved the way for a dialogue which aims to set women's social liberation on the agenda.
- To my children: Noluthando, Wethu, Owethu and Siviwe, you endured many hours of being alone while I carried out this research. Juggling my studies, my job commitments and the other myriad of duties, deprived you of a mother's attention. Thank you for your patience, dear children.

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this work to my dearest children: my first born, Noluthando, my twin girls, Wethu and Owethu and my son Siviwe.

- Noluthando, my first born, my confidante, my co-parent, helping me to raise your younger siblings, you have lived beyond your time. From a young age, you have been my constant support. Your intelligence and level of maturity are exceptional. I love you baby girl.
- Wethu my angel, your million-dollar smile, free spirit and great sense of humour have kept our home warm. I love you my baby.
- Owethu my princess, your selflessness, great sense of responsibility and spirituality assured me that you would take care of your siblings when I was away. Sometimes I would forget that you are only eleven years old. I love you my baby.
- Siviwe, my only son, I know you wished you were older than the twins, but alas! I am almost always awed by your exceptional level of intelligence, high sense of reasoning and clarity of focus. I adore you my son.

Dearest children of mine, you all are God's greatest gift to me and I love you eternally. Together, let us advance the agenda of women's emancipation from social bondage!

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ABSTRACT

The patriarchal society of Eswatini entrenches numerous unfair practices against women. Cultural elements ensure that women are kept at a perpetual position of disadvantage. The socialisation of females and males at different levels of society, including in families and schools, promotes a social divide between the two sexes. The suffering of women epitomises coloniality; women serve the interest of men in the same way that the colonized served the interests of their masters. Since women's voices have been systematically muted, they do not speak out against their oppression; women are the subalterns who cannot speak and thus they absorb their suffering in subdued silence. Moreover, they self-categorise with other women who are facing a similar plight. This research, therefore, sought to discover how poetic texts by selected Swati women poets represent the social construction of womanhood and gendered identity as a form of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society. Ten poems, spanning three decades, written by six women poets were selected on the basis of their feminist thematic content, an additional five oral poems were included to interface the discussion of the ten poems. The primary poetic texts were analysed by applying principles of interpretivism and narrative inquiry and by relating to cognitive poetics principles. Theories that guided the analysis of the poems were postcolonial theory, a wide range of feminist philosophies and self-categorisation. Findings from the study revealed that poetic texts enable women poets to exploit figurative language as a vehicle to expose social ills that society perpetrates against women. Exposing the issues creates an opportunity to address those concerns

that are considered taboo since it is 'unSwati' for women to speak out against women's oppression. Findings from studying the poems revealed that: with the exception of a few confident women, generally, womenfolk in Eswatini are treated as domestic slaves; they suffer a myriad of abuses including emotional abuse, conjugal deprivation, physical abuse, sexual abuse and economic deprivation. Also, it was revealed that women's abuse has negative effects on the youth and the society at large. In spite of these abuses, the texts showed that women in the country have a preferred identity. Furthermore, it was discovered that the key theoretical insights were significant in enabling an understanding of the construction of womanhood and gendered identity in Eswatini. While society has constructed womanhood to be a category of the oppressed, women poets, on the other hand, create a preferred identity of confident and independent women. It is recommended that similar research in future should include poems written by males, since men are implicated in the gendered oppression of women.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Siphwe Angelica Langa (213572417) hereby declare that the work in this document titled:

Textual Representation of the Social Construction of Womanhood and Gendered Identity: A case of selected Eswatini Women Poets

is my original work. I have acknowledged all resources that I consulted during the study.



S. A. Langa

DATE : June 2022

ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

AGOA	-	African Growth Opportunity Act
ERA	-	Eswatini Revenue Authority
EWLRA	-	Eswatini Women's Land Rights Alliance
JSC	-	Judiciary Service Commission
NCC	-	National Curriculum Centre
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SNAT	-	Swaziland National Association of Teachers
SNL	-	Swati National Land
UKZN	-	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNFP	-	United Nations Food Programme
UNISA	-	University of South Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Motivation

Gendered practices are locked up in many traditional African societies where male chauvinism is glorified; in some African societies, women are reduced to second-class citizens who at times are rendered homeless by male dominance. Boyce-Davies (1994) laments women's homelessness:

As a result of gendered relations, compulsory domesticity, male dominated home space, experiences of physical abuse, relegating women to the position of slaves, class structures, exploited women labour, women's identity has been distorted (*ibid.*, p. 196).

A good woman is one who embraces these beliefs and never dares to challenge the existing *status quo*. In my native country, Eswatini, these beliefs still hold true, and sadly, a number of women, particularly those in rural areas, have normalised some of the practices of cultural bondage; however, extremes of domestic violence are frowned upon. Generally, womenfolk are deprived of their rights which are enshrined in the Constitution of the country; in some communities, women are deprived of their rights to ownership of property despite provision made by the supreme canon of Eswatini, which gives women the right to own land. Violations of other human rights are also rife among women; this is evidenced by local newspapers which are inundated with reports of such infringements.

Sadly, a number of women absorb their suffering quietly, and they do not challenge the perpetrators. This act of passive resignation to oppression not only promotes the culture of women's oppression but it also endorses patriarchy. Of note is that the women who timidly embrace oppression, see to it that the culture is propagated, and their girls are properly initiated at a young age (Langa, 2012; Dlamini, 2017). Moreover, they frown upon and ridicule the woman who is liberal in her thinking.

Personally, I have witnessed a number of cases where women have been abused and society shifted the blame on them also, as a member of Eswatini Women's Land Rights Alliance (EWLRA), an NGO that seeks to protect women's land rights, I am privy to information on the abuse of women in Eswatini. These mistreatments include, but are not limited to, domestic abuse, dispossession of property by family members including in-laws and forced eviction from marital homes, which usually happens when a spouse dies. Women's representation in legislative bodies is also wanting which results in the passing of laws that do not favour women. In some cases, the laws that are passed are not enforced but they exist only on paper; for instance, it is not uncommon for a woman to report a case of assault against her husband, but instead of an arrest, the spouse gets away with a warning. These abuses undermine the dignity of women which further promulgate the culture of women's oppression from one generation to the next.

The problem of women subjugation is a universal phenomenon, plaguing women across the globe; this plight is also evidenced by literary compositions which give women a gendered stereotype which, to the liberal feminist, is not a fair attribution since it presents women as victims. Consequent to this, feminist women poets have risen in defiance and have taken a stand to challenge the current *status quo* as they present a kind of poetry that reconstructs women's identity. African-American women, through their poetry, challenge practices of gender and racial prejudice that attempt to keep them down, they want to visibly import elements of cultural practices that demean women (Mance, 2007). In so doing, these women poets resist their subjugation by insisting on self-reliance for survival, reverse the negative image painted about them and replace it with a new conception of feminism which promotes an alternative identity (Steady, 1981). Woodward (2004) avers that identity gives a sense of recognition and belonging. Similarly, in Eswatini, a group of enlightened women have begun to question the practice of reducing women to domestic slaves; they have embarked on a journey to self-discovery and emancipation from the culture of servitude that has been passed down to them culturally. They migrate, both in their thinking and physically, in search of a new self with better opportunities. They also negotiate new identities as they challenge patriarchy, dominance and the culture of silence and being silenced (Boyce-Davies, 1994). In their quest, women are

constructing their identities in line with how they want to be perceived (Collins, 2001; Dlamini, 2017), similarly, Eswatini women poets through their poetry are making their voices heard.

Woodward (2004) distinguishes between identity and personality by noting that while personality describes qualities that an individual has, identity requires an awareness of those qualities. Identity may be constructed depending on how she sees herself and how she wants to be viewed by others. However, there is a disconnect between how she sees herself and how others see her. Woodward goes further to say that society has a part in the construction of identity: the institution which one is attached to, one's political allegiance, sexuality and religion, are some of the elements that have a part in the construction of identity, and since identity can be constructed, it is possible for one to have multiple identities.

1.1 Rationale for and purpose of the study

Gendered practices which subjugate women to second class citizenship are a challenge that the entire world is grappling with; women both in so-called civilised societies and those in traditional communities continue to experience male dominance in different forms. On the one hand, while culture and power dynamics give men more authority and a stronger voice, women, on the other hand, are placed at the margins of society and their voices are muzzled. Socially sanctioned violence against women continues to be a challenge that threatens the female gender. Although these challenges affect women globally, the experiences of women in African communities seem disproportionately weightier as a result of their colonial history and cultural practices that promote the relegation of women to minors and reduce them to objects of violence. With their multiple identities as mothers, sisters and daughters, among other identification marks, women in Eswatini, tend to experience an array of challenges ranging from poor representation in legislative bodies, compulsory domesticity, economic deprivation, gender-based violence and homelessness (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016).

Literature suggests that social dynamics such as culture shift and the growing awareness of these social ills are beginning to unravel practices that are responsible

for keeping women down. International bodies aimed at promoting gender equity have taken it upon themselves to make women aware of gender equity, and empower them about their rights. A growing wave to resist gendered practices has risen among some Swati women and they explore various forms of media to make their voices heard, and to demand a change (Dlamini, 2017). I have personally been intrigued by how some women poets have exploited poetry as a medium to make their voices heard. From this stance, I have been motivated to investigate *how poetic texts by selected Swati women poets represent the social construction of womanhood and gendered identity by discovering how poetry can be engaged as a form of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society.*

The study will be underpinned by the following research objectives:

- 1.1.1 To identify the social issues which women poets address in their poetry
- 1.1.2 To find out how the construction of womanhood is depicted in poetic texts by selected Swati women poets
- 1.1.3 To explore the value of poetic language in poetic texts.

1.2 Definition of concepts

Key concepts in this study include gendered practices, identity construction, poetic techniques and womanhood; below is a brief description of the terms.

1.2.1 Gendered practices

Gendered practices are the habitues that society uses to create a class difference between females and males; although gendered behaviours derive from one's sex, one has to note that they are performative rather than being based on an individual's biological makeup (Butler, 1988). Gender is not stable, but it changes, it is "an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (*ibid.*, 1988, p. 519). Through socialisation an individual is assigned certain roles and expectations; roles ascribed to women ensure that women are domesticated, as 'mothers' and 'wives', women are expected to conform to certain standards which are

usually of an oppressive nature. In her article, Clair (2018) argued that, although women's experiences are not the same, generally, all women experience oppression from birth through to adulthood. Thus, women's struggle against patriarchy is the same the world over. The article further states that patriarchy determines power dynamics and it classifies women as second-class citizens. In their article, Damant, Lapierre, Kouraga, Louise, Brabant, Lavergne, Lessard (2008) attest to the above statement, adding that motherhood takes place in an oppressive social context.

Generally, gender roles which usually translate to gendered practices are established on the basis of one's sex, wherein sex may be described as biological differences between men and women. Sex differences are used to justify roles assigned to different individuals. Someone may be born female, but through socialisation, a woman is created by assigning social roles which keep her inferior to men (Freedman, 2001). Patriarchy which embodies gendered practices dictates that a real woman is feminine and humble toward males; in a patriarchal society, being feminine denotes gentleness, humility, sensitivity, timidity (*Cambridge University Press*, 2021) Gendered practices ensure that, from a young age, boys are taught to dominate, and girls are taught that they are nurturers and they ought to be receptive. When the gendered practices are repeated over time, they end up becoming the norm. In her own experience, Adichie (2015) observed that when members of society repeat gendered practices, the repetition enforces and propagates gender stereotypes: "If only boys are made class monitors, then at some point we will all think, even unconsciously, that the class monitor has to be a boy" (*ibid.*, 2015, p. 13).

1.2.2 Identity construction

Identity is what gives one a sense of belonging and it enables an individual to answer the question *Who am I?* Identity is more than being a man or a woman; furthermore, an individual may take multiple identities (Woodward, 2004). Other factors related to it include clothes, religious inclination and language; what is more, a person may choose how she wants to be perceived and identified by how she presents herself. Hence, it is possible for identities to change, and for new ones to be constructed (*ibid.*). Those taking up identities ought to be actively involved in the process of identity construction, Woodward avers that identity construction is similar to taking up a new

role during the performance of an act, also, changing social roles may impact on identity (*ibid.*). Woodward adds that the construction of identity may involve stereotyping, where personal and social factors come into play.

1.2.3 Poetic techniques

Poets use certain strategies to create rhythm, thereby enhancing the effect of poetic texts. The elevated style of writing and unfamiliar usage of language to evoke certain mental images and to create a musical effect is achieved through exploring poetic techniques. One may define poetic techniques or poetic devices as the lofty style that poets use in their writing to set poetry apart from other literary texts; poetic techniques include figurative language and metaphor, syntactic organisation, sound, rhythm and metre (Abrams, 2009). Poetry may be described in various ways depending on the emotion that it evokes in a reader. Below are some interesting definitions and quotes that literary scholars have advanced about poetry:

A literary art form which consists of lines of verse and in which the figurative, syntactical, typographic, strophic and sound-related elements of language are creatively exploited and charged with meaning in order to achieve a variety of poetic-communicative effects (van Rooyen, Grabe and Keuris, 2008, p. 14).

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings - William Wordsworth

Poetry is what gets lost in translation - Robert Frost

A poem begins with a lump in the throat, a home-sickness or a love-sickness - Robert Frost

Poetry is the one place where people can speak their original human mind. It is the outlet for people to say in public what is known in private. - Allen Ginsberg

Poetry heals the wounds inflicted by reason - Novalis

Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood - T.S. Eliot

(Collins, 1988)

The quotations above exemplify the various ways in which a poetic text may be viewed and described. However, in this study, poetry is defined as an elevated art-form that explores certain techniques to evoke powerful emotions from a reader.

1.2.4 Womanhood

Womanhood is the state of being female, it is often associated with abuse and being silenced to the extent that women's sexuality is often approached by critical scholarship through assumptions created about them (Collins, 2001). Moreover, womanhood is associated with deprivation and lack of access to positions of influence in schools, news media, churches and government. Influence and power are privileges of men, who then use them to define and construct their preferred woman. Collins (2001) avers that women come together to share their plight, find a way to express themselves and form support with each other.

1.3 Background to Eswatini

The study is set in the kingdom of Eswatini, therefore, background information on the geo-social, political and economic atmospheres of the country is given. Likewise, the position of women is elaborated on in order to understand the study in its context. Eswatini is land-locked and surrounded by the Republic of South Africa and Mozambique (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021). This country is a developing, independent state and an absolute monarchy which obtained its independence from the British in 1968. SiSwati and English are the two official languages; the country is known for its rich cultural heritage and beautiful landscape. Between 1990 and 2019, Eswatini was in the medium development category at position 138 out of 189 countries (Human Development Report, 2020a). The latest population census which was held in 2017, indicated that the population stood at 1,093,238; of which 562,127 are females and 531,111 were males, which represented a growth by 74,789 persons from the previous census of 2007. The Human development index shows that the population was 1.3 million in 2010 (Human Development Report, 2020a). Although the two sources show a variation in figures with a margin of about 300,000, they do nonetheless suggest a significant population growth at the rate of 0.7% annually. Between 1990 and 2019, life expectancy decreased by 1.8 years. The average for females was 64.8 years and for males it was 56.0 years (*ibid.*, p. 5). The population density per square metre is 72 (Hlatshwayo, 2014), with 24% of the total inhabitants occupying urban areas (Human Development Report, 2020a).

Ninety percent of the Swati population is Christian but other religions are allowed by the government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, to operate in the country (Hlatshwayo, 2014; Human Development Report, 2020a); these include among others Muslims and African Traditional Religions. However, only Christianity may be taught in the schools. The exclusion of other religions, from the schools' curriculum, was effected by the Eswatini government in 2017 ('2020 Report on International Religious Freedom', no date). In terms of education, the literacy rate in 2010 stood at 94% for people aged between fifteen and twenty-four (Hlatshwayo, 2014). Literacy is promoted through the National Library and mobile library services (*ibid.*); mastery of educational concepts is measured by the level of reading and writing (Human Development Report, 2020a) and schooling takes an average of 11.8 years (Hlatshwayo, 2014).

Administratively, there are four regions: Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo and Shiselweni, which vary in terms of their geography, social and economic orientations. The Hhohho region has an area of 3,625.17 square kilometres, it is located in the north-western part of the country, bordering Lubombo in the south-east and Manzini in the south west. There are fifteen constituencies; the country's capital city and administrative centre, Mbabane, is in the Hhohho region. In 2017, the population, which is largely urbanised, was 320,651. The main cultural events of Eswatini, such as Incwala and Umhlanga ceremonies, are held in the Hhohho region at Lobamba. In terms of education, the Hhohho region is leading with top performing schools and a number of institutions of higher learning. Economically, the region is the most advanced in the country; with the Central Bank of Eswatini and many of the large corporations. The economy in Hhohho is largely based on tourism and the forestry industries (*The Kingdom of Eswatini: Master plan towards the elimination of neglected tropical diseases*, n.d.).

Manzini region is located in the centre-west of the country and it borders all three regions; in the North, there is Hhohho, in the east, there is Lubombo, and in the south, there is the Shiselweni region. With an area of 4,093.59 square kms, eighteen constituencies and a population of 355,945 as of 2017, Manzini harbours two of the three campuses of the University of Eswatini and a number of leading schools: Eswatini National High School; the national school, is about a kilometre away from the

main campus of the University of Eswatini. Inhabitants in this densely populated region comprise people who migrate from all over the country; the educated make up the urbanised group, while those who migrate to the city in search of better opportunities end up doing odd jobs in town or surrounding areas and living in slums in the townships. It is this group that is usually implicated in crimes that are motivated by poverty. Matsapha, the industrial hub of Eswatini is located in the Manzini region; most of the factories are in Matsapha and women make up the majority of factory workers where they are paid a paltry wage and most of them live in slums where there is cheap accommodation (*ibid.*).

The Lubombo region is situated in the east of the country, with an area of 5,849.11 square kms and a population of 212,531 by 2017. The administrative offices are in Siteki. Lubombo borders all three regions; to the north, there is Hhohho, to the west, there is Manzini and to the south, there is Shiselweni. The Lubombo region has eleven constituencies, geographically, the region is dominated by the Lubombo Mountains and a number of poor communities who depend on donor support. The economy is supported by the agriculture sector and the sugar industry; sugarcane, Eswatini's main export, and citrus fruits are produced in Lubombo. Thus, employment opportunities, which are generally seasonal, are for field work and for those who work in the sugar mills at Mhlume, Simunye and Big Bend. Moreover, most of the country's game reserves: Hlane, Mlawula, and Mkhaya, are in the Lubombo region (*ibid.*). The Shiselweni region is located in the south of the country, has an area of 3,786.71 square kms. Its administrative offices are in Nhlanguano. There are fifteen constituencies and a population that is largely rural. In 2017, there were 204,111 inhabitants in Shiselweni. (*ibid.*).

The description of the four regions of Eswatini is significant because people migrate from one place to another; and as they do, they get different experiences. The selected poems do not necessarily depict what happens in one particular area of the country, or what the poets had experienced, but they show the general experience of women in the four regions of Eswatini; thus, the experiences described in the poems will not be attributed to a specific location. The poetry therefore may have been birthed from any place in Eswatini.



(Adapted from <http://www.ezilon.com>)

Image 1.1: The map of Eswatini showing the four regions

1.3.1 The political atmosphere in Eswatini: Governance

The government of Eswatini is said to be run democratically; however, some views suggest that Eswatini is not a democracy but an absolute monarchy which harbours many transgressions that violate the principles of democracy, with the king bearing

authority over all sections of government. Democracy enhances a country's level of economic development and it is instrumental in reducing infant mortality; however, in Eswatini, democracy is being stifled, which is counter-productive to the development of a country (Human Development Report, 2020b). Part of the parliament of Eswatini is elected democratically – out of the 65 members that make up parliament, 55 are elected by the people during national elections, but the other 10 are hand-picked by the king. After the election, the electorate are expected to mandate members of parliament to address certain issues that affect national policy, including the governing of the country (Hlatshwayo, 2014).

The king also selects 20 of the 30 senators, leaving the House of Assembly to select only 10 senators; the king also appoints the Prime Minister and the cabinet, the Prime Minister can only recommend cabinet ministers. The Prime Minister of Eswatini by custom always has the royal 'Dlamini' surname (Snaddon and Nhlabatsi, 2017). The parliament deliberates and passes Bills but it is only the king who can sign the Bills that will be passed into law (Hlatshwayo, 2014). The king made provision for the people's parliament (*sibaya*) where every ordinary Swati is allowed a voice to speak; individuals are allowed to voice their feelings during the gathering of the *sibaya*, a platform viewed as a means of empowering the people to advise the king. However, it remains unclear how this process is democratic in light of the fact that the people's opinions are not taken into consideration and implemented into policy. For example, during one *sibaya* gathering, the people voiced their displeasure with the parliament, and they called for its dissolution; the people also pleaded for a change of governance during the *sibaya*. Nonetheless, the *status quo* prevails to date; the cabinet was not sacked, and the country is still run under the *Tinkhundla* system (Hlatshwayo, 2014). *Tinkhundla* is Eswatini's participatory and democratic system of government which allows for state power to be decentralised to the various chiefdoms (The Constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini, 2005).

Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017) report that although Eswatini is presented as democratic by holding elections, the country is far from being democratic. King Mswati III exercises absolute rulership over the country; he has authority over parliament, the judiciary and the executive, judges are hired and fired by the monarch. A report by the

World Bank (2018a) gives this observation: “absolute power rests with the monarch while traditional and parliamentary systems run concurrently” (p. 2). Political parties remain banned since 1973 by the then king, Sobhuza II, and opposition to the ruling elite has not been tolerated since. Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017) assert that King Sobhuza was against political parties and voting because they threatened his rule.

1.3.2 The political atmosphere in Eswatini: Judiciary, freedom of speech and association

The judiciary is also governed by the king in the sense that it is the monarch who appoints the judges through his appointed Judiciary Service Commission (JSC); this practice is contrary to international standards of judiciary independence (Hlatshwayo, 2014). It is ironic that while freedom of speech is a right that the country upholds, censorship which stifles the freedom of the press prevails. The freedom to disseminate information around political matters is not allowed.

The king has the power to revoke constitutional guarantees to freedom of expression and freedom of the press at his discretion. Publishing of criticism of the royal family is banned and self-censorship in the media is thought to be widespread, as journalists are routinely subject to threats and attack by the authorities (*ibid.*, 2014, p.5).

Hlatshwayo (2014) adds that Eswatini is ranked as number 155 out of 179 in terms of the Freedom Index. The latest data by the Human Development Index reveals that Eswatini is listed as position 160 out of 172 countries (Human Development Report, 2020b). Similarly, the World Bank (2018b) reports that Eswatini still ranks poorly on human rights.

An act of parliament is in place to ensure that certain individuals and groups are not allowed the freedom to hold gatherings. Hlatshwayo (2014) laments that the Suppression of Terrorism Act has, to a large extent, been abused; the government has extensive powers to declare any organisation a terrorist group. There have been reports of civil society groups that have suffered under these laws; police have harassed them for staging pro-democracy protests. Protestors have been dispersed or even arrested; moreover, there has been an increase in the close watch of civil society groups by the state (*ibid.*). Gatherings by religious groups, which are usually

largely populated by women and which also advocate for democracy, have been dispersed under the same anti-terrorism act. For instance, in 2011, police broke up a gathering by the Lutheran Church, similarly, in 2013, a prayer gathering organised by the Eswatini Democratic Front and the Eswatini Democracy Campaign was broken up by the police; these things happen despite constitutional guarantees (*ibid.*). Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017) affirm that the Suppression of Terrorism Act is one of the numerous strategies that are used to silence dissenting voices; and individuals and groups with different opinions on how the country is governed are labelled ‘terrorists’. Other pieces of legislation that are in place to protect the *status quo* are those that allow for the jailing of persons who criticise the king and his government. Such offences are classified as “showing contempt against the cultural and traditional heritage of the Swati nation”. These acts are contained in the Public Order Act of 2017 (*ibid.*, p. 2).

Repression has been causing the people to be afraid of expressing themselves freely on how they would prefer the country to be governed; “In public, lavish and sugary praise is hefted upon Mswati, in private, though, it is a different story. In quieter moments, many people express deep displeasure at how the country is run” (*ibid.*, p. 2). Fear of being imprisoned is what keeps many quiet. In 2014 and 2015, two pro-democracy activists were sentenced to two years for calling for the democratisation of Eswatini; human rights lawyer, Thulani Maseko, and an editor of an independent newspaper, Bheki Makhubu, wrote an article which challenged the *status quo*, consequent to this, they each spent fifteen months behind bars. This act of repression sent a very strong message that if anyone dares to find fault with the current system of governance, they may end up in jail (*ibid.*). Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017) quote Bheki Makhubu, one of the fearless critics of the ruling monarch, as saying:

Swatis are apt to criticize other corrupt legislators but they would keep their mouths shut when it comes to their own country... corruption is so ingrained in our society we have even started to believe it's normal and that's how life works. And no one, absolutely no one, wants to say anything about it (p. 2).

Similarly, Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017, p. 1) point out that: “the phrase silence should not be mistaken for peace”. They are vehement that Eswatini is not peaceful, but instead Swatis are forced into silence. Hlatshwayo (2014) alleges that Eswatini does

not conform to liberal democracy standards of separation of power in the administrative, law-making, and legal aspects of governance between the state and the monarch. He goes on to bemoan the intrusion on civil and political rights and freedoms which are against principles of social equality.

1.3.3 The economic factor

Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017) present a grim account of the economic situation of Eswatini. Their research indicates that since his enthronement in 1986, the king is yet to abate numerous economic and health challenges. They discovered that Eswatini has one of the highest HIV rates in the world and the lowest life expectancy, over and above, they noted that the distribution of wealth is also a matter of concern.

While the infrastructure is relatively well-developed, there are some glaring gaps which limit the scope of the poor rural households to avail economic opportunities (The World Bank, 2018a, p. 6).

Snaddon and Nhlabatsi (2017) express similar sentiments: “While flashy malls and conference centres are being built, a majority of the people live in serious poverty, they cannot even afford to buy from those malls, let alone attend the conferences” (*ibid.*, p. 1). “Unemployment is high” (*ibid.*, p. 1). Part of this problem was a direct result of Eswatini being removed from benefiting from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), following the country’s failure to heed the call from the international community to exercise democratic practices (*ibid.*).

In an attempt to alleviate the dire economic situation in the country, the government of Eswatini established the Eswatini Revenue Authority (ERA) and mandated it effectively to collect revenue from tax payers to finance the development of the country. ERA is also a key player in ensuring that the vision of King Mswati III, for the country to attain first world status by 2022, is realised (Eswatini Revenue Authority Strategic Plan, 2018). Since its establishment in 2011, ERA has seen a substantial growth in the revenue of the country: the revenue collecting institution, managed to exceed its targets for 2012/2013 by 3% and 2013/2014 by 7%. From its inception, ERA “has been able to record revenue collections that were above target, cumulatively in excess of 40%. This was possible amidst the backdrop of the financial crisis” (*ibid.*, p.

6). ERA aims to maximise the collection of revenue across each tax category; this is ironic considering that the country's authorities are aware of the poverty level in Eswatini. Indeed, "Eswatini continues to face other developmental challenges such as high unemployment and poverty" (*ibid.*, p. 13).

Following reports of the high revenue collected by ERA and the subsequent increase in salaries for senior management in December 2017, junior staff through their union, made demands for salary increments (Magagula, 2018). ERA junior staff, engaged in a one-month strike where they were demanding a pay rise of 6 percent, a strike action which spanned from December 2017 to January 2018 and resulted in the striking workers not getting their pay, was eventually suspended in the second week of January 2018. In a published article, Magagula (2018) stated that in the month that the junior staff were on strike, the top management who held the fort were able to collect revenue which amounted to E1.092.600.000. This amount showed an increase above the target of E1.023.100.000, which is a growth of 14 percent compared to revenue collected around the same time the previous year (*ibid.*) The Commissioner General, Dumisani Masilela, was quoted as saying: "let me pass my sincere gratitude to everyone that continues to work tirelessly towards the delivery of our mandate during these trying times" (*ibid.*, p. 6). Of note is that the workers were not given the salary increase that they had requested.

Swati people have been subjected to hefty taxes amid the high level of poverty which stands at 58.9% of the country's population. Those who are multidimensionally poor are 19.2%. A further 20.9% are vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. Also, 13.5% are working but they earn a salary of \$3.20 a day, which is equivalent to E49.15 a day (Human Development Report, 2020a, p. 6). High taxes imposed by ERA are a significant driver of poverty among the majority of Swatis. The income distribution in Eswatini is as follows: the poorest 40% of the country have 10.5%, the richest 10% have 42.7% and the richest 1% own 18.2% of the country's wealth (*ibid.*). The minority which controls the bulk of the country's wealth is composed largely of members of the royal family; Vincent (2018), gives a glimpse into their opulence:

The pomp and ceremony of Mswati III's appearances and the excess represented by his fleet of luxury cars, his private aeroplane, and his bevy of

wives, each with her own palatial residence, in a country with the grim distinction of having the highest HIV/AIDS infection in the world, along with a devastating poverty level, constitute grotesque and obscene displays (p. 157).

1.4 Women in Eswatini

Culturally, women in Eswatini have a minority status; they are treated like children and they have few rights. In his research, Brogna (2018) unveils a number of issues relating to the predicament of women including: discrimination, unpaid labour, limited opportunities for education and marital rape, among others (*ibid.*). Despite constitutional provisions that allow for equality between men and women, women are still discriminated against and deprived of many rights which include the right to own property, particularly in rural areas. Legally, women do not have the same rights as men, which is in contradiction to the Constitution; consequent to this, they cannot buy, sell, or own land. Widows are often forced out of their marital homes after the demise of their spouses. Of note is that there are some communities that are beginning to be accommodating of women in this regard, although it is still rare (*ibid.*).

Other social ills that women in Eswatini are exposed to are the practice of reducing them to domestic slaves. While men engage in paid labour, at their places of employment, a number of women are subjected to unpaid labour, such as: physical housework, and the emotional care of household members, including taking care of the sick. Women are not remunerated for the services that they render in homes. In cases where the woman holds a job outside the home, she finds herself with the burden of doing double shifts; girls are not spared. With the escalation of the HIV pandemic, leading to many needing home care, girls are under pressure to drop out of school to care for sick relatives. Once girls are deprived of education, their chances of holding meaningful jobs in the future are diminished and this promotes dependency; the girls who drop out of school, grow up to be dependent upon their fathers or husbands, in some cases, these girls are forced into prostitution, which further drives the HIV scourge. Currently, the HIV prevalence rate among Swatis aged between 15 and 49 years stands at 27.3% (Human Development Report, 2020a). Brogna (2018) avers that 31% of women have been diagnosed with HIV and 71% of sex workers are HIV positive. Brogna adds that social power imbalance is responsible for the high

number of HIV cases among adults in Eswatini. Marital rape is another social ill that Eswatini is grappling with; for a very long time, marital rape has been rampant in the country, due to the limited rights that women have. Despite the country's Constitution which came into effect in 2006, which gave women legal rights, gendered cultural practices continue to overshadow the law, "leaving women rights where they started" (*ibid.*, p. 7). Women continue to be discriminated against and their rights are stifled; the discrimination exists despite constitutional provisions for equality between men and women.

Early research by Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland (2016) uncovered a number of injustices that Swati women are grappling with. The discussion below summarises the findings from the study which address women's position traditionally, politically and economically. Eswatini upholds a number of cultural practices which undermine women and keep them in bondage. These include traditional marriages, assigning women minority status and violence. Culturally, women may be given into marriage (*kwendziswa*) without their consent. Furthermore, traditional marriages allow for polygamy (*sitsembu*) which may be imposed without the senior wife's consent. Moreover, traditional marriages do not allow for divorce, meaning that a woman is stuck in a marriage permanently, even if it proves to be dysfunctional. Since traditional marriages cannot be dissolved, the traditionally wed woman remains bound to the family even after the demise of her husband, in which case she is given as wife inheritance (*kungenwa*) to her late husband's brother. With their minority status, women may be given into marriage without consultation. This practice not only objectifies women, but it makes them vulnerable to a number of unfortunate circumstances, which include being dispossessed of late husbands' properties. A brother-in-law, who inherits a woman, takes over the property of the late husband as well. The practice of wife inheritance is also responsible for the high poverty level among Swati women. In a minority of cases, some women do challenge this state of affairs and opt out of the marriage but when they leave their marital homes, they have to leave everything behind and start afresh. Wife inheritance also makes women vulnerable to contracting the HI virus (*ibid.*).

Another cultural scourge that Swati women are faced with is their minority status; culturally, Swati women come after male children in rank. While Swati women cannot own land on their own, their male children can. When a divorced or widowed woman wants to access Swati Nation Land (SNL), she is permitted to register it under the name of her father, brother or her male child, even if the male child is an infant (*ibid.*). In community meeting forums, women are not permitted to sit on a chair but they sit on mats. When a woman is allowed to make a contribution in such meetings, and she makes a valid point, she is lauded for speaking like a man (*ukhuluma livi lelidvuna*). In this way, women continue to be reduced to people who do not possess enough intelligence (*ibid.*).

Gender-based violence is another challenge that Swati women and girls experience on a daily basis. They are affected by gender-based violence disproportionately in comparison to males; about 37% women and girls are raped by their husbands and boyfriends. What further drives the gender-based violence is women's dependency on men (*ibid.*). Physical abuse is a different kind of violence that women contend with, Nhlapho (1992) shared the following observation:

We must distinguish between the views of lay people and those of court adjudicators. Ordinary Swazis do appear to believe that there exists a right to beat a wife. The Swazi court of appeal at Lozitha rejected this notion, insisting that assault upon a wife is an offence, though of course in the circumstances of each case there may be mitigating factors showing that the husband was intensely provoked or otherwise acted on the heat of the moment (p. 84).

The sentiments expressed in the above quote suggest that the Swati court does not entirely condemn the practice of wife battering if there is 'justification' for it. Although it may seem that the court is against it, it is obvious that there are conditions that may oblige a man to beat up his wife. Such convictions align with the belief among some Swati people that a woman is a child who should be punished or disciplined for delinquent behaviour. As indicated earlier, Swati women and men are not at par socially, while men occupy lofty positions, women on the other hand, are lower in status. One is cognizant of the fact that it is unheard of for a woman to discipline her husband if the man 'provokes' her. While this point illustrates the society's attitude

towards women's abuse, it also reveals the different social classes for women and men.

The poor representation of women in parliament and other governing bodies is also of concern especially because it hampers development; decisions are taken without women making meaningful contributions even on issues that affect them. Although the Constitution of the country does allow for women's participation in parliamentary elections, there are numerous inhibiting factors which deter women from enjoying that right (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016). For example, in order for a woman to qualify to run for elections, she must be approved by her local chief. Sadly, the traditional structures which are overseen by chiefs still hold very strong views against women participation in legislative bodies. Moreover, it is these same structures which propagate the relegation of women to second class citizens. Widowed women are often cut out from participating in public offices (*ibid.*). By 2013, only one woman had been elected to parliament. Eswatini has the lowest number of women representation in the SADC region; out of 20 seats, women are allocated only 3 seats. This is despite Eswatini being one of the states that set the millennium development goals, one of which aimed for 50 % of women representation in government by 2015 (*ibid.*).

Economically, Swati women's position looks gloomy; ownership of property including land, livestock and other assets, is still enjoyed largely by men while women remain disenfranchised. Men also dominate the employment sector in a country that is plagued by a high unemployment level. Even for those women who are employed, a majority of them, 90%, are usually assigned lesser roles in sectors that have unfavourable working conditions such as the manufacturing sector. This sector is characterised by low pay, inhumane working conditions and long working hours. As such, these women are exposed to abuse, exploitation and sickness. Wages earned by these women are usually around E932.00 a month; equivalent to 50 Euros. The paltry wages usually drive some women to prostitution as a means to supplement their earnings. In the process, they are exposed to HIV, a challenge that the country is still grappling with (*ibid.*). Although men are considered bread-winners, in actual practice, many women are feeding families, in addition to bearing the extra burden of household

tasks. In summing up its exposition of the plight of Swati women, Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland (2016), states that:

Eswatini is a slave cage with gross human rights violation, corruption and parasitism, sexism and gender-based violence which swims in the abuse of culture and traditional values throttled by the royal aristocracy (*ibid.*, p. 2).

A study conducted by FAO (2019) affirms the findings by Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland (2016) and Brogna (2018). Their report shows that women living in rural areas are the most affected by gendered practices because of the prominence of the patriarchal structure that dominates the Swati society. These women are usually subjected to "discrimination and harmful practices" (FAO, 2019, p.1). The dual legal system where Roman Dutch Law and Eswatini Customary Law operate side by side has led to conflicts which adversely affect women's rights. Moreover, the widely held view that human rights and women rights are foreign concepts undermines effecting the constitutional provisions for equality between men and women. Of note, the study uncovered that survivors of gender-based violence have few avenues where they can receive assistance (*ibid.*).

Another study conducted by World Report (2020) confirms the plight of women in Eswatini. Their research focuses mainly on two issues: legislation and the economic factor. Women are generally absent in legislative bodies which means that important decisions are made without their contribution. They often take the position of secretaries. The low representation of women hampers their development because some of the decisions taken during legislative meetings impact on women's welfare. World Report (2020) reveals that the whole political administration is male dominated. Economically, women are disadvantaged; and ownership and distribution of means of production such as land, capital and livestock, are uneven (*ibid.*). The Gender Inequality Index, in the 2020 Human Development Report, affirmed the assertions presented in the foregoing discussion. They ranked Eswatini as "position 137 out of 159 countries" (Human Development Report, 2020b, p. 5). The report further revealed that in the period of 1990 – 2019, inequality was in three dimensions: "reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity" (*ibid.*, p. 5).

Reproductive health is measured by “maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates” (*ibid.*, p. 5). In the period 1990 - 2019, “maternal mortality ratio stood at 437.0 per 100,000 live births and adolescent birth rate was 76.7 per 1000 girls aged 15 -19” (*ibid.*, p. 5). These figures are an indication of a high mortality rate and a high birth rate among teenage girls. With regards to empowerment, females are disproportionately disadvantaged, currently, “only 12.1% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women”. Empowerment is measured by “the share of parliamentary seats held by women and attainment in secondary education and higher education by each gender” (*ibid.*, p. 5). While 33.9% men have attained higher education, only 31.1% women have (*ibid.*, p. 5). Economic activity for women in Eswatini is relatively low compared to that of their male counterparts. Economic activity “is measured by labour market participation rate for women and men” (*ibid.*, p. 5). The rate of women participation in economic activity stands at “48.5% in contrast to the 56.8% of males” (*ibid.*, p. 6). These figures also suggest that there are more women than men who are at the poverty level, or who are dependent on males. In occupations that are usually saturated by women, the monthly pay scale stands as follows: clothing and manufacturing, E1,500; sales assistants, E2,000; domestic work, E1,500 (*Ministry of Labour and Social Security – Eswatini Government, 2020*). There is, therefore, a need to speed up women’s empowerment towards gender equality in Eswatini (World Bank, 2018a).

1.4.1 Rural women in Eswatini

There is a considerable divide between rural and urban areas and women living in those areas. The assigning of gendered roles and the domesticity of women, particularly those in rural areas, are promoted by cultural elements (*Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals, 2012*). Rural women spend more time than rural men, urban women and men doing housework such as providing food, raising children and caring for the sick (*Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals, 2012; World Bank, 2018; Dlamini, 2017*). A study conducted by UNDP revealed that: “collectively, women from Sub-Saharan Africa spend about 40 billion hours a year collecting water” (*Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals, 2012, p. 12*). On average, rural women work more hours than rural men, urban women or urban men because those rural women who have jobs outside the home still have to perform

their domestic chores (*ibid.*). Generally, rural women spend more time doing housework, which leaves them with no time for other activities such as education (World Bank, 2018). If their domestic chores increase, the responsibility falls on girls, keeping them out of school (*ibid.*).

The study also found that the participation of rural women in gainful employment was limited compared to that of urban women (*ibid.*). It was discovered that a large number of rural women who were employed were working in the agricultural sector where the working conditions are harsh and their employment contracts were usually short-term. Also of note is that the proportion of rural women working under these conditions was higher compared to that of urban women and rural men. In Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, 60% of employed women were in the agricultural sector (*ibid.*). Notably, only 15% of women owned land in the region (*ibid.*, p. 1). This despite their ability to derive profit from agricultural land as they formed the majority of the workforce in the agriculture sector.

Education is another issue of concern for rural women. In past years, parents in the Sub-Saharan African region did not perceive educating girls as important; this is why the level of illiteracy among rural women was higher compared to that of other categories. “Women make up two-thirds of the world’s 796 million people who are illiterate, and many of them live in rural areas” (*Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals*, 2012, p. 2). Women’s low level of education has a ripple effect on their poverty and general position in society; their poverty is made worse by their restricted access to resources such as credit (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, rural women’s participation in decision-making is restricted; in community meetings, women are expected to sit, and not speak, they only listen to what the men are saying and they are expected to agree with decisions made by men (World Bank, 2018). Even in family meetings, rural women’s voices are stifled, this is particularly true in extended and polygamous families (*ibid.*). Gender-based violence is also common among rural women because they are usually dependent on their spouses. These women are also usually victims of harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and wife inheritance, which make them vulnerable to HIV infection (*ibid.*).

In Eswatini 77% of the population live in rural areas. 47% of the population is under the age of 18 according to 'The Kingdom of Eswatini: Master plan towards the elimination of neglected tropical diseases 2015-2020' (no date) . Females make up 52.6% of the Swati population and males are 47.4%. Almost 48% of households are headed by women (*ibid.*). Rural women in all four regions of Eswatini: Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo and Shiselweni, are generally marginalised socially, culturally, educationally and financially and this results in them living in poverty (*ibid.*). The poverty of Eswatini women is further compounded by some cultural practices such as early marriage for girls. Females can legally marry at age 16, provided parental consent is given. It is also worth noting that traditional marriages do allow for the marriage of a girl at age 13, such marriages are rife in rural areas of Eswatini (UN News Service, 2013). *The World Bank* (no date) indicated that the proportion of people living below the international poverty line is 58.9% and this is more pronounced in rural areas with about 70% affected persons (Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, n.d).

The hardships experienced in rural areas have caused many to migrate to urban areas where there are prospects of a better livelihood and "income generation" (UN News Service 2013, p. 6), thus, informal settlements are emerging in urban / peri-urban settings (*ibid.*). In 2019, the urban population was at 24% and it is projected to reach 34% by 2050. Rural to urban migration is generally observed in the Hhohho and Manzini regions (*ibid.*)

The foregoing discussion has given an overview of the contextual framework by describing Eswatini, in terms of the social setup, political and economic climates and how they impact the lives of women in the country, also indicating that Swatis are engulfed by a number of challenges which emanate from how the country is governed.

Human rights abuses are still rife despite provisions made by Article 20 (1)¹ of the Constitution of the country (The Constitution of the Kingdom of Eswatini Act, 2005). Despite the provisions of Article 20, women and girls still suffer a plethora of challenges, politically, socially and financially. Women are hardly represented in governing bodies and positions of authority. Women are treated as minors, more than fifty years after the country obtained independence from Britain. Financially, women are disadvantaged, yet many are the bread-winners in their families. Maladministration has led to the feminisation of poverty (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016). This brief summary gives a glimpse of the plight of a Swati woman.

Eswatini's post-colonial experience has not made the position of women any better, while they grapple with the issues noted above, they are yet to be un-yoked from colonial snares of limited opportunities and mental bondage. Having been raised in an environment which does not provide many opportunities for self-development, women grow up believing that deprivation is a natural phenomenon which they have no power over. Their slave mentality causes them to embrace more burdens by accepting, without challenge, the saddle of being breadwinners and carers in their families. According to Biblical dictates, as narrated in Genesis 3 verse 17, the burden of providing for the family was laid on the man.

And to the man He said: Since you listened to your --wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it (Holy Bible, 2015).

Eswatini is a Christian country which upholds Biblical principles, but due to socialisation, women have allowed themselves to be exploited by men in this regard

¹ *All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law.*

and have disregarded the Biblical pronouncement on men's obligation to provide for the family. This is despite that women in general are the majority believers in The Bible (Pew Research Centre, 2016). Nonetheless, women and girls from the royal family are exempt from the challenges presented above.

1.4.2 Influential women in Eswatini

The general impression about women in Eswatini is that they are helpless victims of subjugation, which is in fact a fair assessment considering the foregoing discussion. However, there are some women, although a minority, who do not conform to this classification. The authors of the poems in this research have defied the label of 'victim' by exposing gendered cultural practices. Other women may not have exploited the literary space to challenge the prevailing discriminatory social practices, but their contributions at various levels in the Swati setting, is a sign that women can unshackle themselves from societal traditions and create a better reality for themselves and for other women. The women described briefly in the following sub-sections are a random sample of those who have invaded the male dominated space and have influenced society significantly, albeit, from different spheres including: women's rights (Doo Aphane), religious sector (Dr Dalcy Dlamini), economic environment (Zodwa Mabuza), educational and political domains (Sibongile Mazibuko).

1.4.2.1 Doo Aphane

Doo Aphane, a lawyer by profession and a women's rights activist, is engaged in numerous developmental programmes aimed at improving the lives of women in the country. Aphane's name became recognised as a brand in 2010 when she successfully challenged the government of Eswatini to uphold constitutional provisions related to married women's rights to own title deed land (Lee, 2011). Prior to the landmark case, women married in Community of Property (CoP) were denied the right to "register immovable property, bonds and other real rights in their own names or jointly with their husbands" (The Attorney-General v. Mary-Joyce Doo Aphane, 2010). Aphane is passionate about social justice and this is evidenced by her involvement in numerous organisations which aim at promoting women's social statuses; some of her roles in these organisations include: Founding Director at Women to Women

Development Consultancy, Regional Coordinator for Women’s Legal Rights Initiative, Founding National Coordinator of Women and Law in Southern Africa Trust (Swaziland), Founding officer of the Legal Aid Clinic of Council of Swaziland Churches now Justice and Peace Department and Co-Founder of Eswatini Women’s Land Rights Alliance (EWLRA). Aphane’s contribution towards women’s welfare in the Swati society proves that, being empowered with knowledge, gives one the conviction to defend her rights as well as hold supreme governing bodies responsible for laws that they enact. Her attitude of remaining steadfast and unfazed by seemingly insurmountable challenges reveals her radical feminist spirit. Apart from being a resilient feminist, Aphane equipped herself by acquiring relevant educational qualifications including: Bachelor of Arts in Law, Post-Graduate Diploma in Women’s Law and a Master of Laws in Developmental Law, which she obtained from the University of Eswatini, University of Oslo and University of Warwick, respectively (Aphane, 2022).

1.4.2.2 Dr Dalcy Dlamini

Elected Head of the Anglican Church in 2021, she becomes the second woman Bishop in Eswatini and the fourth in the Southern Africa province. Dlamini obtained her undergraduate degree at the University of Eswatini and then she proceeded to obtain an Honours, a Master’s and a PhD, from the University of Pretoria. Prior to occupying the highest position in the Anglican church, Dlamini had served at various positions in the community, including: primary school teacher, school chaplain at St Michael’s Girls’ School in Manzini, Dean of studies and rector, priest and deacon (*Anglican Church of Southern Africa, 2021*). Her selfless commitment towards the development of the Anglican Church and schools, coupled with her academic acumen, earned her the recognition which ultimately qualified her to occupy a position of authority. Rising from the position of primary school teacher to attaining the status of Bishop is significant in showing that it is possible for women to cross social barriers of limitation.

1.4.2.3. Zodwa Mabuza

Zodwa Mabuza is a 52-year-old economist currently based in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, where she is serving as Principal Regional Integration Officer for the African

Development Bank. Prior to occupying this highly esteemed position, Mabuza who is both a mother and a wife, was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Eswatini Employers and the Chamber of Commerce. She has also served in a number of government ministries at various capacities. Worthy of note is that Mabuza came from a humble background, she started her secondary education in a rural school in the Hhohho region of the country; however, her hard work ultimately earned her the coveted job she occupies in a male dominated space. Mabuza's success evidently shows that although some women in Eswatini are held back by their unfavourable backgrounds, women with resilience are able to break free from societal confines and map out a preferred future (Mabuza, 2022).

1.4.2.4 Sibongile Mazibuko

Sibongile Mazibuko is a retired secondary school teacher, an active political activist and one of the bravest women in the country. On numerous instances, she has been beleaguered by law enforcement agents for being vocal about the unfavourable political landscape in the country, and for calling for political change. Mazibuko is the incumbent president of Ngwane National Liberation Congress (NNLC), one of the oldest, but still banned, political formations in the country, she is also the chairperson of the newly formed Political Parties' Assembly (PPA).

Mazibuko has made significant contributions in various sectors in society including in teaching where she rose to the position of leadership. Her teaching career spanned a period of 37 years. Another milestone in her teaching profession was her becoming the first woman president of the national teacher's union, The Swaziland Teachers' Association (SNAT). (*Page-9-Sibongile-Mazibuko.pdf, 2022*). Now in her late 60s, Mazibuko has committed herself to the liberation struggle of Eswatini. Her unfailing spirit, even at her age, subverts the belief that women are weak.

It is worth stating that these women are examples of average Swati women who ascended from modest backgrounds, and through hard work, they managed to occupy esteemed positions within the patriarchal Swati society. The perception that women in Eswatini should stay at the bottom of the social echelons did not convince them that

their femaleness has sealed their fate, but instead they ventured to establish a different narrative about what it means to be a woman in Eswatini.

1.5 Research methodology

While quantitative research aims for accuracy that is achieved through conducting tests, qualitative research seeks to arrive at conclusions that are grounded and can be supported by the reality of human experience. Qualitative research does not objectively reconstruct life experiences, it presents life as perceived, relying on those aspects that one gives attention to, thus making it subjective. Similarly, in this study, the centre of focus is the depiction of Swati women's lived experiences in a patriarchal society, enabling one to form an impression of how the studied poetic texts illustrate womanhood as a social construct. Since this research aims at understanding and construing social interactions (Lichtman, 2013), and making sense of how society constructs gendered identities of women, the qualitative research approach is most suitable. Qualitative data were collected by using the literature review approach (Hart, 1998), wherein, quality of narratives from poetic texts was the focus. Studying the selected poetry allowed for the researcher's subjective interpretation, depending on her lived experiences as a Swati woman. Furthermore, the poem's contextual setting as well as poets' demographic details provided a suitable launch pad for doing a textual analysis of the poems. Importantly, feminism, being a key theoretical lens, enabled a guided analysis of the poems, invariably, minimising the researcher's bias. Collected data were analysed, firstly, by identifying figures of speech utilised in each poetic text, and thereafter analysing them in order to extract meaning that had not been presented overtly. Finally, emerging themes were presented textually according to the different feminism eras they represented, ensuring ease of organising the data (Biddix, Chung, Park, 2015).

Qualitative research is used with a small sample size (Lichtman, 2013), hence, a total of ten poems by six women poets from Eswatini were studied. Analysis of the poems provided rich data in alignment with an assertion by Webster and Mertova (2007) that qualitative research is interested in the impact of an experience. Although numbers are important because meaning is connected to numbers (Sandelowski, 1991), feelings and thoughts will be central and those cannot be quantified. In qualitative

research, researchers study phenomena in their natural settings. Although human participants were not engaged in this study, their poetry, whose composition was influenced by the poets' natural settings, was studied. Moen (2006, p. 61) states that "researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them". Although there is researcher bias in qualitative research (Johnson and Christensen, 2008), it was nonetheless overcome by reading texts objectively, first giving a brief description of the poets whose poems were studied; this helped the researcher to understand the voice behind the poems. Secondly, the anthologies where the studied poems had been taken from, were described in order to enable a fuller appreciation of the context of the poems. Lastly, the poems were profiled to enable the reader to get more insight about them. Extracts from the texts were quoted and interpreted objectively, paying attention to contextual matters.

In narrative inquiry, qualitative research enables a researcher to address issues about human experiences in certain cultural contexts. The stories that are told in those cultural settings provide data that researchers use in their investigation (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Findings from the study are deemed significant if they sound contextually relevant. "Stories derive their convincing power not from verifiability but from verisimilitude" (Amsterdam and Bruner, 2000, p. 30), which is to say that stories do not necessarily have to be true but they should sound true and they ought to have an impact on a reader.

Qualitative research belongs to the school of interpretivism which focuses on generating and understanding meaning, making it suitable for studying social environments and the meaning that the people make out of their environments. It may also be used to study documents, including poems. Experiences about authors of studied texts may form part of the collected data, and since those experiences cannot be measured, researchers use detailed descriptions to create rich data. From the collected data, both the implicit and explicit information is taken into consideration. The subjectivity of qualitative research allows for the creation of multiple realities of a phenomenon. The inference that one makes from these statements is that, how one individual researcher reads a poem is influenced by one's experiences; another reader

with different experiences may read the same text and interpret it differently. Therefore, to minimise the interference of readers' experiences, it is important to clearly define the lenses through which texts will be read. Data is generated through the processes of discovering and describing. As a research design, qualitative research can influence social change. Another significant contribution on Qualitative research was made by Bhattacharya (2016). The section below reviews her contributions on qualitative research.

Dr Bhattacharya of K-State College of Education pointed out, in her video presentation, that qualitative research is not necessarily against quantitative research, as it may seem, but it is a research process that has a different epistemological paradigm. Qualitative research is inductive and explorative, without a predetermined hypothesis, the researcher makes conclusions based on exploring a matter. The process of exploration is independent of a predetermined theory, a theory can only be formed later, after the research process has been done. Qualitative research is about uncovering stories and getting an in-depth understanding of people's lived experiences; documents may also be studied for the same purpose. Similarly, this research explored poetic texts for the purpose of discovering how poetry can be engaged as a form of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society and a theory about how that can be achieved will be formed after poems have been studied. Bhattacharya (2016) goes on to say that after data has been collected, it is compared to find out if there are patterns that can be established; however, the patterns are not generalizable. This assertion rings true because experiences of people are influenced by the social settings they are in. In one community, women may be able to respond in one way to a certain issue, but in another community, the same may not hold true. In Eswatini for instance, some rural areas still uphold very strict rules and practices concerning women, yet in other communities, there is a certain level of flexibility. Thus, findings from one community may not hold true in another community, even if both communities are within the same Swati society.

In qualitative research, bias cannot be avoided because researchers are in touch with the study, says Bhattacharya. This assertion is true and, to some extent, applicable here because the researcher is a woman who is very conscious of the plight of Swati

women, nonetheless, bias was minimised. The awareness of the fact and the possibility of interpreting the texts in a subjective way cautioned the researcher against that. Moreover, the researcher attempted to study the particular contextual sphere and was guided by it in the interpretation and analysis of data. Bhattacharya cautions that qualitative researchers should pay attention to detail about a unit of analysis; hence, the contexts of the poetic texts, including background information about the authors, were described.

Words, videos and pictures are the unit of analysis used to generate rich data. While quantitative research relies heavily on numbers, qualitative research uses the power of words and in-depth descriptions to generate information. The strength of poetry lies in the use of language. A poet carefully selects the words that will convey a message effectively, and structure them in a manner that will produce maximum outcomes on the reader. Poetry by the selected Swati women poets has this strength, and the researcher explored the poetic language carefully in order to maximally extract the message embedded therein. In summation, qualitative research is advantageous to the researcher as it provides some flexibility in adjusting research questions if the ones available are not very helpful in producing data (Bhattacharya, 2016).

1.5.1 Data collection and presentation: Reading, translation and analysis of poems

This research is literature-based, so data were drawn from the selected poetry; a total of ten poems by six poets, representing both urban and rural women, were read, transcribed from Swati into English and analysed by the researcher. Writing poems in Swati, the poets' mother tongue is advantageous because the authors are able to express themselves naturally. In addition, the researcher used the reflective journal to record her thoughts and to jot down some ideas that arose during the course of the research. The Centre for Research Quality at Walden University affirms that a researcher's journal forms part of data (Walden University – Office of Research and Doctoral Services 2015). To structure the data, poems were classified according to the year of publication of the anthologies where they appear, notably, the publication years represent different waves of feminism, a factor that is significant in reading the poems. Moreover, emergent themes were categorised according to their importance

in exposing the different ways in which Swati women are oppressed. Bhattacharya asserts that breaking data down into manageable chunks helps to organise it (Bhattacharya, 2016).

Data were presented in narrative form, following Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh (2002) guidelines for conducting narrative research. The steps include identifying a phenomenon that addresses the problem, selecting sources of information, collecting stories from the identified sources, transcribing, analysing, looking for themes, retelling the story in chronological sequence, and writing a sequential narrative (*ibid.*). Firstly, the researcher identified the problem of subjugation of women in Eswatini. In seeking out an appropriate medium that women exploit to express their sentiments, poetic texts were discovered to be the most suitable mode because poetry allows for the uncontrollable outburst of emotions. Through poetry, women poets are able to find an outlet for their subdued emotions. It is through studying their poetry that one gets to learn about their plight. Secondly, ten poetic texts by six women poets were identified as sources of information, only poems that address gender issues that impact on women were analysed, the poems were extracted from published anthologies spanning a period of twenty-eight years. Selected poems were those written in the Swati language, which is the mother-tongue of the poets. More details about the selection criteria will be given in section 1.9. The next step was to read and transcribe the poems, directly translating them into English. This was followed by analysing the poetic texts, taking into account elements of time and space. For all the poems, time included the period between 1986 and 2014 which marked the period when all the poems were published and space referred to the specific setting described in each poem. The fourth step involved searching and categorising themes that were recurrent from the poems. Next, was to create a narrative which described the issues that the poetry addressed. Finally, the researcher discussed data with cross-referencing. Findings from the discussion led to the formulation of a theory which supported the assumption that, generally, Swati women of all ages face challenges of domination across the country, nonetheless, there are some women who stand up for their rights and resist any form of subjugation that is promoted by the patriarchal society.

1.6 Quality and research ethics

Despite its significance, Narrative Inquiry (NI) has not been considered as a reputable method because of it lacking scientific credence, and thus, until recently, it has been overlooked as a research method, aver Webster and Mertova (2007). This study adheres to quality checks which include the role of the researcher and the researcher's trustworthiness in describing the setting of the poems (Vander Putten and Nolen, 2010). About researchers, Bhattacharya (2016) says that they should be transparent about their values and beliefs which may cause them to be biased. Thus, she says, is not realistic for a researcher to remain neutral. However, Webster and Mertova (2007) believe that it is possible to observe neutrality by not allowing conditions of the research to be influenced by the researcher's biases. The researcher here was affected by the issues that Swati women experience since she is a member of the society where the poetic texts were based. Nonetheless, she distanced herself by studying the poetic texts in line with the contexts surrounding the poems. Moreover, the different regions of Eswatini were described, taking into account the geography, social aspects as well as the economic characteristics. This helped in reading and interpreting the poetry from the Swati context (Lincoln and Denzin, 2003; Moen, 2006).

Lincoln and Denzin (2003) add that thick descriptions are necessary for validating interpretive texts. They aver that such descriptions create the world that is being described. Similarly, Moen (2006, p. 64) observes that meticulous descriptions "present the context and the web of social relationships", thus they paint a clear picture of participants in their contexts. Moen (2006) adds that a qualitative researcher should use multiple and different sources of information for triangulation purposes. This assertion was supported by Webster and Mertova (2007). Hence, data were collected from poetry by a selection of six women poets, relevant information about the poets was provided.

Webster and Mertova (2007) cautioned that qualitative research does not aim for scientific methods but its focus is on individual truths, hence the experiences of Swati women in their various contexts give individual truths. Moreover, the results arrived at are not generalizable, but they are unique to the context being described. The researcher also took care to observe consistency in translating the poems, and to

avoid bias by consistently referring to each poem's contextual background during the process of analysis. Any claims made during interpretation of data were supported with theoretical evidence and the findings revealed emerging patterns (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Similarly, in order to promote trustworthiness so that the research is well grounded, Webster and Mertova (2007) advise that scenes and events should be described adequately. The researcher therefore dedicated time and space to describing the four regions of Eswatini, the poets whose poems were studied, the anthologies and backgrounds to the poems.

Regarding ethical issues, the researcher endeavoured to avoid fabrication, falsification and plagiarism. Lincoln and Denzin (2003, p. 623) warn that researchers should not fabricate "data, data sources, findings, claims, or credentials". Credit was correctly attributed to sources cited and data were accurately presented from poetic texts. Moreover, the findings were correctly reported without any attempts to misrepresent truths. Dissemination of the findings will be done in accordance with the ethical code of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, College of Humanities.

1.7 Women poets and their poetry

Oral literature is thriving yet written literature is inadequate in Eswatini, according to Culture of Swaziland-history, people, women, beliefs (n.d.). A similar observation was made by Vincent (2012) who noted that written literature is limited in the country. Written poetry too is generally unavailable, there are few women writers of poetry in Eswatini, and a very small number have written poetry that may be read through a feminist framework. There is no documented evidence indicating the availability of published poems by Eswatini women poets prior to 1986. A search of documents has revealed that the earliest published anthology, *Takitsi* by Ntiwane, Mamba, and Dlamini (1986), featuring poems by women, was issued by Macmillan Boleswa in 1986. Over the years, there have been few additions of poems by Eswatini women poets. The section below profiles six women poets whose poems have been studied. The ten poems by the six poets were selected on the basis of their feminist themes. Issues that they address include the position of women as daughters, sisters, mothers and wives. These roles depict the position of disadvantage that a woman in Eswatini is fated to experience. Each poet is described by year of birth, marital status, level of

education, occupation and contribution to society. Although the focus of the research is on the poetic texts, a basic understanding of the poets themselves – the voice behind the poetry – will contribute positively to the analysis of the poetic texts. These factors will, to some extent, minimise researcher bias. The poets are: Glory Mamba, Sisana Dlamini, Sarah Mkhonza, Cynthia Hlophe, Fikile Mnisi and Thembekile Msibi

1.7.1 Glory Mamba

Most of the information about Glory Mamba was sourced from Magagula, (2012). Mamba, fondly known as Ngudze, a name that derives from ‘Ngudzeni’, her home area in the Shiselweni region, had remained single and she died in 2012 in her seventies. She had previously served as a lecturer in the Department of African Languages at the University of Eswatini. She was also an appointed member of the Elections Boundaries Commission (EBC). Mamba was a prolific poet and praise singer. Poetry anthologies published by Macmillan Boleswa indicate that Mamba spearheaded the writing of women’s poetry as well as poetry that is critical about the treatment of women in Eswatini. Mamba was an acclaimed praise singer, including court poetry. Among her famous poems are “Professor S.M. Guma” and “Mswati III”, which she co-authored with Matiwane Manana. In her poem “Ngihlushwa yindvodza”, Mamba uses irony and sarcasm to ridicule an incapable man who enjoys a lofty status by virtue of being male. In “Umloyi” Mamba paints a grim image of women suffering in subdued silence.

1.7.2 Sisana Dlamini

Sisana Dlamini born Mdluli is from a place called Mekemeke at Entfonjeni in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. She was born in 1958 in an area that was typically rural, with no electricity nor tap water. Dlamini’s father died when she was ten days old, leaving her mother with no other source of income except for what she got from selling fruit and vegetables at a market, and the responsibility of raising four young children, her two elder sisters and a brother. Her mother remarried when Dlamini was about three years old and three more children were born from the second marriage. Life became hard as she grew up feeling unloved; for example, all the other children had school shoes but she did not have any until she started secondary school, aged around twelve. Dlamini also came to learn very late that her mother who used to beat her up

severely, had been subjected to abuse by the new husband. Despite the abuse that her mother endured from her second husband, she had a strong personality; she would literally fight and defeat men. She was also a member of the traditional court in the area. Her mother instilled in her Christian ethics, taught her about the importance of education and the value of being content with what one had.

Dlamini grew up in a poor family but their social status was elevated after her stepfather built a house that had corrugated iron roofing, thus, her homestead, was referred to by neighbours as *emathayeleni*, a place of corrugated iron. In that area, girls and women engaged in a number of domestic chores such as ploughing (*kulima*), weeding (*kuhlakula*), thatching (*kufulela*), moulding mud walls (*kubhadza*), flooring using cow dung (*kusindza*), grinding maize meal with a hand-operated grinding meal (*kugaya*), and grinding ground nuts on a grinding stone (*kusila*).

Dlamini grew up fond of doing traditional dance and she was good at it. However, her mother who was protective of her would not allow her to attend the Reed Dance ceremony (*Umhlanga*) for fear that she might be picked to be one of the king's brides. Dlamini's excellent dance skills and good looks made her susceptible to being taken as a royal bride. Growing up, Dlamini and her siblings would look after cattle, when she had to start school, her schooling schedule had to be altered to accommodate tending cattle, as a result, she would often enrol for night school so that during the day she could look after the animals. The motivation for her mother to send Dlamini to school was that school would give her a chance to have a better life, unlike her mother who did not get the opportunity. Another reason was that she would be able to read warning signs and be able to read letters that her future mine-worker husband (*ligayiza*) would send to her. Acquiring education was miraculous for Dlamini because her stepfather was vehemently opposed to the idea, he insisted that Dlamini should stay at home and do home chores and look after cattle. The man argued that educating girls was a waste of resources because girls leave home to get married.

Dlamini did her primary school at Entfonjeni Primary School in the Hhohho region and Hhelehhele Nazarene School in the Manzini region, she then proceeded to Ntfonjeni High School for her secondary education. She later enrolled for a Teacher's diploma at William Pitcher Teacher's College in the Manzini region; later on, Dlamini acquired

a Bachelor's Degree, Honours Degree, Masters and Doctoral Degrees at the University of South Africa (UNISA) where she is currently lecturing. Her teaching career started at St Theresa's High School after obtaining her diploma in teaching, she then proceeded to UNISA in 1991 and now she is a senior lecturer in the Department of African languages.

Sisana Dlamini has remained single after she ended her abusive marriage in 1991. She had been married to a man who was ten years her senior, thinking that an older person would give her the fatherly love that she had not experienced as a child. When she left the husband, who abused her verbally and emotionally, she took her three sons (now adults) with her and she raised them single-handedly.

Dlamini grew up with her sisters and brothers and from a young age she began to realise that society treated the two sexes differently, even her own mother treated her brother better than she would treat her. For example, Dlamini's brother would be given the best piece of meat and her mother would peel sweet potatoes and jugo beans for her brother but Dlamini would not get the same kind of treatment. Moreover, Dlamini noticed that while both females and males were tasked with looking after cattle, it was only males who owned the cattle. When Dlamini began to ponder why males were treated better than females, her feminist spirit was aroused. Nonetheless, Dlamini does not consider herself a feminist, but a gender equality activist. Through her writing, she questions some of the practices that place women at a disadvantage. Dlamini is also a researcher and she has published articles that deal with the depiction of womanhood in literary texts. The composition of Dlamini's poems is usually triggered by certain experiences and events, she also writes as a form of therapy to release some powerful emotions. Her three poems that are studied here are examples of such poems. These poems were not written specifically for publication in *Inhlava*, a poetry anthology prescribed for secondary school learners, but she wrote them at the height of certain emotional experiences and reflections. When Dlamini, an accomplished writer of Swati literature texts, was approached to contribute poetry for the anthology, she submitted the poems that she had already written (*Sisana Dlamini, personal communication, 30 March, 2021*).

1.7.3 Sarah Mkhonza

Sarah Mkhonza born Du Pont in 1957 grew up at Siphofaneni in the Manzini region of Eswatini. Mkhonza is a woman's rights activist who uses her writings to challenge society's gendered social ideals. Growing up to see her mother, a domestic worker, being exploited, irked her to challenge oppressive social systems including Eswatini's absolute monarchy. Mkhonza is a former journalist of *The Times of Eswatini* and *Eswatini Observer* in which she would write articles which revealed the harsh reality of the ordinary Swati under the monarchical rule in Eswatini. Her publications addressed issues such as extreme poverty, food shortage and HIV and AIDS in the country.

Her writings which had been perceived as incendiary caused her to suffer various kinds of harassment; her university office at Kwaluseni was vandalised and she also received threats. As a result, she fled the country in 2003 and was granted asylum in the United States of America in 2005 where she continued with her teaching career at Cornell University. Mkhonza received her PhD from Michigan State University in the USA. Her writing includes poetry and prose. Her books, *Pains of a maid*, published in 1989, and *Weeding flowerbeds*, published in 2008, gained her wider recognition. Her other publications include: *What the future holds*, *Two stories*, *Woman in a tree*, *Dance your hand across the page*, *The beadmakers* and *Teaching English in Swaziland*. Her poem "*Betfwele kabetfulwa*" is very critical of women's oppression in Eswatini (Ithaca City of Asylum, no date; Books Africana, 2021; Culture trip, n.d.).

1.7.4 Cynthia Hlophe

Cynthia Hlophe was born in 1962 in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini and she grew up at Mhlosheni in New Heaven. Since her parents were working at the time, she was raised by her grandparents in a gender equitable environment. Her grandmother and grandfather related as equals and the treatment they gave to the children had expressions of gender equality for both females and males. The Hlophes were respected members of society in the community. The local chief of that time, Chief Mantintinti, and a former cabinet minister, Senzenjani Shabalala, were close family friends who would seek advice from Hlophe's grandparents. Hlophe's grandfather

returned home and became a commercial farmer after his retirement in 1964 from his job in the Republic of South Africa where he worked as a chef. With his background of working as a chef in RSA, Hlophe's grandfather took an active role in cooking for the family and giving treats to the children, he also treated his wife as an equal and consulted her on many issues relating to running the household.

Hlophe's love for literature started at a young age. She would read books that her police officer-father had bought. She did her secondary education in a girls-only mission boarding school at Mbuluzi High School, and her tertiary education at the University of Eswatini. Her first experience of a gendered environment came at around age 19 when she enrolled at the University of Eswatini for a degree in Humanities with a major in Literature. Staying in the university campus environment made her aware of the difference in the treatment of females and males in society. Literature texts that she studied at the university also made her aware of the reality of gendered societies. Hlophe writes poetry, prose and educational text-books. She also works as a curriculum designer at the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) in Eswatini.

Hlophe considers herself an advocate for gender balance, and she uses her writings and curriculum designing platforms to promote that agenda and to challenge typical socially constructed gender stereotypes. Courses that Hlophe has taken in Gender studies have broadened her awareness of gender-related issues and they have given her strategies for tackling them. At the University of Pretoria, where she had enrolled for a Master's degree, she took a module on Gender studies. Another course, sponsored by UNFP in England, on curriculum design, also had a module on gender studies (*Cynthia Hlophe, personal communication, 24 March 2021*).

1.7.5 Fikile Mnisi

Fikile Mnisi was born in 1966, and she grew up at Ngculwini in the Manzini region. She started school in the same school where her mother was a teacher. Mnisi, born the seventh out of nine children, was raised by a single parent, her mother. Her mother died while Mnisi was still in primary school and she was then raised by her elder siblings. During Mnisi's early years, prior to her mother's death, she was introduced to Christianity. Her mother also taught her and her siblings about the value of education

and hard work, growing up, they each had their own vegetable garden and Mnisi has grown to love farming.

Mnisi completed her secondary school at St. Theresa's High, a mission school for girls only. She then enrolled for a degree and a concurrent Diploma in Education at the University of Eswatini and she graduated in 1986. Since then, Mnisi has been working as a high school teacher for the past three decades. Mnisi also serves as a counsellor in the school and in her local church. She has witnessed numerous cases of abuse among women, particularly the church women she offers counselling services to.

As a panel member of the Swati language, Mnisi participates in writing textbooks. Panel members of school subjects are responsible for ensuring quality in materials used for teaching and learning in schools. She also writes poems which are studied in schools. Moreover, she contributes poems which are published by *SNAT Eagle* – a magazine for the Swaziland Teachers' Association (SNAT). At one point, she was the national chairperson of SNAT women's wing.

Mnisi was once married but after experiencing abuse from her husband and observing the high level of women abuse in the Swati society, which has driven some to suicide, she left her marriage and decided to remain single. Msibi had a child before the marriage but the husband did not want her. Also, the man would spend his money on himself alone and refuse to contribute towards meeting family needs. He would beat up Mnisi and demand that she hands her salary over to him. Counsellors at her church would urge her to pray harder and to exercise more patience but Mnisi decided to leave the abusive marriage (*Fikile Mnisi, personal communication, 28 March 2021*).

1.7.6 Thembekile Msibi

Thembekile Msibi, born Magagula in 1968, is an accomplished writer of Swati literature. Msibi is a daughter to the late chief of KaBhudla, Chief Magutjwa Magagula. She grew up in a traditional polygamous setting at KaBhudla-Endabeni in the Manzini region. In her upbringing, there was a blend of semi-Christian and semi-modern values, the family also placed value in education, hard work, respect and hospitality. Msibi did her schooling at KaBhudla Primary School and St Joseph's High School.

She then proceeded to the University of Eswatini where she did a Bachelor's degree in Humanities with majors in African Languages and Literature as well as History. Msibi has two Master's degrees, one in Curriculum Studies and another in Languages and Media Studies, obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Her career in writing dates back to 1997 and she has made a significant contribution in poetry, prose and drama, that are studied in Eswatini schools. Publications that she has contributed poems, short stories and drama to include: *Chaza ngive* (1997), *Khulumani sive* (2001), *Incwadzi lengenakheli* (2002), *Giya sigiye* (2006), *Emaphupho emadvwala* (2011), *Sabalala Misebe* (2014), *Tayitolo nanamuhla* (2014) and *Lukhalo lwamanyovu* (2016). Apart from writing, Msibi is also a lecturer at William Pitcher Teachers' Training College in Manzini.

Moreover, Msibi is a panel member of Swati subject, ensuring that materials that are used for teaching and learning Swati in schools are of good quality. As an executive member of Lutsango lwakaNgwane, Msibi is responsible for promoting Swati culture among women. Lutsango lwakaNgwane is a traditional regiment for married women. Msibi is also a member of the Swati Task Team and a member of the Swati National Language Board, a board established for promoting Swati language in the country. In 2014 she received the 45th Anniversary Independence Medal from His Majesty King Mswati III. This award was in recognition for her contribution towards the cultural preservation and promotion of the Swati language. Msibi does not consider herself a feminist but an advocate for the preservation and upholding of cultural values as well as an activist and advocate for the nurturing of women and girls in moral, cultural and Christian values (*Thembekile Msibi, personal communication, 10 May 2021*). Her poem "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika" was inspired by her familiarity with Swati traditional culture, observing and listening to stories about monogamous and polygamous family structures were also triggers in the composition of the poem. The poem is full of symbols and is critical about the superiority of men in Eswatini (*Sibiya, 2017; Thembekile Msibi, personal communication, 10 May 2021; Researcher's diary, p. 9*).

The conclusion that one arrives at regarding the composition of the ten poems is that the poets wrote them in response to certain emotional states that they were in. They

wrote the poems to release certain powerful emotions that prevailed at the time of composition to reflect on those experiences. Although the poems ended up being included in anthologies prescribed to be studied at secondary schools in Eswatini, the school learners were not the primary target, notwithstanding this fact, including poems in schools' poetry anthologies is the only way to ensure that poems end up being published and read. Nonetheless, the poets believed that the poems would be significant to school learners; hence they submitted the poems to Macmillan so that they could be considered for publication.

The information above reveals that the six poets had a number of similarities at the time that each one of them contributed their first gender-related poems for publication: they were all mature women with ages ranging from the thirties to the fifties. This age range falls within Generation X, which Duncan (2010) observed, is the generation that is gender conscious and holds stronger feminist convictions. Gender consciousness is related to one's level of education (*ibid.*). Life experiences are also a factor in influencing one's beliefs and feminist identity (Nelson, Liss, Erchal, Hurt, Ramsey, Turner, 2008). Despite these factors, the poems represent the experiences of women of all ages. The poets' marital statuses were varied; two of them were single, three had been divorced and one was married. The marital statuses of the two poets who had remained single past their fifties, and the three who had opted out of their marriages, suggests a certain view that they had about marriage. This perception is depicted by their poems which paint a grim image of womanhood including in the context of marriage. While a number of women stay in dysfunctional marriages, some left; educated and financially stable women have the courage to leave abusive unions.

The minimum qualification of the poets was a Bachelor's Degree and the highest, a PhD. Their poems reveal a certain level of enlightenment as suggested by the poets' educational backgrounds. It is worth noting that the poems were not written by an average woman who let things slip without giving them much consideration, but they were written by women who are not only enlightened, but also accept a social responsibility to educate. All the poets have a background of being educators. Moreover, all the poets have made significant contributions in different spheres of

society including writing textbooks, designing schools' curriculums and offering counselling services.

1.8 Background to the anthologies

The poetry anthologies from which the poems were extracted were published by Macmillan, a publishing house for material that is taught both in primary and secondary schools of Eswatini. However, the selected poems are taught only at secondary school level. The National Curriculum Centre (NCC) selects poems that will be studied in schools in a given period of time and when the syllabus is reviewed, the schedule of poems to be studied is also considered. Contributors of poems are usually teachers from local schools. The poetry anthologies cover an array of themes including growing up, love, marriage, womanhood, death, life lessons, nature, culture and praise names of the monarchy. The poems studied, which address gender issues, were extracted from four anthologies: *Takitsi*, *Inhlava*, *Umvemve* and *Sabalala misebe*. The inclusion of the poems in the anthologies was coincidental. As earlier indicated, the poems were written as personal reflections on the poets' experiences as well as to provide an outlet for troubling emotions.

Takitsi was published in 1986 and it contains fifty-two poems, written by three poets. Out of the three poets, only one (33%) is female and the other two (67%) are males. Twelve out of the fifty-two poems (23%) were written by the only female poet and forty (77%) were written by males. In the anthology, only four poems (8%) deal with gender issues; three of which were written by the only female poet and one, by a male. *Inhlava* was published in 1990 and it contains forty-four poems, written by eleven poets. Out of the eleven poets, only three (27%) are females and the rest are males. Seventeen out of forty-four poems were written by females and the other 61% by males. In the anthology, only four poems deal with gender issues and they were all written by female poets.

Umvemve was published in 2012 and it contains sixty-three poems, written by thirty poets. Out of the thirty poets, fifteen (50%) are females and the other 50% are males. Twenty-six out of sixty-three poems (41%) were written by females and the other 59%, by males. In the anthology, only five poems deal with gender issues and four of them

(80%) were written by female poets. *Sabalala misebe* was published in 2014 and it contains eighty-eight poems, written by twenty poets. Out of the twenty poets, only nine (45%) are females and the other 55% are males. Twenty-six out of sixty-three poems (41%) were written by females and the other 59% were written by males. In the anthology, only three poems deal with gender issues and two of them (67%) were written by female poets.

The information above reveals that in the last three decades, there have been more male contributors of poems to the anthologies that are studied in Eswatini schools. However, an improvement has occurred over the years as more females contributed in the later anthologies. Also of note is that poems that address gender issues range between 3% and 9% over the three decades, which is a very small number. The ten poems have been identified from a search of 7 anthologies including: *Takitsi* published in 1986, *Ligabazi* published in 1990, *Inhlava* published in 1990, *Emakhangala* published in 1996, *Giya sigiye* published in 2006, *Umvemve* published in 2012 and *Sabalala Misebe* published in 2014. Three of the seven anthologies are silent on gender issues. Out of the four anthologies from which the poems studied were extracted, only ten poems address gender issues.

Glory Mamba took the lead in contributing poems that unravel Eswatini's patriarchal society by addressing gender issues. Her three poems: "Umfati", "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" and "Umloyi", published in 1986, paved the way for feminist poetry. In 1990, Sarah Mkhonza contributed "Ngihlushwa yindvodza". In the same year, Sisana Dlamini made her contribution with "Vuka mfati", "Tibongo temnumzane" and "Kantsi wawukhona yini?" One poem, "Hlakanipha mfati", was added by Fikile Mnisi in 2012. Finally, in 2014, Thembekile Msibi and Cynthia Hlophe made their contributions of "Sidwaba ngumgigelansika" and "Washikitela mfati", respectively. It is worth noting that three poems have been published twice, in two different anthologies for each poem. "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" was published in 1986 and 2012, "Vuka mfati" in 1990 and 2012 and "Tibongo temnumzane" in 1990 and 2012.

The scarcity of poems that challenge patriarchy and other practices that dehumanise women is an indication that women poets in Eswatini are not brave enough to address such issues, however, some are. Those who are afraid, fear to be labelled rebels, and

so they ignore pertinent issues threatening their womanhood. Published poetry anthologies reveal that most poems written by women poets are silent on gender-related issues but their content suggests that the women poets are embracing abuses that are practised under the guise of culture. Nonetheless, the selected poems reveal that figurative language provided by the medium of poetry emboldens the selected women poets to address gender issues and challenge unfair cultural practices against women and girls. *Sisana Dlamini (personal communication, 30 March, 2021)* gives an example of the practice of referring to a woman as *umuntfu lomsikati*. Dlamini is appalled by women writers including poets, who use such derogatory terms in their writing. The phrase *umuntfu lomsikati* derives from the shape of a woman's private anatomy (*ibid.*).

The ten poems account for only 4% of the 247, which is the total number of poems. In a period of twenty-eight years, women poets have been generally silent on gender-related issues. The shortage of such texts has resulted in three of the ten poems being published twice in two different anthologies. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that some poems with a feminist theme, may exist somewhere, but since they have not been included in the anthologies, they may not have been published elsewhere.

1.9 Womanhood in Swati oral poems

Oral literature, including poetry, is one of the genres through which one may learn about certain cultural beliefs and practices, particularly in African contexts. Swati people exploit this vehicle to communicate their experiences, albeit, in a spontaneous way (Dlamini, 2017). It is therefore a worthwhile endeavour to consider a few oral poetic compositions to find out how they may contribute towards an understanding of the different ways in which the society constructs women's identity. However, one may caution, in line with an observation made by Finnegan (1970), that in analysing an oral composition, some information gets lost due to the absence of the performer and the audience, which are integral elements during an oral performance, he observes, "Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion" (p. 2). In contrast, written poems can be read as independent units of meaning without being supported by these other factors. Similarly, this study is based on literary compositions, and the poems in this section serve as supplementary

data. Below are examples of poems that women and children chant during social gatherings, worth mentioning is that some of the poetic compositions are sometimes expressed in song.

1.9.1 “Ye NaboThoko”

1 <i>YeNabo Thoko,</i>	Hey Thoko’s mother,
2 <i>Awugeze libhodo,</i>	Wash the pot,
3 <i>Sitopheka inyama,</i>	So that we may cook meat,
4 <i>Nemazambane,</i>	And potatoes,
5 <i>Siketi sakho,</i>	You twirl your skirt,
6 <i>Siyantjikita ebafaneni,</i>	When you are around boys.

Oral literature (n.d.)

Nabo Thoko (mother of Thoko) is a proper noun formed by adding the prefix (*Nabo-*) to a child’s name; a name coined in this manner denotes ‘mother of’, meaning that a mother’s name derives from the name of her child, usually a first born. Another way to coin a woman’s name is by adding the prefix (*La-*) to the name or surname of her father, for example, LaJohane or LaLanga, respectively, are proper nouns deriving from the name or surname of a man, and used only as proper nouns for women; culturally, a grown woman is never called by her first name. Although this is not a focus area at this point, one may add, insouciantly, that the practice of coining a grown woman’s name by deriving it from another’s name, serves to diminish her identity so that a new one is given.

In the oral poem, NaboThoko is being addressed by her mother-in-law, or another elderly woman in the family, instructing her to wash a pot in readiness to cook. The woman giving orders speaks to Nabo Thoko as though she were a child, getting orders from an adult. As already mentioned in earlier sections, women, including adult females, have a low social rank, even lower than male children, thus they take orders from those who are superior. Notably though, some women are accorded seniority if they are royalty, also, in a family setup, seniority is attained when one becomes a mother-in-law (Dlamini, 2017). Washing pots and cooking are socially accepted as duties performed by women, however the speaker seems to be emphasising that the woman has to wash the pot in order that they may cook meat. Had it been any other

dish, save for meat, it is unlikely that the senior woman would be taking interest in the duty of cooking, but since it is meat and potatoes that would be cooked, she is taking charge; overseeing the cooking of the meat but not washing of the pot. In line 2, “*Awu*” (you) points towards NaboThoko, but line 3 “*S*” (we) includes the one giving the instruction. What is more, the speaker is insinuating that Nabo Thoko has loose morals; the comments about her skirt, which is said to twirl when she is around boys (lines 5-6), is an attack on her morals, also serving to expose that her body is being policed (Arndt, 2002).

1.9.2 “Koboyi koboyi”

1 <i>Koboyi koboyi,</i>	Hey Koboyi Koboyi
2 <i>Uyephi unina?</i>	Where is your mother?
3 <i>Uyekujuma emajaheni,</i>	She has gone to sleep over at her boyfriend's place
4 <i>Watala umntfwana,</i>	She'll conceive and bear a child
5 <i>Wam' bek' etjeni,</i>	She'll dump the baby on rocks
6 <i>Wadliwa timphetfu.</i>	To be consumed by worms

Oral literature (n.d.)

“Koboyi koboyi” is an example of a poem that is sometimes expressed in song; as a poem, it is used as a lullaby sung by a babysitter when comforting a baby, whose mother is away. Finnegan (1970) affirms that poems may be used as lullabies. Although it is uncommon for a mother to leave a baby for frivolous reasons, the mother of Koboyi is suspected to have done that; she is said to have left the baby to have a nice time, with her lover. The poem goes on to say that the mother would return when she is pregnant, and upon giving birth, she would dump the baby. She is indirectly being accused of being reckless, yet there is no supporting evidence to substantiate that her temporary absence is for seeking pleasure. Although the perceived lover of Koboyi's mother is implied in the poem, there is no indication that he has any responsibility for taking care of the baby.

1.9.3 “Yemfati longesheya”

1 <i>Yemfati longesheya,</i>	Hey woman over there,
2 <i>Utsi bhu bhu ini na?</i>	What is it you are shaking?
3 <i>Utsi bhu bhu sidvwaba.</i>	You are shaking your leather skirt (<i>sidvwaba</i>)
4 <i>Sidvwaba yini na?</i>	What is a leather skirt? (<i>sidvwaba</i>)



5 <i>Ngumgam'ka fecela.</i>	It is what breaks a scorpion,
6 <i>Sebabulele licaca,</i>	They have killed a skunk,
7 <i>Baliyisa kalabani?</i>	To whose house are they taking it?
8 <i>Baliyisa kalaGojagojane,</i>	They are taking it to LaGojagojane,
9 <i>Yena atsi muhle yedvwa.</i>	She who claims, she is the only one who is beautiful.

Oral literature (n.d.)

The poem above draws attention to *sidvwaba*, a traditional wear for married Swati women; although it is a cultural symbol of womanhood, it may be seen as an oppressive element imposed on women. *Sidvwaba* is made from cow's skin; it gives the wearer a certain poise which mystifies and makes her unapproachable (Mdluli, 2013). One may therefore view *sidvwaba* as a label which denotes that a woman is somebody's property; moreover, it creates a barrier around her to block other men from accessing her. The Swati society uses *sidvwaba* to police women's bodies (Arndt, 2002).

Having noted the symbolism of the clothing item, one may also pay attention to its description, proffered in the poem above. It is heavy, this is indicated by *bhu bhu* (lines 2 – 3) which are visual images that one conjures up as she imagines the woman's moves which are accompanied by the movement of *sidvwaba*. Similarly, the phrase "*umgamuka fecela*" (line 5) denotes heaviness. Apart from the weightiness, *sidvwaba* has an unpleasant odour, suggested by *licaca* (line 6), the stench is worsened by atmospheric elements such as wet weather conditions. The speaker's words insinuate that a woman (Lagojagojane) is about to be married, hence *sidvwaba* is being sent to her. The last line "*yena atsi muhle yedvwa*" expresses a condescending attitude towards the bride to be, she is being accused of boasting about her good looks. From this attitude, one may infer that the speaker is a wife to the man who is about to marry Lagojagojane. Although the wife is unhappy that she is about to have a sister-wife, she is nonetheless being consoled by the fact that Lagojagojane is about to be 'captured' and 'branded' as property, by means of *sidvwaba*. The attitude that the speaker exhibits, is what Finnegan (1970) describes as expressions of emotions that one experiences when they she goes through certain life experiences.



1.9.4 “Thula mntfwanami”

1 <i>Thula mntfwanami</i>	Hush my baby
2 <i>Unyoko akalimanga</i>	Your mother did not plough
3 <i>Ulibele kulala</i>	She is busy sleeping
4 <i>Gcim' fahla!</i>	Here she comes!
5 <i>Sewuyabuya</i>	She is nearby
6 <i>Nangu esigodzini</i>	She is closer to the gorge

Oral literature (n.d.)

“Thula mntfwanami” is another example of a poem that may be sung as a lullaby, by one who is looking after a baby when the mother is unable to do so. Usually, it is a female family member, or any other female, tasked with the duty, who comes to the mother’s rescue when she is compelled by circumstances to leave her baby behind while doing chores outside her usual home environment. In an effort to keep the baby calm, poems are chanted (*ibid.*); however, the poems usually present the mother as being irresponsible. As the poems become a part of baby-sitting, they become a part of oral tradition which gets to be passed down to generations. It is unfortunate that the lyrics propagate a narrative that is misleading; presenting women in a negative light. In “Thula mntfwanami”, the mother is accused of being lazy, she is said to be fond of sleeping instead of ploughing the fields. Through the speaker’s voice, we learn about the impression that the Swati society is creating about women. The fallacy purported by the poem and spread through being recited repeatedly, becomes a factor in the construction of women’s identity.

1.9.5 “Mine ngiyamshova umgcaki”

1 <i>Mine ngiyam'shov' umgcaki</i>	I can shove a co-wife
2 <i>Mine ngiyam'shov' umgcaki</i>	I can shove a co-wife
3 <i>Noma anetibunu letingaka</i>	Even though she has huge buttocks
4 <i>Noma anemehlo langaka</i>	Although she has big eyes

Oral literature (n.d.)

This poem is usually chanted by women during social gatherings, however, it is not uncommon to find children, particularly girls, reciting it during play time. The poem underlines the animosity that exists between co-wives. Women in a polygamous setup seem to live in perpetual strife, evidenced by curt talk and competition, among other

things (Dlamini, 2008; Langa, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Dlamini, 2017). Notably, it is husbands who benefit from this arrangement because while, on one hand, the women engage in infighting, on the other hand, they strive to appear noble to the husband by competing to excel in their service towards him. The poem "Mine ngiyamshova umgcaki" expresses the same sentiments. The speaker is a woman, boasting that she outrivals her co-wife. To "*shova umgcaki*" (push a co-wife), metaphorically suggests to outclass her. The woman boasts that she is capable of outshining her co-wife in order to win the favour of their husband; this, she claims, is despite anything, exemplified by *tibunu letingaka* and *emehlo langaka* (lines 3 - 4). Huge buttocks are usually associated with being feminine and eyes may represent looks, both of which may enhance a woman's appeal to her husband. The message in the poem gives an indication that a woman's identity in the Swati society may be related to the degree to which she provides pleasure to her husband, which consistently reduces her to an object.

The foregoing discussion on oral poems has exposed some of the ways that women's identity is expressed, nonetheless, detailed discussions on the construction of their gendered identity will be undertaken in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

1.10 Scope of the study

The thesis comprises six chapters, each beginning with an introduction and ending with a summary. Chapter 1 introduces the study from the hypothetical stance that poetic texts are an effective tool to expose that, in Eswatini, women are identified as a category of the oppressed and that gendered roles are used to enforce the distinction between women and men. Furthermore, objectives underpinning the research as well as Eswatini's contextual background are described; moreover, key concepts used in the study are explained. A description of the poets and an overview of their poetry are described. Lastly, research ethics are explained briefly. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature including theoretical ideologies, and motivation for selecting the theories is given. In Chapter 3, a discussion of emerging themes and categorisation of the different forms of women's oppression begins. Poems included in this chapter are those published during the second wave of feminism. In Chapter 4, a discussion of themes continues; poems published during the third wave of feminism are discussed.

Thematization continues in Chapter 5, with a discussion of poems published during the fourth wave of feminism. Chapter 6 is a conclusion where salient points from the entire study are highlighted.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature about the theoretical lenses foregrounding womanhood as expressed in the poetic texts. Also addressed is literature providing background information on the social position of women in Eswatini. Theories include: postcolonial theory, feminism (postcolonial feminism, Afrocentric feminism, African feminism, postcolonial African feminism, decolonial feminism, intersectional feminism) and self-categorization. Also included is literature on the theoretical lenses for reading the poetic texts. The chapter concludes by discussing the role of literature and the role of poetry as an agent of social change.

2.1 Theoretical foregrounding of womanhood

Countries that have a history of “colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid and other systems of racial domination” share a unique experience of bondage (Collins, 1990a, p. 52). This bondage, which left the vulnerable disenfranchised in many respects, including politically and economically, ensured that the subjugated nations were kept in a state of perpetual poverty and dependency. The imposed state of dependency was a deliberate effort on the part of the masters to gain and maintain control over their colonies. Sadly, the inherent oppressive legacy now influences how societies function. In his lecture, R’boul observed that:

Colonisers took time to study and to learn about the nations that they had identified for loot. Colonisers had money and their money gave them power and an advantage over their colonies. When the colonisers eventually gained ground, they exploited the weaker nations and plundered their resources. They did this to enrich themselves (R’boul, 2020, p. 27).

The colonisation of Blacks introduced the concept of ‘othering’ and created stereotypes which made Blacks seem inferior to Whites (Fanon, 1952). In order for

Blacks to be accepted, they were expected to act White; consequently, the identities of Blacks were altered, their cultures were modified and the concept of othering was strengthened (*ibid.*). Since the West had more power, they determined the language, culture and religion of the colonised, wherein the culture of the coloniser was said to be central and normal, while the cultures of the colonised were said to be strange and other (Said, 1978). In 1961, Fanon expressed the need for decolonisation and he introduced a radical approach to dealing with colonialism. He urged Blacks to resist colonialism and to find their identity in their culture and heritage (Fanon, 1952). Moreover, Fanon urged the oppressed to explore violence to claim their humanity and to bring an end to oppression (*ibid.*). The strife for independence and the subsequent expansion of resistance movements led to the collapse of colonialism, replacing it with the post-colonial era.

Eswatini, a former colony of Britain, gained her independence in 1968, but, more than fifty years later, the effects of colonization still linger, and they are felt disproportionately by women. The identity of Swati women has, for a long time, been constructed by the patriarchal society: Swati women experience oppression and domination in a manner that epitomises the colonial era, and inherent cultural practices, entrenched in patriarchy, are used to foster women subjugation. Both rural and urban women suffer the same plight, although the effects are felt more by women in rural areas. Women in Eswatini are conditioned for domestic servitude, their labour benefits men and household repression keeps them loyal to the oppressive cultural system. Women are deprived of their voices and made subaltern who cannot speak (Spivak, 2003). The subjugation of Swati women can be understood to have elements of colonialism. With the rise of the influence of feminism, a number of women are beginning to be aware of women's plight, which drives them to seek a change in how society treats them; feminist voices are spearheading a new era, characterised by women's liberation from cultural servitude. One of the ways that these women explore to register their discontent and to seek change is through the use of feminist compositions. However, it was observed that although feminism addressed the problem of patriarchy, pioneers of the women's movement had a Eurocentric outlook and did not attend to women's concerns holistically; as a result, women of African descent were side-lined. This, therefore, necessitated the exploration of a feminism

that focused specifically on the needs of African women, henceforth, feminism from an African perspective, including African feminism and decolonial feminism were brought to light to describe this transition and to enable an understanding of *how poetic texts by selected Swati women poets represent the social construction of womanhood and gendered identity*.

2.1.1 Postcolonial theory

During the colonial era some nations were dominated by colonial masters and this led to their indigenous populations being disenfranchised in many respects. Nonetheless, through political pressure, colonialism eventually collapsed, the period that came after the collapse of colonialism is expounded by postcolonial theory, a thinking that explains national liberation from colonial powers, and particularly liberation from domination by Europe (Schwarz and Ray, 2005). Postcolonial theory is about political and social life at a global level (Parashar, 2016). The post-colonial period saw power being transferred to the nations which were once dominated; the nations began to function independently and formulated policies for self-governance, which also impacted social structures. Many years later, these nations are still trying to recover from the effects of being colonised. As a theoretical perspective, postcolonial theory is significant in understanding the social position of women in Eswatini as portrayed in poetic texts. The domination of Swati women (socially, politically and financially) is similar to that which was experienced by Blacks under Whites; thus it may be viewed as another form of colonialism. Similarly, the advocacy for women's emancipation, through poetic texts, may be likened to the emancipation agenda promoted by postcolonial theorists.

Theorists Frantz Fanon and Edward Said paved the way for post-coloniality and the postcolonial theory, advocating for the emancipation of Blacks from domination by Whites. This theory analyses the lasting social, cultural, economic and psychological effects of colonialism and imperialism, also noting that while there is a need to liberate Blacks from their inferiority complex, there is equally a need to liberate Whites from their superiority complex. Postcolonial theory also seeks to help the colonised to discover who they are outside the colonial era (Said, 1978). Similarly, post-colonial studies did not just influence politics, it has also reshaped academic knowledge in

interrogating the past in order to make amends (Schwarz and Ray, 2005). Fanon influenced present day postcolonial theory and contemporary scholars developed his ideas (Fanon, 1952). Consequently, in 1999, Spivak, explaining concepts of postcolonial theory, she argued that colonial power could be undone structurally, stating that the best place to start, perhaps, could be at the academic level, where scholars argue their case against colonial transgressions, and how the effects of it could be undone (Spivak, 1999). Viewing postcolonial theory from this perspective is of particular interest to this research, because it reflects the depiction of womanhood in Eswatini, by poetic texts, also, revealing how indigenous people were treated during the colonial era. Equally, post-coloniality epitomises the construction of a preferred identity of Swati women by feminist women poets.

Some scholars, like Chambers and Watkins (2012), draw a relationship between postcolonial theory and feminism. They bemoan the experiences of Blacks during the colonial era around the 1900s when, in Southern Rhodesia, White men who desired Black women were protected by law, but Black men were prohibited by the same law to have sexual relations with White women. This scenario exemplifies how the racial divide of the colonial era allowed for the objectification of Black women. A Black woman could be used by a White man for his sexual gratification, but Black men were legally prohibited to have any romantic relations with White women.

While this imbalance of power relations between Black and White became a contentious issue among critics of imperialism, it also became obvious that gender and sexuality were implicated in colonialism and its legacies. Postcolonial feminism therefore becomes significant in understanding the plight of Black women in countries that are still battling the effects of colonialism. Feminists who have been affected by colonialism have a different kind of experience to feminists from developed countries. Thus, a feministic approach will be viewed largely from a post-colonial perspective.

2.1.2 Postcolonial feminism

Postcolonial feminism addresses two issues: colonialism and patriarchy; while colonialism is based on the suppression of the Black race by the White race, patriarchy is about social systems that invest power in men and subjugate women. Men and

women are placed in a male-dominant patriarchal society where there is power imbalance between the sexes; women are subordinates and men hold authority over women, children, and property (McLeod, 2020). Post-colonial feminist theorists argue that women are oppressed by both colonial ideals and patriarchy; thus they seek to challenge any despotic ideas, including male domination. Postcolonial feminism developed as a response to the feminism that focuses only on the experiences of women in Western cultures, and leaves out the experiences of women in developing countries (*ibid.*). Tyagi (2014) concurs that postcolonial feminists raise concerns about the relationship between White feminists and their colonised counterparts. One of the accusations levelled against White feminists is that they attempt to impose their White feminist models on colonised women, which makes them oppressors. Postcolonial theory and feminism deal with discourse, which make them relevant theoretical insights in the study on the textual representation of womanhood and gendered identity. So, studying poetic texts through the lens of postcolonial feminism will help unravel socially constructed injustices against women. This is in line with an observation by Chilisa and Ntsele (2010), to the effect that feminist poetry mirrors lived experiences, and suggests how exercising fairness might heal society.

The post-colonial era is a period of transition for Blacks, transcending boundaries of social, economic and political emancipation to gain academic liberty. The post-colonial era can be seen as a period of reflection on what the coloniser did, and how to move forward from one's current state, starting with analysing the effects of colonialism. During this period, the Blacks who once had their story told by colonial powers started a journey of rewriting their history. Academic research took a further interesting turn when women who had suffered double jeopardy, as a result of their unique experiences of gender oppression that go beyond boundaries of race, social class, religion and ethnicity, began to engage in postcolonial feminist academic enquiry (Collins, 1990b). Postcolonial feminism theory explores the struggles of post-colonial women against "colonialism, racism, sexism and economic forces" (Rani, 2012, p.7); it merges elements of both colonialism and feminism.

Postcolonial feminism is associated with the works of feminists from the developing world, who are opposed to the idea of universal woman (Rajan and Park, 2005). They

urge their counterparts from the developed world to acknowledge the differences that exist between them. Women from the developing world aver that the realities of economy, politics and culture should be faced. They insist upon “the specificities of race, class, nationality, religion, and sexualities that intersect with gender, and the hierarchies, epistemic as well as political, social, and economic that exists among women” (Rajan and Park, 2005, p. 54). They also challenge the notion that White middle-class women are the standard, and that women from the developing world are subordinate (Rani, 2012). Notably, global South women not only contend against the domination of men, but they also have to resist the effects of colonial domination.

Eswatini women experience double colonisation from their former colony, Britain, as well as from Eswatini’s cultural elements; they are multi-dimensionally oppressed. Women, including those from Eswatini are an exploited group; Eswatini’s patriarchal society is set up in a manner that promotes the exploitation of women’s resources both in the home space as well as in the community; for instance, women’s labour is still largely not remunerated. Now, the questions are: “Can women speak out against the injustice?” “If they do speak at all, in whose language will they speak?” Against the backdrop of cultural norms, the appropriate language of a woman is silent resignation to suffering and submission: this language of timidity is one element of the identity of a culturally appropriate woman.

Said’s description of post-colonial domination may enrich one’s understanding of the experience of double-colonised women, including that of Swati women. Said (1978) avers that knowledge about women has been expressed by men; a lot of what women think have been written by men, what women have to say has been written by men and a lot of opinions about women have been expressed by men. It appears that information has been expressed in the language of the oppressor; clearly, this is because the subaltern cannot speak. Previously, women’s voices were muzzled, but now post-colonial feminists have found a voice to narrate real experiences of “torture, imprisonment, social upheaval, colonization processes, and struggles for survival” (Collins, 1990b, p.18). Collins adds that when stories are told, the narrator testifies about what is happening, without giving a critique of those events. This observation supports an earlier statement by Spivak (2003), in her article ‘Can the Subaltern

speak': Spivak asserts that "if those who have been silenced, could be allowed to speak, and be listened to, they could cease to be the silenced" (Spivak, 1999, p. 24). Maya Angelo's poems also speak to racial exploitation and "double oppression of women" (Rani, 2012, p. 9). Her poem "Equality" "centres on the position of women in society which is authenticated by the man in their lives" (*ibid.*, p. 9).

Issues of concern to post-colonial feminists include women's work, land, property and their socio-economic status (Chanda, 2005). In some cases, women seem to own property but the truth is that 'owning' property does not necessarily mean that she is wealthy; it may just be nominal as male members of her family may still control the property (*ibid.*). In their quest to produce social change, post-colonial feminists advocated for the recognition of "women's domestic work, the unpaid agricultural and farm work they often perform in rural areas, and home-based labour" (Rajan and Park, 2005, p. 59). Feminists also highlighted the conditions of exploitation under which women were compelled to work, and they demanded better working conditions (*ibid.*).

Engaging in scholarly research and participating in academic debates is one way to influence a person's way of thinking and advocating for social change. Post-colonial feminists also explore this forum to make their voices heard, but they face opposition from the gatekeepers who ensure that dissenting voices are muffled and not allowed space to express their sentiments. This is done systematically through subjecting research by post-colonial feminists to strict censorship, thus excluding them from the knowledge validation process:

In 2001, Collins noted that those at the helms of accrediting academic work, frustrated works by Black women by claiming that their writings lacked credence, yet the real reason was to keep their voices muted. Now Lewis & Baderoon (2021) reiterate the same sentiments, adding that writings by Black South African women was meant to serve as "props or background to the intellectual work of global scholars...there are some exceptions. But the dominant and dominating trend is indeed this blinding erasure of a rich critical scholarship" (p. 2).

The notion that Black feminist thought is not credible research, raises the question of how feminist research passes as credible. One is drawn to the conclusion that

whatever yardstick is used to judge credibility is set deliberately to exclude work by these women researchers, because academic discourse was dominated by white male interests which permeates the thematic content (*ibid.*). To back this claim, Collins (1990a) adds that, previously: “Black women’s experiences with family, motherhood, political activism, and sexual politics have been routinely distorted or excluded from traditional academic discourse” (p. 47). Feminist scholars who get support from the academic institutions that censor women’s writing are those who accept and promote assumptions of Black female inferiority. African-American women academicians who persist in trying to rearticulate a Black women’s standpoint face potential rejection of knowledge claims on epistemological grounds. The academic bodies at the helms of accrediting scholarly material, in a bid to suppress the voice of feminists, argue that works by Black feminist scholars are not consistent with the existing body of knowledge, and therefore rejected on the grounds that they lack credibility. They add that methods used to validate knowledge claims must be acceptable according to standards set by the Eurocentric masculinist knowledge validation process, propagating the notion that women are inferior, instead of advocating equality between the two sexes (Collins, 1990b; Collins, 2001). For their biased representation of certain interests which may conflict with the ideologies of Black feminist thought, publishers have been impugned (Collins, 2001). As a theory, postcolonial feminism addresses concerns of women who share a history of domination by colonial masters. However, it does not seem to comprehensively address unique concerns of women from the African continent.

2.1.3 Afrocentric feminism

Afrocentric epistemology was proposed by Collins (1990b) as a strategy that could be used to understand Black women’s experiences. It seems that the terms Afrocentric feminism and Black feminist thought are used interchangeably. In one of her lectures, Collins reflects about what it meant to be Black during the period when she was growing up in America. Her father was in the army, defending the flag, but he was not afforded the same opportunities that White veterans were afforded. Her mother’s dreams of being an English teacher were thwarted; as a Black woman, she was not allowed to pursue certain career paths; as a result, she settled for being only a

secretary where she trained White men on the job. Year after year, she watched White men get ahead in life, while she remained in that position of being secretary, owing to her black skin colour. Moreover, Black women would clean toilets for Whites but they would not be allowed to use those toilets; instead they would walk a mile to find a toilet designated for Blacks (Collins, 2001).

As Collins reflects on these, I was prompted to ponder what it means to be a woman in post-colonial Eswatini. Being a woman in Eswatini is fraught with a plethora of challenges which begin early in childhood. As a child, Swati girls are socialised such that they grow up to know their place, which is at the bottom of the social strata. Those who are from privileged families are given toys such as dolls and dinner sets, while boys are given cars and guns. Children from less privileged households learn to make their own toys using scraps from old clothing items and clay; these toys prepare the children for the roles that they will grow to assume in society. Girls learn that they will become mothers and caregivers, while boys are being initiated into a position of privilege. As the years progress, the definition of what being a girl entails becomes more pronounced. Girls learn early that the responsibility of home chores rests on them. They also learn very early in life, from what society models, that in the event that parents die, they will have to drop out of school and assume the responsibility of the parents. With boys, not much responsibility is placed on them, because it is not uncommon that the boy will continue with his schooling, while the girl remains at home to fend for the younger siblings. This condition is made worse by the fact that Swatis are still reeling from the effects of colonialism, which has subjected the bulk of the population to perpetual poverty. Many Swatis still depend on meagre salaries that they are paid by their employers; by virtue of it being exploitative, this practice, may be traced to colonialism.

Collins (2001) observes that, in the communities where they live, Black women experience a different kind of reality in comparison to the groups that are not oppressed; they are disadvantaged socially, politically and economically and they engage in unpaid labour. It is these realities that triggered consciousness of their positions and sparked a debate on Blackness. Black feminist thought articulates the everyday experiences of Black women that are often taken for granted. This

articulation “encourages all Black women to create new self-definitions that validate their standpoint” (Collins, 2001, p. 169). Black feminist thought is born from experiencing the life of a Black woman (Collins, 1990b). Collins believes that knowledge empowers the oppressed so that they may change their situation. She is intrigued by the portrayal of African-American women as “self-defined, self-reliant confronting race, gender and class oppression” (*ibid.*, p. 221). These women are coming up to effect change and to revolt against their domination, because if they do not revolt, they are maintaining that which fosters their domination. Collins (1990a) believes that social change results from an individual’s changed consciousness and the transformation of society’s socio-political climate. She advocates for a paradigm shift on how we see oppression. Afrocentric feminism, which Collins refers to as Black Feminist Thought, is significant in that it offers Black women a different view of themselves than what is offered by society. At the core of African feminist thought is the belief that despite varying geographical locations and histories, all Black women experience the same plight. This is “as a result of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination” (Collins, 2001, p. 171). Similarly, feminists assert that women share a history of patriarchal oppression. This legacy of oppression transcends boundaries of race, social class and religion. Thus, the Afrocentric feministic epistemology is able to bring Blackness and feminism together so as to create knowledge that will allow Black women to resist oppression. To contribute meaningfully to Black feminist thought, one ought to have experienced the life of a Black woman. “Traditionally, such women were blues singers, poets, auto-biographers, story-tellers, and orators” (*ibid.*, p. 175).

Black feminist thought challenges two ideologies: that the oppressed are passive victims; secondly, that the oppressed are less human than their oppressors. Collins negates that position as a fallacy, claiming that African American women in particular “have a self-defined standpoint on their own oppression” (Collins, 1990a, p.168). Women are encouraged to resist subordination. There seem to be an overlap between Blackness and femaleness. Both categories have a history of oppression. This suggests that Black women’s experience of oppression is more than that experienced by other groups. On the basis of this, Collins suggests that oppression can be quantified (Collins, 2001).

Although Collins contributed significantly to this ideology, her predecessors paved the way for this debate. Zinn (1989) traces the roots of women subjugation to segregation laws that were overturned in the 1960s in the United States of America, bringing hope to the Black families. She laments though that the lives of Blacks remained unimpacted and that the income gap between Blacks and Whites continued to widen. The fact that Blacks continued to live in poverty sparked a debate about the Black family. Similarly, Hurtado (1989) argues that subordination has to do with relationships: power is allocated according to socially constructed structures, and oppression of a particular group in the USA is positioned in a relationship to the White man.

Hine (1989) compares two types of atrocities that the Black community was subjected to: lynching and sexual exploitation. Hine laments that the problem of sexual exploitation of Black women was not given the same amount of attention as the challenge of lynching. To further compound the problem was the allegation that women are responsible for the sexual exploitation that they are being subjected to. She notes that this issue was beginning to get attention in recent times. Similarly, Hurtado (1989) observes that Black women experience oppression more than other groups of women. She further notes that when these women resist the oppression, they are being brave; being able to challenge what society has accepted as right. As many Black women “earned advanced degrees” (*ibid.*, p. 176) they opted to write about their experiences following Afrocentric epistemologies.

2.1.4 Feminism

Feminism challenges the social, economic and political divide between women and men, and insists on equality, which it believes is an expression of human rights. As Becker (1999) observed, most women continue to engage in unpaid labour within the home-space. Societies use biological differences between females and males to allocate gender roles between the two sexes and to create a hierarchy which places women at the bottom, and makes it easy for them to be oppressed by men. Therefore, gender is a social construct that has been used to trap and oppress women, for the benefit of men. Adichie (2015) observed that socially constructed roles have been used to build boundaries around the two sexes and to uphold patriarchy: the discrimination tends to prescribe how people should be rather than recognising how

they are (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, Adichie does not deny that men and women are different biologically, but the problem is that society uses the sex difference to oppress women. As a point of departure, feminism will be approached from the perspective of social construction feminism, taking into consideration that patriarchy ensures that the social divide is maintained. Patriarchy is responsible for making sure that men are beneficiaries of the social system while women are disadvantaged. Social construction feminism may help to explain how, as a result of the segregation between females and males, women end up categorising themselves as a minority group in society.

Gender is used by proponents of gender inequality to create and maintain a social divide between females and males, and they exploit gender segregation and typing to allocate certain roles to males and females. Gender segregation and typing extend to behaviour that is considered acceptable or unacceptable for a certain gender, which usually disadvantages women (Lorber, 1994; Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017). Social construction feminism therefore questions gender segregation and gender typing by advocating for equity between females and males. The practice of allocating certain jobs and assigning unpaid labour such as housework and child-care to women, is being challenged. Lorber (1994) noted that certain behaviours and beliefs are taught in the society in order to maintain the sexual divide, which places women at a disadvantage. In a typical household in Eswatini, where both the woman and the man are working, the woman is the first to wake up and she starts with her morning chores before going to work. Upon return from work, she goes back to her myriad of chores which include taking care of young children, preparing meals and helping children with schoolwork. The man, on the other hand, wakes up to take a shower and enjoys breakfast that his wife had prepared, and then he goes to work. His evenings are usually free. In some cases, the man does not immediately return home after work, but he hangs out with friends, including female friends and mistresses. This cycle is repeated throughout their lives.

Rani (2012) made similar observations in her claim that:

Gender disparities exist throughout the life cycle of the individual from birth to death. Gender issues are therefore very deep rooted and affect all age groups and societal groups... Working ladies have to perform a dual role – job tasks

and household chores. On reaching home from work, she is expected to entertain and serve the in-laws family, while others sit relaxed and have fun (p. 1).

Gender inequalities affect all women and they exist despite marital status, educational rank and financial independence (*ibid.*), and women are socialised in a manner that conditions them for domestic servitude and they continue to stay in the dysfunctional relationships.

Women oppression which is a result of gender inequality is a universal phenomenon, affecting women globally, although its effects are more pronounced among women in the developing world, including Eswatini. Women are oppressed materially across religious and community boundaries. Some practices within the patriarchal society are enforced to ensure the subjugation of women. For instance, in some social circles, a woman is assured of the support of male members of her family if she remains subjected to them, and does not challenge the *status quo*.

Chanda (2005) believes that the class to which a woman belongs is responsible for keeping her in poverty. Of note is that many oppressed women are aware of the different forms of oppression that they are subjected to and they are willing to resist them. Feminism, therefore, aims at unifying women (*ibid.*) so that, together, they may challenge this scourge. Feminism empowers oppressed women to understand their oppression so that they could change their realities. This may be achieved through correcting the distortion of their experience and bringing the women out of obscurity, thus ending inequality in their social position (Lather, 2003). The concept of feminism dates back to the 19th century and it continues to develop as it responds to prevailing social ills. The exploitation, oppression, suppression, marginalisation and ill-treatment of women by men (Rani, 2012) has been normalised in different societies across the globe. In the past, women were not allowed to vote, they were not allowed to own property and they were not allowed to have a meaningful education, but they could have just enough schooling to make them good mothers and wives (Rani, 2012; Barry & Grady, 2019; Situmeang, 2019). Societies created stereotypes of women, thus constructing a gender that can be dominated. In the male-dominated Indian society,

for instance, men are considered as superior beings, and they are seen as protectors, masters and guardians of women (Rani, 2012).

Other socially constructed stereotypes about women are that women have a more fragile physique and small brains which matched their small bodies (Goel, 2010). These physical traits, it was said, qualified them for confinement to the domestic space where they had to meet the needs of their husbands and children (*ibid.*). However, domestic work had no remuneration. In response to these ills and others, feminism was born. Feminism is an array of social, political, and ideological movements aimed at achieving personal, economic, social and political equality of the sexes (Situmeang, 2019). Another way to view feminism is that it is a kind of thinking that encourages women to desire a different future, free from patriarchy (Hooks, 2000). This ideology gives a voice to women to speak about their experiences (Said 1978; Bhabha, 1997). The goal of feminism is to uncover the elements that societies use to construct gendered identity, as well as to overturn stereotypes created about women (Goel, 2010). Moreover, feminism aims at achieving equal opportunities for women (*ibid.*; Barry & Grady, 2019). To attain this goal, women are challenged to refuse and rebel against oppressive gender constructs and oppose political, economic and cultural downgrading (Goel, 2010; Nkealah, 2017). Women are further urged to demand their full citizenship, which includes the right to vote (*ibid.*).

There are different classes of feminism: radical feminism which seeks to abolish patriarchy, social feminism whose aim is to achieve economic equality for the two sexes (*ibid.*). Radical feminism is premised on the belief that women are oppressed by patriarchal structures; the problem of patriarchy is not an individual issue but it is entrenched in culture (Damant, Lapierre, Kouraga, Louise, Brabant, Lavergne & Lessard, 2008). Cultural feminism is concerned with the representation of women in culture, and eco-feminism's focus is on the environment and the role of women in social issues (Situmeang, 2019). Despite their differences in focus, there is an intersectionality which is brought about by their common agenda of women emancipation.

2.1.4.1 The women's suffrage movement

Initiating the call for the recognition of women's rights in the USA, was a women's rights group called the suffragettes; their campaigns and demonstrations, which took about a century, finally yielded a positive outcome. On the 18th of August in 1920, the Constitution was amended, and for the first time women were given the right to full-citizenship, including the right to vote (History.com Editors, 2009). An earlier amendment had given Black man the right to vote but women were left out. "However, the writers of the Fourteenth Amendment made sure to include the word 'male' in Section 2 of the Amendment..." (Alexanian, 2022, p. 72). Unsurprisingly, as Vergès (2021) records in her reflection, by virtue of being woman, one was disadvantaged; it was even worse for a Black woman who experienced intersectional discrimination, both on the basis of her colour and of her sex.

2.1.4.2 The four waves of feminism

As earlier mentioned, feminism has evolved over the years, giving rise to four different waves. First wave feminism was started in the mid-19th century, around 1848 and it went on until the earliest 20th century, in the 1920s. This movement was initiated by the call for the recognition of women's and girls' rights and the demand for equal division of labour between females and males (Phillips and Cree, 2014). Prior to that, women were being prostituted, incest was rife, women's rights to vote were denied. Moreover, there were some professions that were reserved only for men, including: law, medicine and accountancy; women's careers were largely in fields which require social services. If, instance, a man occupied a post in the social work sphere, he would take an administrative position (*ibid.*). Responding to the injustices cited above, women from the Western and in the Eastern world engaged in a protest demanding better conditions for womenfolk (Goel, 2010). In the 1940's, women from the USA marched to the White House, demanding the same recognition that women from Germany enjoyed in their country: "Well-dressed, well-educated, White, Middle-class women picketed outside the White House" (*ibid.*, p. 24.) This act was met with disdain from the society which claimed that the women acted in an unwomanly manner. "No true woman could be a public persuader" (Campbell, 1989, p. 9). Goel (2010) affirms the sentiments adding that a woman who spoke in public was said to be displaying

masculine behaviour. In the Republic of South Africa, a similar demonstration by women took place on the 9th of August in 1956. The demonstration which later on became a historic event was triggered by a law which demanded that Black women living in urban townships should carry passes, and they would be required to renew their entry permits every month. This oppressive Coloured Persons Settlement Areas Act of 1930², was meant to control the influx of Black women into the city (SAHO, 2019). Women numbering between 10,000 and 20,000 from different parts of the country, even as far as Cape Town, flocked to the Union Building in Pretoria to protest against the discriminatory law (*ibid.*). Walker (1991) describes the emotional scene: “Many women had babies on their backs and some domestic workers brought their White employers’ children along with them” (p. 195). The women’s orderly demonstration, in spite of the circumstances prevailing during the event, demonstrates women’s resilient feminist spirit. The protest march became a huge success because that despotic law was eventually annulled (SAHO, 2019). It is worth highlighting that only women of colour were affected, which explains the relevance of an Afrocentric epistemology when studying texts dealing with the experiences of African women.

Second wave feminism elaborates on the ideas developed during the first wave movement, De Beauvoir (1989), who is considered the twentieth century voice of feminist ideology and one of the key figures in developing the movement, including pioneering the move towards redeeming women from social and academic obscurity, argues that men oppress women by categorising them and labelling them as ‘other’, thereby creating a wedge between the two sexes and reinforcing gendered

² Any Black who wanted to move to another area had to register at a labour bureau; Blacks should be prohibited from moving to any area where it was unlikely they would find employment; Blacks could remain in a town for up to 72 hours without requiring a permit but that the burden of proof over how long they had been there rested with the Blacks; and agitators could be deported from any trouble area without recourse to the courts.

stereotypes. De Beauvoir's book, *The Second Sex: Influence on the feminist movement*, according to Chebaro (2019), "acted as a catalyst to propel the second wave of the feminist movement and to break the patriarchal monopoly of the publishing industry" (*ibid.*, p. 1). Prior to that, no achievements of women had been documented as women had been kept at the margins. Getting the book to be published in 1952, during a time when women's rights in France had been stifled, was a major breakthrough for women's rights movements. When the book finally got published by Knopf, in the USA, more opposition came, including from the Roman Catholic Church: The Vatican placed De Beauvoir's work "in the Index of Forbidden Books" (*ibid.*, p. 3). Although this move was aimed at suppressing the message, it helped to give the book more attention, resulting in the selling of 22,000 copies in France within a week. In one of her reflexions in the book, De Beauvoir (1989) observed that women are not born, but rather, societies shape them and give them an identity. The excerpt below summarises her sentiments:

Man occupies the role of the self, or subject: woman is the object, the other. He is essential, absolute and transcendent. She is inessential, incomplete, and mutilated. He extends out into the world to impose his will on it, whereas woman is doomed to immanence, or inwardness. He creates, acts, invents; she waits for him to save her (Spark notes Editors, 2005, p.1).

Although De Beauvoir's arguments were based on observations that she had made in a context that is both geographically and politically different from the reality in Eswatini, her sentiments ring true here; this therefore affirms that women's experiences of patriarchal domination transcends geo-political boundaries. In this country, as represented in most of the poetic texts that are studied here, women are still discriminated and thereafter, relegated to the position of props, where they serve the interests of men. Eswatini's male-controlled society uses oppressive cultural elements to 'other' women and to socialise them in gendered roles which diminish their humanity. Over and above that, the society sees to it that the discrimination is reinforced and propagated; among the various means used for that is oral tradition: different types of performances, including oral poems, as it is shown in the five oral poems in the preceding chapter, are exploited to transmit the message of gender discrimination. De Beauvoir (1989) traced women's subjugation to ancient eras, noting

that in prehistoric times, societies exploited myths, among other techniques to foster the othering of women by representing them as being inferior (Butler, 1986; Spark notes Editors, 2005). The parallel between De Beauvoir's statement on how a society may use the media of literature to develop an ideology, and what is happening in Eswatini's oral tradition, as noted above, is a clear indication that societies are responsible for constructing women's gendered identity. This implies that the same channel may be used to correct the injustices against women; the messages that enlightened women poets are communicating through their poetry, evidently show the significance of poetic texts in influencing social change.

Further, De Beauvoir (1989) expressed her dismay at how, on one hand, societies would place high value on procreation as being essential in preserving human kind, the vehicle for which is woman, yet on the other hand, the social order is made in such a way that promotes the subordination of womankind. Similarly, women poets are questioning the practice, among Swati patriarchs, of glorifying motherhood, yet at the same time, promoting the subjugation of women: for instance, making the task of mothering very hard. This will be revealed in the discussion of the poems in the chapters that follow.

Second wave feminism is multi-faceted with a wide range of coverage from women's rights issues, race issues and other human rights issues (Goel, 2010; Barry & Grady, 2019, Situmeang, 2019). Social feminists, Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandria Kollontai and Emma Goldman gave more life to the second wave movement in the 1960s (Goel, 2010). The struggle for women's recognition gained momentum and the movement placed more demands for the recognition of women in the home space, work place and society. Feminists negated society's perception that the place of the woman is in the home (Barry & Grady, 2019). They refused to be tied to the domestic environment and they demanded that the work they did in the home space, including child-bearing, should be valued (Situmeang, 2019). This movement placed a lot of emphasis on women's empowerment and the dismantling of household power structures which granted men more power than women (*ibid.*).

The workplace is another oppressive space where women are not treated fairly. Sexual harassment in the work place is not uncommon and besides, women's pay is

lower than that of their male counterparts doing the same job; therefore, second wave feminists demanded equal pay for women and men. They also stood up against rape and sexual harassment in the workplace (Barry & Grady, 2019). Feminists also rejected the practice of reducing women's role to that of servicing those who served during World War II; they wanted women to be enlisted to serve in the forefront (Goel, 2010). Equality, full citizenship and the right to vote (Situmeang, 2019) were insisted on by the second wave feminists since it had not yet been fully realised by the first wave movement. Also, additional rights were demanded: women wanted to be allowed to hold credit cards in their names and to apply for mortgages in their names (Barry & Grady, 2019). Divorce and abortion were also placed on the feminist agenda (Goel, 2010). The 1969 Miss World pageant gave second wave feminists an opportunity to voice their misgivings against society's tendency to objectify women. Males dominated all spheres of society and they had constructed their own image of a beautiful woman, as one who had physical beauty only. Other elements such as level of intelligence were not considered; as a result, second wave feminists felt that women were being objectified. To challenge that ideology, they staged a protest during the pageant (Goel, 2010; Barry & Grady, 2019). The second wave feminist movement collaborated with other human rights movements to challenge social ills such as capitalism and imperialism (Goel, 2010); and they demanded their rights: "for employment, education, public and private lives; against rape and domestic violence; against pornography and prostitution" (Phillips and Cree, 2014, p.11). Forced abortions on and sterilisation of Black and disabled women were also challenged (Barry & Grady, 2019). Nonetheless, women from the developing world refused to be classified together with women from the developed world on grounds that their experiences were not the same. Black women felt that society was harsher on them than it was towards White women (Situmeang, 2019). The influence of the second wave feminist movement between the 1960s and the 1970s was significant not only in addressing the social maladies described above, but also because it was during this decade that academic research on feministic issues gained prominence (Barry & Grady, 2019).

The third wave feminist movement started in the late 1980s (Phillips and Cree, 2014). It expounded on some of the ideas from the second wave, such as workplace sexual harassment (Barry & Grady, 2019); and going further to demand that there be an

increase in the number of women in positions of power (Barry & Grady, 2019). Their focus included the recognition of minority groups such as queers (Goel, 2010), arguing that an individual has a right to define her identity, and societies should respect that (*ibid.*). Moreover, the proponents affirmed Judith Butler's observation that gender is performative, and that it is not innate (Phillips and Cree, 2014); this revelation is important in understanding that the identity that a society ascribes to an individual can be altered. Third wave feminism also has a strong post-colonial focus in the sense that it advocates for women's empowerment (Situmeang, 2019); and negates the idea of universal woman (Goel, 2010). In advancing their philosophy, proponents of this movement express their disapproval of certain practices that tend to objectify women by feeding men's sexual desires, such as "posing for Playboy" (Snyder-Hall, 2020); instead they insist on women's rights to enjoy sexual pleasure (*ibid.*). The practice, by Swati patriarchs, to police women's bodies, by prescribing a dress code for them, as well as the traditional custom of requiring girls to wear skirts that expose their buttocks (*indlamu*) during traditional functions, may be described as culturally sanctioned ways of making women and girls objects for men's sexual gratification.

The fourth wave movement was initiated in 2012, according to Situmeang (2019); technology tools were greatly explored to share information and to challenge unacceptable societal elements (Munro, 2013; Phillips and Cree, 2014; Situmeang, 2019; Peroni and Rodak, 2020; *National Women's History Museum*, 2021). Examples of media campaigns and protests carried out in cyber space include the Me Too movement, which marked the inception of the fourth wave movement, and sought to hold powerful men accountable for their behaviour (Barry & Grady, 2019); another one is the Nigerian, Bring Back Our Girls campaign (*National Women's History Museum*, 2021). Apart from topical issues, the fourth wave feminism movement endeavours to revive issues from previous eras, which are still a challenge to women such as women's abortion rights, gender-based violence and unfair distribution of labour. While in earlier years, as pointed out in the discussion on first wave feminism movement, women were not allowed to take certain jobs; now, what has been observed is that there are jobs that women will do but men will not take, such as social services (Phillips and Cree, 2014). If men happen to take up such jobs, they leave women, in junior positions, to do the work because men usually occupy managerial posts (*ibid.*). In

Eswatini, as pointed out in Chapter 1, the problem of unfair distribution of labour does exist, nonetheless, due to high levels of unemployment, the challenge, as exemplified by social work, is masked; men do engage in paid social work but in families and at community level, where the work is not remunerated, men are absent but instead, it is women who do the job.

2.1.5 African feminism

African feminism is similar to postcolonial feminism in many ways but differences exist in their approach towards bringing reformations. While postcolonial feminism underlines Black women's victimization, African feminism underscores their sense of independence. Like postcolonial theory, it also came as a result of a criticism against the domination by White feminists and their attempt to speak for women at a broader perspective yet ignorant of the cultures and experiences of women in other parts of the world. The White feminists were blamed for the racist backgrounds of their societies and their tendency to overlook unique challenges faced by Africans and for assuming homogeneity within women's movements (Arndt, 2002). African feminism therefore acknowledges women's multiple intersecting identities (Bawa & Ogunyankin, 2018, p.11), identifies distinctive problems of African women, explore their roots and effects and then seeks out ways to address them (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 1996).

The problem of patriarchal manifestations in African societies is still real, some traditional institutions harbour oppressive elements which have to be weighed in order to identify those that should be eliminated urgently. Moreover, gender roles are viewed in light of other oppressive contrivances that have colonial roots such as "racism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, socio economic exclusion and exploitation, gerontocracy, religious fundamentalism as well as dictatorial and/or corrupt systems (Arndt, 2002 p. 32).

Three African feminist movements: reformist, transformative and radical are relevant in interpreting the selected poetic texts. The reformist movement seems to adopt a milder stance in its criticism of patriarchal attitudes, generally accepting society's patriarchal orientation as a given fact. The proponents negotiate for improved conditions for women in a conciliatory tone. Instead of categorising men as being

generally macho, they consider each case as isolated. Poetic texts such as “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Ngihlushwa yindvodza” and “Vuka mfati” feature women who are victims in their marriages and the speaker’s tone seems to be pleading for improved conditions for the women. “Tibongo temnumzane” and “Umfati” present women generally as being victims of an oppressive patriarchal system thereby adopting the stance of transformative feminism. The radical view of African feminism is depicted by “Hlakanipha mfati” and “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”, although the two texts employ different strategies, they both reveal that discriminatory behaviour by men is typical male behaviour. Radical African feminism further classifies men as being sexist and immoral beings who discriminate against women and abuse them physically and psychologically. A cultural homogeneity of oppression is common place among Swati women, the texts reveal this trend notwithstanding the observable differences which may be attributed to generational differences. Furthermore, texts show that despite their contribution in the development of their families, Swati women are marginalised in a manner similar to the one that women in Kenya witnessed. Arndt (2002) attests that “Kenyan women played a very active role in the national liberation movement, after achieving independence, politics was declared men’s business” (p. 36).

The radical movement is nonetheless cognizant of the fact that some women are responsible for gender discrimination against fellow women. A few of the selected poems exemplify this by presenting some women as being accomplices to the suffering of fellow women when they become mistresses to married men, which usually results in the maltreatment of wives. Examples drawn from other African cultures include the practice of genital circumcision of girls by fellow women and the traditional marriage of a second or subsequent wives which is performed by women, sadly, the women who perform the rites are not rewarded but it is men who enjoy the benefits. These practices are not only oppressive but they create a wedge between women and they destroy womanhood (*ibid.*). To restore unity among womenfolk and to rebuild their womanhood, women are urged to “show solidarity with their kind in order to fight back against the structures and the men who reproduce them for egotistic reasons” (*ibid.*, p. 41). Arndt (2002) backs the call for the formation of an alliance for abused women, she describes it as “a vague anchor of hope” (p. 35). This sentiment is bluntly reflected in the poem “Hlakanipha mfati”. While championing women’s

alliance against patriarchal systems, the text implores womenfolk to unite and revolt against different forms of repression. Assuming a passive stance towards women's subjugation has an adverse impact on girls who aspire to become wives in the future, this view is also expressed in the poem. Other atrocious acts committed by men against women are blamed on neo-colonial poverty; the radical movement purports that men are driven by poverty to be aggressive and to use women as safety valves; "Hlakanipha mfati", "Tibongo temnumzana", "Umloyi", express this point and further reveal that "women carry the double yoke of gendered poverty" (Arndt 2002, p. 41).

Proponents of African feminism are concerned about restrictions that societies place on women, including the practice of policing of their bodies and curtailing women's rights to exploring their sexualities; in some African countries for instance, women are subjected to genital mutilation. Although there is no customary practice that allows for women's genitals to be mutilated in Eswatini, there are nonetheless oppressive traditional practices that are used to police women's bodies such as dress code. Societies prescribe a 'morally acceptable' way of dress, and the standard of morality is set according to masculine values (*ibid.*). Married Swati women for instance, are compelled to wear certain clothing (*sidvwaba*), which is oppressive and girls are lauded for dressing modestly. Strangely, girls' traditional attire comprises skimpy wear (*indlamu*), which when worn, it exposes girls' buttocks.

Despite this level of policing, womenfolk continue to claim autonomy of their bodies and they defy the call by traditional structures for women to conform to a certain prescribed way of dress. The woman in the poem "Vuka mfati" openly defies an order given to her to wear (*sidvwaba*); by challenging the oppressive voice of a gate-keeper, she is contravening the acceptable standards of morality. Some of the restrictions are rooted in colonial times where women's rights, including liberty to travel freely, were circumscribed. Allman (1996) recounts that in colonial times unmarried women over the age of 15 were arrested by local chiefs on claims of prostitution; these were fabricated charges meant to restrain their movements and to frustrate their economic independence. A similar sentiment is shared by Bawa & Ogunyankin (2018), that women's stay in the city was prohibited on the grounds that the city harboured deviant tendencies that influenced women to get into prostitution. Even though some people

may perceive such acts in a positive light, it is clear that domesticating women is meant to subjugate them because if a woman's movement outside of the home benefits men in some way, her movements are allowed. In "Umfati" and "Vuka mfati" this is illustrated by the women who leave their usual home space and go in search of provisions which would benefit the entire family including men.

Although the fundamental disposition of African feminism is admirable, the movement has its own flaws, for instance, "it is accused for hatred of men, the promotion of lesbian love and the rejection of motherhood" (*ibid.*, p. 43). These weaknesses are generally absent from the selected poems because they do not represent the ideals of Swati people. Even though a few of the poems, such as "Tibongo temnumzane", "Umloyi" and "Hlakanipha mfati", express women's resentment for irresponsible men, they do not suggest that there is hatred for men by women, neither do they promote same sex relationships; on the contrary, the poems seem to glorify motherhood as an expression of womanhood.

2.1.6 Post-colonial African feminism

Post-colonial African feminism merges post-colonial feminist ideals with African feminism principles and traces women's colonial histories with a view to understand their impact in the development of feminism in the African context. Bawa & Ogunyankin (2018) describe post-colonial African feminism as:

Feminist activism that historicizes women's oppression and disempowerment in the continent by critically situating women's rights and discourses of gender equality with colonial histories...It contests Eurocentric representations of women, current patriarchal systems of power and control in the continent (p. 3).

The definition above addresses three points: locating historical roots of women's subjugation, rejecting the classification of women as being a homogenous group and renouncing gendered domination. These concerns qualify postcolonial African feminism as a relevant theoretical framework for studying experiences of Black women who have suffered under patriarchy.

The selected poetic texts capture the reality that is unique to Swati women's context; therefore, an understanding of the culture of Swati people and their colonial history

are critical in enabling a fuller understanding of oppressive elements expressed in the poems. Overlooking this fact may compromise the process of uncovering meaning from the poems. In addition, if there is a need to subvert certain observable cultural tendencies that are viewed as being discriminatory, one may have to explore possible means of doing so within the given context. Acknowledging women's uniqueness also helps in avoiding generalisations regarding women's plight, for example, the belief that women are powerless is frowned upon by post-colonial African feminism. The view that women are perpetual victims originates from the colonial era (Bawa & Ogunyankin, 2018), this impression distorts women's image within their communities; as a consequence, it propagates the culture of women's subjugation. The poem "Hlakanipha mfati" is a remarkable illustration of women's repudiation of a victim mentality; the text urges womenfolk to assert their independence which includes managing their own finances instead of delegating that privilege to men. The same conviction is held by Nkealah (2017): her position is that African women should reject the preconceived conception of "snail sense feminism" (p.17) and adopt a camel disposition of assertiveness. Here Nkealah uses the metaphors of snail and camel respectively, to contrast women's passivity with the assertive approach that she is proposing.

2.1.7 Decolonial feminism

Like the other anti-White feminist approaches discussed above, decolonial feminism responds to weaknesses posed by Eurocentric feminism which is blamed for being a "colonising construct imposed by imperialists" (Byrne, 2020, p.38). There is a tendency by Western feminists to ignore the point of view of marginalised Black women and to overlook their diversity in terms of class, race, or caste, and to view them as a homogenous group; yet, women's diversities and histories ought to be taken into account, including their economic and social struggles (Verschuur & Destremau, 2012). Eurocentric feminism, according to critics of the theory, claims to address concerns of women globally; this is problematic because although generally all women experience gender-based oppression at varying degrees, they still have diverse experiences from their different socio-political backgrounds. Butler refutes any claim of universality on the grounds that no pre-existing identity of gender can be applied to

women cross-sectional. White women have a position of privilege and their attempt to speak for Black women is unscrupulous (Byrne, 2020). In view of the history of domination of the Black race by Whites, it is hypocritical for White feminists to claim sisterhood with women of colour (*ibid.*, 2020). Moreover, attempting to classify women as a homogenous group is a flawed endeavour because even historically, women's experiences were very diverse. Lugones (2010) articulates her reflection of differences in experiences between women of colour and those from the West:

Only the civilized are men or women. Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species-as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild. The European, bourgeois, colonial, modern man became a subject/agent fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, being of mind and reason. The bourgeois woman was not understood as his complement, but as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being home bound in the service of white, European, bourgeois man (p. 744).

Firstly, by virtue of being native, African women could neither be classified as civilized, nor did they fit the category of humans. Dehumanizing and relegating them to the class of animals robbed women of their right to be treated with dignity, and as animals, women existed to serve the interest of their masters; the only privileges they enjoyed were what they were given by their owners. This belief system resonates with the social construct of a timid woman whose existence is towards the service of others. Another element of women's subjugation is directly related to their female bodies. Although White women's human nature was not disputed, it is their bodies that made them inferior beings; women's social roles were subsidiary, limited only to function as support for men, hence they had to keep themselves pure to service men well. Literary texts in Eswatini are indicative of such colonial traits and they show that women's female bodies predispose them to discrimination.

Another criticism levelled against Eurocentric feminism is the tendency to misrepresent problems faced by women from the South in a culturally insensitive manner. For example, the issue of clitoridectomy is grossly distorted, focusing only on the negative and overlooking cultural implications of the practice. This is not to suggest that female circumcision is acceptable to African women, but what is problematic is how the problem is reported. African women are concerned that such slanted reports

present them as helpless victims, yet that is not an accurate assessment of their situation. In fact, women “reclaim lives of dignity and sensuality” (*ibid.*, p. 41), despite their difficult backgrounds. Furthermore, Eurocentric feminist ideology tends to undermine African feminist epistemologies (*ibid.*).

Western feminists have a propensity to construct a colonial image of Southern women who are “dumb, powerless, victimised, traditional” (Verschuur, & Destremau, 2012, p. iv), in contrast with Western women who are presented as an “educated, modern woman in control of her body and sexuality, having the ability to be aware of inequalities or desire to become involved in social transformation” (*ibid.*, p. vi–vii). The affinity of presenting Black women as victims has been criticised because Black women are not speaking out for themselves but instead White feminists speak for them about their perceived victimization (*ibid.*).

For White women to speak on behalf of Black women perpetrates the oppressive subaltern ideology against women of colour and it is conceived as a subtle form of domination, very much similar to cultural oppression of the African race by dominant Whites. Muting Black women’s voices diminishes them and renders them invisible, a practice similar to others in capitalist societies as represented by Vergès (2021) reflection below:

Billions of women take care of cleaning the world every day, tirelessly. Without their work, millions of employees and agents of capital, the state, the army, and cultural, artistic, and scientific institutions could not use their offices, eat in their cafeterias, hold their meetings, or make their decisions in clean spaces where wastebaskets, tables, chairs, armchairs, floor, toilets and restaurants have been cleaned and made available to them. This work, indispensable to the functioning of any society, must remain invisible. We must not be aware that the world we move around in is cleaned by racialized and overexploited women. On the one hand, this work has been considered what women must do (without complaint) for centuries; women’s caring and cleaning work is free labour. On the other hand, capitalism inevitably creates invisible work and disposable lives (p. 1-2).

This moving exposition of the women’s day-to-day arduous and mundane cleaning duties, performed merely to make comfortable the lives of capitalist superiors, is an appeal to the reader to reflect on how important the women’s services are against the

backdrop of their invisibility. These women are often neglected yet without their service, the upper echelon in society would suffer; their lives would be disrupted and their efficacy could be compromised to the extent that they would not attain their consumerist goals. This illustration is a metaphor of Swati women who are frequently marginalised; the poem “Washikitela mfati” clearly captures Vergès’ sentiments. The poetic text describes a void that was created when a woman died. While she was alive, everything was normal for everyone who benefitted from her service; year-by-year she served her family, probably with little recognition. However, the moment she died, a great vacuum was created. In a similar fashion, the women that Vergès is reflecting about, cleaned all the facilities owned by imperialists, but if they were to stop doing the work, the lives of their masters would be disrupted.

Subalternizing the voices of Global South women ensured that the narrative about Black women being timid, is propagated. It is from this position that decolonial feminists endeavour to set the record straight by rejecting the claim of passivity and timidity levelled at women of African descent. On the contrary, decolonial feminists posit that Black women from the continent have another identity that is now ‘surfacing’. This same view is explicated by some of the poetic texts, particularly, “Vuka mfati”, “Hlakanipha mfati” and “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”. The identity of women proposed in these texts is surfacing because “it has always been there, waiting to be seen and given voice... telling recovered stories” (*ibid.*, p. 3). The expression ‘surfacing’ connotes a moment of becoming visible for that which had lain hidden; in this case, it is the voices of Black women that had been silenced.

Decolonial feminism contends that women from the global South ought to speak for themselves, because when women from the global North speak for women, they tend to speak from their position of privilege and they ignore challenges that native women have, which should be taken into consideration. For example, advocating for women to insist on having jobs outside the home is counterproductive to disadvantaged women, because it becomes a burden to them as they end up doing double shifts: one at home and another outside the home space (Khader, 2020). It is unfortunate for many Swati women from the rural areas because circumstances compel them to find jobs which they will do in addition to their routine domestic chores. The women are compelled to do this in order to provide for their families. Notwithstanding the false

belief that men are breadwinners, women are in fact the ones providing for families; in some cases, they cater even for their husbands. Khader (2020) argues that women's individual contexts ought to be assessed prior to making suggestions which may make the women's situations worse off. She goes on to point out that in some circumstances, polygamy provides recourse to women's domestic obligations, because duties are shared among the wives, which results in them having more free time (*ibid.*). Some of these examples illustrate the need for concerns of women of colour to be expressed from an African perspective. White feminists living in Africa may then adopt a posture of allies and should not claim to fully comprehend challenges faced by women of colour, but their participation in the struggle should be that of offering support in a respectful manner (*ibid.*).

2.1.8 Intersectional feminism

Intersectional feminism gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, around the same time that Black feminist thought came to effect (Heaney, 2019); it regained its prominence in 2017, when responding to former US president, Donald Trump's threat against othered individuals (Gökarıksel and Smith, 2017). The fundamental purpose of intersectional feminism was to achieve social justice by unifying people with multiple marginalized identities, such as undocumented immigrants and queer (*ibid.*). Moreover, intersectional feminism addresses the challenge posed by power relations existing at different levels; individual, operational, and organisational (Damant, et al., 2008; Gökarıksel and Smith (2017). At the more social levels, intersectional feminists "acknowledge the existence of multiple systems of oppression, such as patriarchy, racism, capitalism, and heterosexism (Damant, et al., p. 128). Furthermore, it challenges domestic violence, including child abuse and mothering (Damant, et al., 2008). Feminists have observed that in some families, the responsibility of raising children is thrust upon women, thus making mothering to be another form of abuse, Multi-dimensional marginalised people "suffer oppression from more than one direction, which creates a distinct experience of subjugation from what would be felt while having only one marginalized identity" (*ibid.*, p. 3).

From the period of his campaign, to the time when he assumed presidency, Trump promoted exclusion of minority groups and championed White supremacy and male

dominance (*ibid.*). As a result, a group comprising those that he had ‘othered’ organised and held anti-Trump marches which spanned a period of three years from 21 January 2017 to 2019 (Heaney, 2019). The idea of the marches was initiated by two White women, Teresa Shook, a retired attorney living in Hawaii and Bob Bland, a fashion designer living in New York. Later on, women of colour; Linda Sarsour, Tamika Mallory, and Carmen Perez, were added to the organising team (*ibid.*). Although the marches were sparked by Trump’s insensitive utterances, as they gained momentum, other issues were included in the agenda. The challenge of othering women, domestic violence against women and girls and power relations in society became topical issues as well (D’Ignazio and Klei, 2020). Power relations were implicated as being drivers of women’s social challenges.

The current configuration of structural privilege and structural oppression in which some groups experience unearned advantages because systems have been designed by people like them and work for people like them and other groups experience systematic disadvantages because those same systems were not designed by them or with people like them in mind (*Ibid*, p. 2).

As described above, power is clearly a social construct, made in such a way that it benefits a certain category of people in society. In patriarchal cultures, like in Eswatini, power is ascribed to men and it is enforced through gendering of roles. Women, through being empowered educationally and occupationally, may, to a limited degree, wield power. However, their authority is confined to their limited spheres of influence; hence, Weldon (2018), makes the following statement about power:

Power, in modern society, feminists have argued, is not something one can pick up, put down, choose to exercise or not to exercise. Power flows through us by virtue of our social identity and institutional position whether or not we wish to ‘exercise power’. On the other hand, we may be silenced by these same identities and social positions in other contexts (p. 7).

As already noted, one’s power is determined by those who gave it. To put it in context, in Eswatini, patriarchal structures decide how much influence a woman may be allowed to exercise: this is achieved through systematically categorising women and placing gendered restrictions on them. Intersectional feminism goes further to explain

how the marginalised individuals and groups build coalitions among themselves (Heaney, 2019); which, in essence, has an element of self-categorisation.

Exposing weaknesses posed by structures that discriminate against minorities, such as women and children, is significant in proffering solutions to society and averting possible calamities, such as was the case during the height of COVID-19 in the US. COVID-19 cases for minority groups were not accurately captured, which ultimately resulted in a high mortality rate among them.

We see this structural inequality quite starkly in the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black communities in the US (Crenshaw, 2020). The underlying cause in this case is deep-seated, longstanding, institutionally entrenched racism. This racism is not new, and many of these deaths could have been prevented with decision-making, including decisions about data collection and data analysis, guided by goals of equity and justice (D'Ignazio and Klei, 2020, p. 2).

The marginalisation and exclusion of minorities resulted in their death, this unfortunate scenario could have been averted by correct management of data. Thus, D'Ignazio and Klei (2020), expressly state that, in order to gain a better and in-depth understanding about an issue, all parties involved should be engaged in the data collection (*ibid.*). Moreover, everyone concerned should participate during the interpretation of data and its presentation, lest the findings become an expression of the person who has power (*ibid.*). Similarly, in order to objectively articulate challenges experienced by minority groups, including women and children, their voices ought to be heard. Hence, Weldon (2018) argues that, in order to address unique challenges of women in society, there is a need to elect more women, to get more women into positions of power. The dynamics noted above, therefore, make intersectional feminism to be one of the relevant theories for studying poetic texts.

There seems to be an interchange in the use of certain feminist concepts such as: postcolonial feminism, Black feminist thought/Afrocentric feminism and decolonial feminism; this confusion stems from the fact that the terms are interconnected. Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert & Knoblock, (2019) noted in particular that postcolonial feminism and some elements of decolonial thought are usually confused. Decolonial feminism approaches feminism from the locus of ethnic people, instead of

understanding women's problems from a Eurocentric standpoint (*ibid*). Therefore, decolonial feminism is invariably different from postcolonial reasoning in that while postcolonial feminism seeks to bring reformation from a Eurocentric perspective, decolonial feminism advocates for delinking from Western views. Another difference is that while postcolonial feminism seems to present Black women as victims, decolonial feminism perceives them as strong assertive people who want to reconstruct their identity (Bhambra, 2014). The study at hand contains elements from the different traditions; for that reason, relevant elements from each are considered during the analysis of the poetic texts.

2.1.9 Self-categorisation theory

Although self-categorisation is not foundational in this study, it is, nonetheless, valuable in explaining how the Swati society has used gender to classify society in a manner that discriminates women. Similarly, women, as a collective, exploit the same categorisation to challenge society. There is a propensity of women who have been exploited over an extended period of time to embrace and internalise servitude and conform to prevailing institutionalised stratification which places them at the margins of society. Such women identify themselves as belonging together, categorise themselves as a prototype and adopt a group identity (Subašić, Reynolds and Turner, 2008). Dekker (2014) adds that self-categorisation makes people feel that they are members of a group, and it gives them a sense of belonging. From that network, they address issues that are a challenge to them and they become vocal. The rise of a generation of enlightened women who have become aware of their plight introduces a paradigm shift: women begin to challenge the status quo and demand equality.

As a theoretical insight, self-categorisation is significant in shedding some light on womanhood and how the challenges that women experience in society bring them together. Moreover, this philosophical thinking seeks to find out the various categories within which Swati women have grouped themselves and the impact of that grouping in cementing gendered practices. This theory is significant in establishing how, through poetry, women are able to construct a preferred identity and resist the socially constructed identity which places them at the margins of society.

Developed by John Turner, the self-categorisation theory seeks to understand how people organise and place themselves in certain social categories. This kind of grouping tends to influence their “attitudes, emotions, and behaviours” (*iResearchNet*, no date). Woodward (2004) describes self-categorisation theory as one that explains the influence of society on how an individual sees herself in the context of a society. One tends to categorise self as a member of society, and take on identities appropriate to the social categories with which she identifies. People are categorised as members of a society on the basis of the traits they exhibit. Thus, we see ourselves as members of certain social categories. Woodward (2004) observes that femininity and masculinity are two categories within which individuals identify themselves and, as a result, they conform to gendered roles associated with either of the two categories within that cultural context. Worth noting is that there are other categories such as queer, trans, fluid and cishet (Day, 2020). Nonetheless, this study is delimited to female and male, the two genders which the poems deal with, coincidentally, the two, are the only legally accepted genders in Eswatini.

Self-categorisation may have been born from society’s demands on women to conform to a female stereotype; if women do not conform, they are frowned on. Out of fear of being ostracised, women then shift their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours to fit into society’s prototypes (Reid, Palomares, Anderson and Bondad-Brown, 2009; Subašić et al., 2008). Prototype describes attributes such as attitudes towards race, beliefs, and behaviours that best characterise a group (Hogg and Reid, 2006). Reid et al. (2009) describe prototypes as joint self-definitions that serve as a basis for normative action. Prototypes such as gender stereotyping emerge in early childhood but they do not become pronounced until adulthood. The environment that nurtures a child is responsible for fostering gendered identities. Bigler and Liben (2007) assert that the environment, education, society as well as legal policies are responsible for producing stereotypes.

Gendered stereotypes that society creates deprive women of many of the rights that other members of society enjoy. As a consequence, women begin to self-categorise, classifying themselves as a minority, a group of the underprivileged, with low social status and fewer opportunities (Cadinu and Galdi, 2012; Subašić et al., 2008). Cadinu

and Galdi (2012) add that self-categorisation is usually implicit and occurs at a subconscious level; women are often not aware that they have placed themselves in a particular category. Although self-categorisation may happen to both males and females, it is more common among women than among men: this is particularly true in the case of implicit self-categorisation (*ibid.*).

Hogg, Abrams, Otten and Hinkle (2004) refer to self-categorisation as social identity. They aver that when at least two people, who have the same identity, identify themselves in the same way, they become members of a social group. These people describe themselves in terms of how they relate to certain groups and how different they are from others (Hogg et al., 2004). The poem “Umfati”, for instance, features two women who are drawn together by their similar experiences of marital difficulty: they both have husbands with loose morals, who have fathered children outside of their marriages. Over and above that, the men fail to provide for those children, but instead they burden their wives with the responsibility of taking care of them. On the basis of their similar problems, they create a friendship. Social identity may give birth to individual identity when members of the group forge friendships. With self-categorisation, one may belong to a number of social groups, which then gives multiple social identities and personal identities. Of note is that identities are not fixed; they are determined by context and so they may change when the context changes (Hogg et al., 2004; Reid et al. 2009).

Social groups created by self-categorisation have the advantage of collective action. Together, members form an alliance to fight for a common cause: they collectively “engage in social action to forge an image of what the group stands for and how it is represented and viewed by others” (Hogg et al., 2004, p. 253). From this line of thinking, women may jointly advance their feminist agenda and challenge the *status quo*. Subašić et al. (2008) elaborate on the function of self-categorisation. First, they note that self-categorisations are “context specific” (p. 333). For people to self-categorise, first, there ought to be a situation that is perceived by a minority group in society as being discriminatory. The minority group comprises those who feel that they share a similar predicament of being the disadvantaged in society (Subašić et al.,

2008). On the basis of the shared predicament, members self-categorise, and they come together to voice their discontent.

Advocating for social change starts with psychological transformation among those affected (*ibid.*). Once they become aware of their plight and that of others around them, they begin to classify themselves as the disadvantaged, and they begin to act collectively to challenge the authority which is perceived to be acting unfairly, and being responsible for their plight. In “Hlakanipha mfati”, the speaker, an abused woman, encourages other women in toxic relationships to revolt against their oppression.

The philosophical views discussed above and the different classes of feminism encapsulate the ideas represented in the poetic texts, albeit from varying perspectives. This makes them significant in analysing the poems as the texts represent the diverse categories of women in Eswatini. While some women still view their circumstances from a victim’s point of view, waiting for liberation from external factors, others are adopting the stance of confident women and they want to subvert society’s shackles of oppression. Furthermore, the theoretical movements explain how power imbalance is exploited in society. Finally, the theories explain how subjugated women find solace in adopting a group identity.

2.2. Reading poems from an interpretivist perspective

Epistemologically, this study assumes that stories are told according to how an individual interprets an incident and makes meaning out of that interpretation. Thus, this research was conducted through the interpretivist stance (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002). Interpretivism researches subject matters that traditional methods of research cannot address. Traditional approaches are scientific methods such as the quantitative approach (DocBonBon, 2014), these tend to objectify a study. The intention in this study is to understand how poetry can be engaged as a form of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society; this phenomenon could not be achieved objectively, because although human experiences can exhibit patterns, they cannot be generalised.

Collins (1990a, p. 51) argues that positivism, which is a traditional research approach, poses a challenge to research on Black feminist thought because “it aims to create scientific descriptions by producing objective generalizations”. Moreover, in an effort to maintain objectivity, all human qualities, but rationality, are eliminated from the research process. Also, the objects of study are removed from their natural environments, and researchers become disengaged emotionless observers. Consequent to this, information becomes separated from meaning. Collins further laments that positivism becomes a hindrance as it compels feminist researchers to objectify themselves, devalue their emotional life, and dislocate their motivation to furthering knowledge about Black women. In 2001, Collins advanced her argument against positivism, adding that it objectifies women by requiring that one’s emotions and ethnicity be excluded from the research. This demand strips off all human elements and objectifies the research. Holden (2012) supports this argument, pointing out that attention should be given to the meaning of social phenomena rather than on its measurement, since it is not possible to quantify the subjectivity of humans. This position affirms the stance taken by African feminists and decolonial feminism which posit that in order to address challenges of women from the global South, one ought to approach the challenges from a specific socio-political position.

Notably though, the subjectivity of the research raises questions about the selection criteria for the stories that are considered as good sources of information. Another concern about subjectivity in narrative research is that stories are likely to be presented in a way that will make room for happy endings, which invariably distorts the narrative (Webster and Mertova, 2007). In the case of poetry, there is no room for that distortion, because the story proceeds from emotions that the poet is experiencing at the moment that the poem is composed. Although it is not easy to ascertain this, the general background information about Eswatini should provide a sufficient basis for interpreting the texts.

It is worth noting that the experiences are dependent largely on the interpretation that one attaches to it, taking into consideration that interpretivism subscribes to multiple realities. Heyman (1983) asserts that social phenomena can only be interpreted through the eyes of an individual in a specific context. Social phenomena are

dependent on the human mind, values and perceptions, and thus they cannot be studied like physical objects. This research was based on how poetic texts enable one to understand the reality of Swati women. Since knowledge about the experiences of women in Eswatini is already out there, studying the texts provides a way of discovering that knowledge. This claim supports a position adopted by Nieuwenhuis (2010) in his assertion that knowledge is available, waiting to be discovered.

2.3 The role of literature in society

Etymologically, literature has to do with letters, the written as opposed to the spoken word (Lumen, n.d). Literature has both aesthetic and corrective dimensions. In studying literary texts, one appreciates how a writer explores language while at the same time influencing social ideals. Both dimensions ought to be considered during the study of a literary text, and how they complement each other in bringing forth a comprehensive approach to the study of literary texts, particularly poetic texts. The following discussion presents some perspectives on the role of literature as a form of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society; some relevant examples are picked from poetic texts.

Akhter (2020) draws a comparison between politics and literature. He asserts that while politics determines the quality of our lives, literature, on the other hand, enables people to reflect on what they think they already know about life; literature does not merely tell people what they already know. Through exploring certain figures of speech, writers are able to address issues in the stories that they tell. Akhter (2020) adds that the narrative power of art allows writers to address certain subjects. Literature does not just present, but it represents the world: it mirrors and refracts the world. In a similar manner, the poetic texts in this study invite a reader to reflect on womanhood as a gendered social construct; and as one does that, she is confronted with a number of issues that expose discriminatory practise against women in the country.

Idowu (2013) expounds on the idea that literature is an agent of social change. His argument is that literature permeates a people's culture and unravels it; it challenges the minds of men and women. Cultural practices that have, for a long time, been

accepted as natural in Eswatini, are being exposed by the texts as being inhuman. These include: the practice of turning women into domestic slaves, abusing women physically, emotionally, psychologically and sexually; therefore, such traditions are being challenged. Some scholars from Eswatini affirm this claim, they posit that to protest against social ills including abuse, Swati women turn to different forms of media including drama (Dlamini, 2017), song (Dlamini, 2009) and poetry (Fiore, 2015). Dlamini (2009) observed that songs:

depict the ways in which power relations are arranged and played out. It also shows societal beliefs concerning the power relations and critiques these in a very bitter, sarcastic tone and ironic manner (p. 135).

Literature explores various ways to mirror society and personify power, through the power of the written word, literature enables individuals, groups and entire societies to see themselves. After reading the poetic texts, a reader gets a fuller picture of Eswatini as being a patriarchal society.

It is also argued by Idowu (2013) that literature increases perception as it allows one to see where one is coming from, where one is, and to predict where one is going. The satirical poem “Tibongo temnumzana”, for example, gives an indication that a man’s position of privilege is a given and that it has been in existence since the founding of the Swati nation; furthermore, it is an immutable reality that women have to live with. This victim-mentality point of view, presented through the voice of a woman, is negated by “Hlakanipha mfati”, which, from a radical decolonial feminist perspective, brings into the reader’s attention that the current status *quo*, is not only oppressive, but that it threatens generations to come. Moreover, the reader becomes a critical voice of the people. Through the literary text, the writer helps readers to “hear, see, and feel what the people do not” (*ibid.*, p.13). This is an important observation because the poetic texts uncover oppressive elements that have been in existent for a long time, but their repressive dispositions have gone unnoticed because the poets had not yet brought them to the attention of readers. What makes literature effective in conveying a message is the art of storytelling that writers use. Writers exploit figures of speech for providing enjoyment and the fulfilment of a social need to the reader: however, the

writer has a responsibility to address social maladies as a way of curbing them, thus, literature has a role in social change (*ibid.*).

Literature allows for the appreciation of the different ways in which literary linguistic art-forms are used; Karnik and Sheikh (2015) describe literature as a work of art and a mirror of society. Literature enables one to construct new ideas, and as a mirror of society, literature allows one to view society from different perspectives as well as study how members of society conduct themselves within certain social structures. Through studying literature, one learns about how different philosophies have influenced the culture of a particular society; likewise, studying the poetic texts exposes repressive propensities within Swati culture and it traces them to colonial times. In a similar manner, feministic thinking influences the women poets to advocate for better conditions for womenfolk; hence, studying literature may help in the construction of a desired culture.

Karnik and Sheikh (2015) identified two main roles of literature: an active engaging role where by one reads a literary text and forms impressions, and a passive reflective role which shows how a society functions and why it functions that way. Readers of literary texts not only benefit from the aesthetic pleasure of reading texts, but they also generate ideas on certain issues as they ponder the ideas reflected on paper. The written text acts as a trigger of creative imagination and a formation of new ideas. In addition to the construction of new ideas, readers are able to gain an insight into how societies function and how they are represented in the literary text; also, socially entrenched injustices are exposed. It is this unlimited view that allows the reader to perceive why a particular society functions the way it does. While still in the process of exposing the issues in a society, a writer is also privileged to influence readers into perceiving things from a certain perspective and to think in a particular way; hence, Karnik and Sheikh (2015) note that literature shapes civilisations and causes a change in political systems.

From a similar perspective, Duhan (2015) describes literature as a mirror which reflects society's virtues and vices; while literature may entertain, it also educates; what people think, say and do is mirrored through literature. The women in the poems provide, both implicitly and explicitly, the different types of women in Eswatini: those

subscribing to a patriarchal impression of a timid woman as well as the decolonial feminist woman who is assertive and determined to see a change in how women have been treated. Since the reader has a wider view into the text, s/he is able to gain a better understanding of thoughts, attitudes and actions of members of society as depicted by the literary texts. The thoughts, attitudes and actions might be hidden from the characters themselves, but the reader is better positioned to understand those issues. In this way, the writer is successful in transmitting her message to the intended audience, in the process achieving the aim of influencing society on particular issues. The ills of its members are mirrored with the view of making society aware of them in order to correct them. Also, the good virtues are projected in order for people to emulate them (*ibid.*). Similarly, Chhaylin (2016) acknowledges the role of literary works in providing aesthetic pleasure while at the same time being morally critical. Literary texts portray social agents in far better ways than what could be achieved through non-fiction; fictional characters are able to imitate people in their social environments and through that people begin to question things. It is from this perspective that literature is seen as seditious and capable of disrupting the current *status quo*. Literature mirrors society and this is what begins the process of influencing change.

All the researchers cited above concur that literature is an agent of social change. Social reformation is achieved through challenging members of society to reflect and think deeply about what is happening around them. Idowu (2013) and Karnik and Sheikh (2015) go further to note that literature exposes injustices and challenges social ills. Idowu (2013) adds that a writer has a responsibility to challenge social ills, which is why her writing exposes those maladies. The educational function of literature is acknowledged by Idowu (2013), Karnik and Sheikh (2015) and Duhan (2015). These researchers assert that literature challenges minds to form ideas, and individuals to act in a certain way, which is different from how they would act before. Idowu (2013) further states that literature may predict the future. Duhan (2015) and Chhaylin (2016) credit literature for being a form of entertainment, while at the same time it questions certain things (Chhaylin, 2016).

The impact that literature has on society lies in the extent to which it expresses and enriches the culture (*Homework Help and Textbook Solutions | Bartleby*, no date) by

reflecting the ills of society for purposes of exposing and correcting them. Thus, themes in literary texts emerge from group activities in a society. The impact of literary writings has been evidenced by the banning of certain texts, which have been viewed as dangerous, in parts of the world; these include the following:

- *Brave New World* - banned for its comments against religion and traditional family in Ireland
- *Animal Farm* - banned in Russia, Cuba and United Arab Emirates
- *Alice in Wonderland* - banned in China for portraying animals as though they were human beings
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* - banned in the USA for showing a great friendship between a white boy and a slave. In *Plato's Republic*, poets were banned for arousing thoughtless emotions that cloud the citizens' judgments. (Chhaylin, 2016)

Although Eswatini does not appear on the list above, it is a fact that reading material, including literary texts studied in schools, are subjected to scrutiny. The censorship is done in a subtle manner such that it may go unnoticed to the eye of the general populace. The novel *Animal farm*, for instance, was removed from the school curriculum after having been taught as a prescribed text for at least two decades because readers, including students, were becoming aware of its allegorical meaning which implied that the country's leaders were dictators who administered the Kingdom's affairs as if the state were a farm. The authorities of Eswatini were being given names of some of the animal characters that they emulated. Banning of the text, which brought a subdued outcry among educators and learners, was done under the guise of 'curriculum review'. Notably though, documented evidence to back this claim is not available because critics of the system of governance and writers of disparaging documents are systematically silenced by state agents who level trumped up charges of terrorism against them. An example given earlier in the chapter about Human rights activist, Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubhu, an editor of an independent publication, shed some light on Eswatini's status regarding censorship of material that is considered to be seditious. On the censorship of school material, Vincent (2018) expresses her sentiments as follows:

The tight restriction placed on the news media and voices of dissent extends beyond the control of state television, radio, and print media to the world of book publishers. Macmillan Publishers holds a monopoly on the production of educational materials following an agreement with the government first struck in 1979 and renewed for a further ten years in 1988. In turn, local writers and editors hired by Macmillan practise a form of self-censorship, as they expunge from their own work as well as that of others any material that might be considered subversive by the state (p.160).

The stifling of freedom of expression is clearly affecting the kind of material that is produced and allowed to circulate, resulting in the duplication of the same ideas that glorify the monarchy and strengthen oppressive practices. Nonetheless the available literature, although inadequate will provide an insight into the subject under discussion. Reading literature gives an insight into the author's interpretation of life as well as the society that has influenced her writing. Although a literary text may be a mirror of a particular society, readers from different locations may be challenged to reflect about what they read and to form new ideas about life. Writers explore a variety of strategies to engage society on certain issues. Poetry as one of the art forms has been explored by some Swati women as a means of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society. The discussion that follows in the next section elaborates on the role of poetry in influencing social change.

2.4 The role of poetry as an agent of social change

Poetry is a remarkable genre of literature which plays a significant role in society, it also provides aesthetic pleasure (Kurup, 1999). Its magnificent composition sets it apart from the rest of literary texts in that while it entertains through verse, it also serves as a social conscience. The poet who is at liberty to critique social maladies explores poetry and its effect is unmistakable. Poetry comprises both the oral and written forms, but the focus here is on written poetry. The section below discusses different views on poetry which aims for societal transformation. Collins' (1990b) statement that texts are influenced by the author's "social, cultural, class and gendered location" (p.17) will be foundational in the discussion that follows. Shelley (2019) also supports this claim by describing poetry as a definitive hope for social renewal which is direct, and yields immediate effect.

Rexroth (1959) describes poetry as the art of language which may be used to represent and criticise historic events of a particular society. The poet may be seen as an enemy of the advantaged and influential members of society who benefit from exploiting others. To the oppressed, the poet is a friend who gives voice to their plight. This statement is affirmed by Amateshe (1979) who notes that the voice of the poet is the voice of the masses and that social comments are expressed through poetry. Rexroth's perception of poetry aligns with the feminist poetry being studied here in that the women in each text unveil different facets of their oppression. Their silence on the domination that they experience may be a result of their feelings of powerlessness. Women poets, therefore, become the voice of the subdued women, and in the process, they risk being targeted for assail. For instance, Sarah Mkhonza, one of the poets whose poems have been selected, has in the past fallen victim of attack for being vocal about issues of injustice in Eswatini.

Poetry communicates with anyone who wants to be communicated with. The poet visualises an audience and then she expresses her message with the hope that the message will yield positive outcomes. Not only does poetry aim at society, but it may also express the personal experiences of the poet to the point that the reader can in fact reconstruct the poet's life story. An example is T.S. Eliot's poetry: although he denies any emotion in his poetry, it actually exposes his inner life (Rexroth, 1959). Decades later, Miller and Greenberg (1981) made similar assertions about the role of poetry to address the shortcomings and injustices of society. An example drawn from W.H. Auden's poem "The Unknown Citizen" is given to illustrate this point. In the poem, the speaker is the voice of the state commending traits that the poet disapproves of. The poet is adopting the ironic stance to criticise, albeit in a sarcastic manner, what is being frowned on.

Similarly, Galvin (2005) observes that poetry represents the consciousness of the people, because of the immediacy it brings about by the artistic language it uses. This assertion is supported by O'Siadhail's (1991) statement that poetry should have an immediate impact on society; otherwise it is irrelevant. The reason that poetry yields an immediate response is that people are emotional beings and so they respond to poetry in far better ways than they do to other means of communication. Boni (2017)

acknowledges the significance of poetry because of the educational role that it plays and its part in shaping the young. Reference is made to Plato's Republic where poets were banished from Homer's city-state for having painted a bad image of the gods, and hence polluted the minds of the young. Further on, Boni (2017) notes that poetry creates a universe for humanity to share. Fikile Mnisi's poem "Hlakanipha mfati" is a plea to subjugated women to assert themselves and demand a better treatment for womenfolk: this, she notes, will result in women enjoying a better social space in society.

The emotional side of poetry has been acknowledged. Poetry follows paths of emotions, of sensitivity and of the imagination as it transmits human knowledge and values (*ibid.*): poetry aims at giving birth to an emotional state of the reader. Burt, Fried, Jackson, Warn (2007) add that reading poetry appeals to the reader and generates empathy and humanity in them.

Wordsworth describes good poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions; poetry just explodes without rehearsal. The prevailing mood is what supports authentic poetry; it just explodes without rehearsal. Wordsworth believes that poetry is composed of emotions that had sunk deep into one's heart. When those emotions finally find an outlet at a later stage, good poetry is born: "Deep emotion and notion are the essential condition for poetry" (Shelley, 2019, p. 48). All the poems in this study support this view in that the one reading them is moved emotionally, as the texts expose culturally entrenched injustices perpetrated against women in Eswatini.

While Wordsworth argues against the use of elevated language unnecessarily, Shelley (2019) supports exploration of elevated language. According to Wordsworth, poetry ought to use the same simple diction used in everyday communication, and he believes that striving for a lofty style kills the spontaneity of good poetry. However, Shelley (2019) argues that, as men naturally use metaphors during moments of emotional excitement, so poetry should explore figurative language at such moments of heightened feelings. Wordsworth's stance on the use of language seems to be contrary to the position that this study has adopted, because the focus here is on the effective use of elevated language to expose social maladies. In Eswatini, critiquing socially entrenched habits is frowned on; therefore, if one seeks to challenge the *status*

quo, she ought to do so in a manner that is unobtrusive and poetic language does make provision for that.

Furthermore, Wordsworth considers poetry as a tool for communicating philosophical truths about life and teaching moral lessons. Poetry has been lauded for being effective in revealing truth and for making one wiser. Through the medium of poetry, the poet teaches and imparts moral lessons (Shelley, 2019). While teaching how one ought to live in society, the poet also offers emotional and rational satisfaction. Moreover, as many changes take place in society, the poet has a duty to enhance those changes using language in its purest form (*ibid.*).

Poetry is one of the various ways used to provoke members of society to take action, and the elusive style of this genre makes it easy for poets to critique practices that have been accepted as a norm. Through their poetry, women are able to question or even challenge husbands who abuse family resources. Culturally, Swati married women do not have authority over family properties, even if it is them who contribute significantly towards their acquisition. When husbands misuse family assets, women suffer in silence. However, poetry gives women an outlet to raise their protest and as they do so they influence other women to take a stand against women's economic abuse. Ohito & Nyachae (2018) made a similar observation in their assertion that poetry may be employed as a stratagem for social action. From the selected poems, "Hlakanipha mfati" succinctly makes this point. The author is a woman who experienced economic abuse in her previous marriage and in her poem she incites other women to put an end to being abused economically. Teachers and learners who read the text reflect on their experiences and those of others around them and they "analyse their social worlds" (Richardson, 1994, p. 522) and seek out ways to emancipate themselves from the induced economic bondage. The language in the texts goes beyond exposing unfair practices to enabling the women to understand that there is another reality which is better than their current state. Leggo (2004) attests that "language works to open up possibilities for constructing understanding" (p. 30).

2.4.1 Feminist poetry

Suhadi, Baluqiah and Mariansyah (2016) describe the role of poetry from the feminist perspective, pointing out that feminist poetry influences change by using different media to spread the poets' beliefs. Conversely, it may be said that feminist ideology influences contemporary writers to use their poems as media to propagate their philosophy. This poetry challenges gender stereotypes that portray women as weaker by giving them a new identity that presents them as strong and capable, this view is supported by the poems in this study. Over and above, feminist poetry rejects popular notions of culture that promote the subjugation of women through assigning gendered social roles to women: these predetermined roles which exist in both private and public spheres are vehemently opposed. Poetry advocates equal rights socially, personally, politically and professionally, hence "reordering society" (Suhadi, et al., 2016, p. 154). Themes of powerless females are revealed by portraying them as silent and passive. For example, Maya Angelo's poems address women's oppression at the hands of intimate partners (Rani, 2012). Women's silence and passivity may be seen as a form of protest against oppressive culture (Suhadi et al., 2016).

Like other art forms, poetry has a musical aspect: however, in this study attention is given more to the message than to the melody. While being entertained by poetry, readers are also drawn to reflect about the message in the text. This stratagem has been used by poets to communicate since the 1980s, according to (Fiore, 2015). In the lines below, Lorde (1984) expressly sums up the significance of poetry in the lives of oppressed women:

For women, the, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, thoughts are made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action (Lorde, 1984, p. 37).

One is inclined to agree with the statement above because the medium of poetry creates an avenue for subaltern women to self-express and when they do so they are able to reach out to others in a similar predicament. Although the aesthetic aspect of poetry cannot be overlooked, its semantic function gives it its appeal. To the subjugated women, poetry 'is a vital necessity' of their existence. The women do not

just appreciate poetry but they need it to survive; their hope for a better future is grounded on poetry. The selected poems illustrate this point through utilizing figures of speech to expose the various forms of women's oppression, indicating the effects of such repression as well as revealing women's preferred identity. As it has already been noted that women in Eswatini have been socialized to keep quiet even in situations that threaten their dignity, a vast majority of them succumb to this. The female poets who defy this belief and go ahead to compose feminist poetry, express what the other women fear to speak about; they express their discontent on how they have been treated, showing how they feel about certain practices that have been accepted and propagated as norm. The women's poems negate the narrative that has been defended by gate-keepers of culture who benefit from the subjugation of women. Since women who have been socialized and conditioned to embrace suffering promulgate their own misery, which is done for the benefit of men, the poetic texts function to shed some light on the women so that their blind loyalty is shattered and they understand that culture has been used as an agent of their oppression. This awareness will result in 'tangible action'.

The literature reviewed above shows that poetry is a disruptive force which exposes social injustice. Thus, Amateshe (1979) concludes that oppressors have no use for poetry. In order to study poetic texts effectively, certain considerations ought to be noted. These include the theoretical lens foregrounding the analysis of the text, sound patterns and figures of speech. These elements work together to draw out meaning from the poetic text. This research applies cognitive poetics as a theoretical lens.

2.5 Cognitive poetics

Reading and analysing a literary text is influenced by several factors, the theoretical stance taken by a literary critic being one. Literary critics derive and create multiple meanings and interpretations from a literary text by adopting a certain theoretical stance. Louwse and van Peer (2009) add that reading a literary text is influenced by the societal norms and values of an individual. In this research, theoretical stance will take pre-eminence. To study the poetic texts by selected Swati women poets, cognitive poetics will be explored to understand how meaning from the texts may be extracted. In the 1970's, Reuven Tsur coined the term cognitive poetics to refer to the

perceptual effects of literary works in readers (Harrison and Stockwell, 2014). Since then, cognitive poetics has been evolving.

Tsur's (2008) cognitive poetics considers the relationship between the structure of literary texts and their effects. This approach to cognitive poetics differs from Lakoff school's which is mainly concerned with meanings. Tsur's approach is concerned with "meanings, emotions, unspeakable experiences and the sound structure of poetry, including rhyme and rhythm" (Tsur, 2008, p. 2). Reading a poem in line with cognitive poetics, therefore, requires that one takes into account "choice of words, forms of textual structures, and patterns of reasoning" (Tsur, 2008, p.8). Cognitive poetics may be psychological, sociological, historical or deconstructionist, according to Freeman, (2012). Here the focus will be on the meaning, emotions and the unspeakable experiences, read from the sociological perspective.

Cognitive poetics is about reading literature and it offers a way of thinking about poetry (Stockwell, 2002). Cognitive poetics apply principles of cognitive science, "the scientific study of the mind and intelligence" (Louwerse and van Peer, 2009, p. 2). Gavins and Steen (2003) aver that cognitive poetics is a new way of thinking about literature; how one reads and interprets poetry is influenced by one's world-view. Thus, Steen and Gavins (2003) allege that cognitive poetics is grounded in the reader's general cognitive capacities for making sense of the world. Stockwell asserts that cognitive poetics provides information on how readers construct meaning out of a literary text. From these statements one deduces that a reading and analysis of a literary text is subjective and it is open to multiple interpretations, depending on an individual reader and her/his context. However, according to Louwerse and van Peer (2009), this results in a methodological crisis. To resolve this crisis, perhaps, one ought to lean closely to the theoretical perspectives during the interpretation and analysis of the poems. Additionally, relating closely to the context of the poems may reduce the subjectivity, thus minimising methodological inconsistency.

Cognitive poetics applies cognitive linguistics and psychology to literary texts (Gavins and Steen, 2003). The linguistic aspect of the poem gives a description of language features in a non-evaluative way (Stockwell, 2002). Cognitive theory shows that meaning "does not reside in language so much as it is assessed by it" (Freeman, 2012,

p. 253). These statements elucidate Tsur's (2008) description of the linguistic aspect of cognitive poetics which point out that language is used to express, in conceptual ways, experiences that are not conceptual. Moreover, cognitive poetics enables a reader to appreciate a text in a deeper way by "turning conceptual language into experiential language" (Tsur, 2008, p. 2).

A poem is laden with information, and so a reading of a poem gives data regarding what is in the mind of the poet. The reader attempts to extract the information by drawing from her personal experiences to make sense of the written text. Hence Stockwell (2002, p. 2) alleges that "the meanings of texts are in the minds of readers; readers' experiences come into play when meaning is constructed out of reading a text". Perhaps to minimise subjectivity in reading a poetic text, one may take into account contextual information that informs the poem: these may include religion, life experiences, politics or even historical events as well as the circumstances under which the poem was written (Stockwell, 2002).

2.6 Poetic techniques used in the texts

Different poetic techniques are explored by feminist poets to challenge the oppression of women. While some poets prefer to be direct, others opt for subtlety, achieved for instance by the use of sarcasm. Other popular poetic tropes include similes, metaphors, hyperbole, imagery, oxymoron, rhetorical questions and repetition. Certain factors within each poet's social environment may be instrumental in informing the approach that a poet may adopt in her poetry. To get deeper into the meaning, one shall also explore how the selected Swati women poets manipulate the different figures of speech as a vehicle to engage society in the on-going debate on social issues affecting women. The section below briefly discusses metaphor: while all the figures of speech explored are important, metaphor is given prominence because cognitive science places metaphor at the centre of language and thought (Stockwell, 2002).

2.6.1 Metaphor

Stockwell (2002) describes metaphor as the use of one expression to refer to something else in a way that is meaningful. Smith (2002) says a metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is described as something that it resembles. Similarly, van Rooyen et al. (2008) say a metaphor deviates from the literal communication to describe one phenomenon in terms of another by drawing comparison between the two. Also, metaphor is said to portray one thing as being another by making an implicit comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics (Shelley, 2019). Although the definitions given above are phrased differently, they all concur that metaphor has an element of comparison where one thing is given attributes of another thing that has similar traits. A metaphor is different from a simile in that it does not make use of the words 'like' or 'as' to develop the comparison. Metaphors are mostly found in poetic texts. When used, they express feelings emotively by communicating complex images and feelings to the reader (Shelley, 2019). Metaphors not only accentuate a message but they make reading a text pleasing, thus, Stockwell (2002) says they are ornamental. Using metaphors in poetry evokes strong mental images and sharpens the imagination of readers.

2.7 Reading poems through the perspective of narrative inquiry

Despite the prevalent use of elevated language, poetic texts tell a story; through studying those stories, one appreciates the message that a poet is communicating. Similarly, the texts being studied relate stories about the different realities of women in Eswatini. As a social conscience, the poets question and challenge issues that some members of society fear to address, such as the reality that there are class differences in the country, that women are the lower social class and that culture is used to endorse and promulgate discrimination between the two sexes. The poets' freedom enables them to be the voice of the voiceless women who have been systematically silenced. NI is significant in interpreting and analysing poetic texts so that the reader may appreciate a text fully, and at the same time, be enlightened on what the texts are reflecting about women in Eswatini. In this research, stories embedded in poetry are studied for purposes of generating data which adds to the body of existing knowledge.

NI is rooted in the humanities (Ary et al., 2002). The term NI was first used by Canadian researchers Connelly and Clandinin in 1990 to describe an already developing approach to teacher education that focused on personal storytelling. Their work claims that what we know in education comes from telling each other stories of educational experience, often informally. To address the research questions adequately, NI proved to be the appropriate research design, since it is concerned with analysing and criticising the stories we tell, hear and read. It is also concerned with the myth that surrounds us and is embedded in our social interactions. Webster and Mertova (2007) assert that:

Anecdotes, gossip, documents, journal articles, presentations, media and all other texts and artefacts that we use to construct and convey meaning in our daily lives are the instruments of the storytelling process (p. 7).

The ontological stance adopted for analysing the poetic texts is that people, both individually and collectively, live to create stories that they tell; when the stories are told, people relive those experiences. It seems that Swati women's lives tell a story, but in reality those stories are told by poets who enjoy poetic licence. Another assumption is that people tell stories because they can always find something useful about an incident. Therefore, through NI one endeavours to find out how meaning is created from studying stories: people's experiences, beliefs and values. Moreover, since the agenda of women's emancipation from a culture of subjugation is gaining ground, it is pertinent to study how poetic texts address this issue, and also to find out the contribution of poetry in the construction of women's identity.

NI examines stories and makes meaning out of the stories, assuming that people interpret the world around them through studying texts; a case in point is the reality of privileged women, who, through their social disposition, are oblivious of the reality of an average Swati woman. Feminist poetry, therefore, makes them conscious of the reality of other women in the country. NI studies stories from three dimensions of setting: temporality, social setting and place. This study engaged all three dimensions in trying to understand how women's identity is constructed. Although the selected poems are from different geographic locations, women's experiences transcend all boundaries of time, society and place. Stories play a key role in helping us to give

meaning to ourselves, those around us and the world at large (*ibid.*). Sandelowski (1991, p. 163) supports this statement, and goes further to acknowledge the benefits of the narrative model to researchers in that they enable researchers to “gain insight into the way human beings understand and enact their lives through stories”.

In 2006, Moen made a significant contribution to NI, by addressing reasons why people tell stories, as well as factors that influence the telling of a story. In the first instance, people tell stories to recount their experiences in a particular context (Moen, 2006). As one studies feminist poetry in Eswatini, one becomes aware that on the one hand, Swati women are treated as domestic slaves, women suffer abuse of different kinds: physically, emotionally, economically, conjugally and economically; and, on the other hand, women have a preferred identity. From these stories, which are constantly being constructed, human knowledge is created. However, Moen (2006) cautions that the reality that is being created from stories is subjective because several factors influence how a story is told. One’s personal experiences and background influence how one interprets events; additionally, one’s interpretation of events affects how one tells the story. Another factor responsible for subjectivity in the stories that are being told lies with the disconnect between what actually happened and how the narrator interprets the experience. This results in the subjectivity of NI which, Gough (1991) alleges, produces multiple realities that are relative and depending on the prevailing factors from which they are constructed. To try to clarify this, Moen (2006) in Bruner (1984), makes a distinction between three issues: life as lived, experienced, and told.

A life lived is what actually happened. A life experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts, and meanings known to the person whose life it is. A life told is a narrative or several narratives influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience, and by the social context. This suggests that knowledge is influenced by reality, experience and expression (Moen, 2006, p. 61).

Stories help researchers look for recurrent themes, look for consequences by examining cause and effect in past stories, identify lessons that have been learnt that have influenced subsequent actions and behaviours and look for what worked by reflecting on personal, observed experiences and events (Yoder-Wise and Kowalski, 2003). Polkinghorne (2007) concurs with earlier researchers that NI is about studying

stories; people tell stories about themselves and about others, they also tell about everyday experiences and narrative researchers study those stories to understand certain phenomena about human life.

Narrative researchers seek to present narrative truth rather than historical truth. Obtaining narrative truth is a process which includes: collecting data, analysing and interpreting the information, providing justification of claims made, and validating those justifications by explaining what the text being analysed is intended to represent. Polkinghorne (2007) states that “Narrative research issues claim about the meaning life events hold for people. It makes claims about how people understand situations, others, and themselves” (*ibid.*, p. 476).

NI is based on storytelling, and many people enjoy hearing stories; hardly a day goes by without someone telling a story or hearing a story being told. One should bear in mind that the abundance of stories leads to them being taken for granted (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Of note also is that some stories do not get to be told because they have not made much of an impact on the one who would tell them since it is usually significant stories that are told, Webster and Mertova (2007) term such stories critical events. A critical event is one that has “life-changing consequences, and is intensely personal with strong emotional involvement” (Webster and Mertova, 2007, p. 83). Critical events stories form part of history, and they are told to each passing generation, keeping a record of life experiences, which gives room for exploration in research. Narratives should not be distanced from life because stories are shaped by personal experiences and the history of communities; they record important events, changing as new experiences are added. Similarly, women’s experiences in Eswatini are vast and diverse but in totality, they contribute towards what womanhood is composed of, feminist poets, therefore, focus on those experiences that are central in a feminist dialogue.

2.8 The significance of stories

Webster and Mertova (2007), exploring the significance of storytelling in narrative enquiry, aver that stories trace changes that have marked our development as thinking

beings. In studying human experience, NI takes into account the “complexities of characters, relationships and settings” (*ibid.*, p.10) Further, they add that:

Narratives contain accounts of human progress, perfectibility, decline and loss within a framework of culture and worldview. At the level of individual consciousness, stories record personal consciousness from infancy, through youth and adulthood, to old age (*ibid.*, p. 15).

Stories are also significant because when they are told, one learns life lessons; one need not go through the same experiences to learn these lessons. From the reported experiences, we learn how people respond when they go through certain experiences, instead of “experimenting with our own lives” (*ibid.*, p. 20). Furthermore, stories are used to “help one to make sense of her/his life, to explain certain actions and to justify a way of thinking” (*ibid.*). Through narrative, knowledge is transferred and new ideas are communicated. The selected poems expose different aspects of womanhood in the Swati context: realities of being married as revealed by: “Umfati”, “Vuka mfati”, “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Ngihlushwa yindvodza”, “Tibongo temnumzana”, “Kantsi wawukhona yini” and “Hlakanipha mfati”; raising children in conditions of abject poverty as revealed by: “Umfati”, “Vuka mfati”, “Tibongo temnumzana”, “Betfwele kabetfulwa” and “Kantsi wawukhona yini”. Worse still, the poems reveal that if a woman is treated with dignity she is often suspected of practising witchcraft, as revealed by “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”. From these examples it is apparent that being a woman predisposes one to hardship; that even in the best of conditions, as it is the case in “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”, a woman will not be able to enjoy a life that is not without blame. A reader of the poems learns valuable lessons about what it means to be a woman in Eswatini, this knowledge is acquired without having to go through the experience that other women have gone through. Moreover, how different women respond to different situations informs them and prepares them to handle such situations if they should experience them in their own lives.

From the point of view of research, narratives make a significant contribution to the field of literature studies and they also add educational value from which critical life lessons are learnt. A study of human experience is framed by NI; additionally, NI enables one to express criticism in ways that are socially acceptable. What makes NI appealing is its ability to “explore and communicate internal and external experience”

(*ibid.*, p. 10). It also has the capability of “crossing the boundaries between research and practice” (*ibid.*). Narratives carry traces of human life that we want to understand. They also enable us to interpret the world in more flexible ways by not placing strict rules on which materials are suitable for investigating a matter (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013). Moreover, NI does not place strict rules on which epistemological perspective to follow; instead, it enables a researcher to see meaning from different perspectives in order to learn how meaning is constructed (*ibid.*). Moen (2006, p. 60) makes three basic claims about narrative research: human beings organise their experiences of the world into narratives; narrative researchers believe that the stories that are told depend on the individual’s past and present experiences, his or her values, the people the stories are told to, the addressees, and when and where they are being told; NI is multi-voiced. On the whole, NI is human-centred and it recounts human experiences (Webster and Mertova, 2007).

2.9 Preamble to the discussion of poetic texts

The poems studied here are about the experiences of Swati women in the country; they capture the social construction of womanhood and gendered identity, depicting the theme of women’s oppression by using different personas: in some cases, the persona is directly involved and she speaks in the first person, in others, the speaker adopts the second person voice and in a majority of cases, she is an observer, speaking in the third person. When the persona speaks in the first person, she is able to give the reader a perception into her attitudes and feelings towards what is happening or what is being done to her thus enabling the reader to appreciate the information from the persona’s perspective. The second person allows the reader to overhear a ‘conversation’ between the persona and the woman that is being addressed, in this context, the narrator assumes the voice of different members of the Swati society. The third person point of view allows the reader to have an unlimited perspective into what is happening; here, women poets who are aware of the full picture about women’s experiences, use the third person voice as a technique to allow the reader privileged insight into issues that the oppressed women are oblivious of owing to their socialisation which causes them to have a restricted ability to perceive the full extent of their oppression.

Poems were read from Tsur's (2008) cognitive poetics perspective; meaning was extracted by studying the internal meaning of the poems. Each poem was translated from Swati into English and analysed; this was done for the benefit of the reader. The order followed was: introduction and presentation of poem, analysis and identification of themes, recognizing figures of speech used and explanation of their significance contextually, also drawing on their regular usage. Moreover, the different ways in which women's oppression plays out were identified, including: women as domestic slaves who provide for the welfare of their masters, a two-class society which distinguishes between males and females as being first-class and second-class citizens, respectively, women as providers of free labour and women being compelled to embrace an oppressive dress-code (badge of slavery). Another category is that of women suffering emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Furthermore, women were shown to be suffering economic oppression, being breadwinners, facing poverty or lack and being forced by circumstances to work in deplorable conditions. The perpetuation of the culture of abuse and marriage phobia were shown to be effects of women's oppression. Also included was, how women's preferred identity of being independent and confident has been expressed. Different waves of feminism which have influenced the composition of the poems were alluded to during the discussion, this is so because the poems have been grouped according to the year of publication, which is linked with a different wave of feminism

Analysed poems include: "Umfati" (Glory Mamba), "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" (Glory Mamba), "Umloyi" (Glory Mamba), "Betfwele kabetfulwa" (Sarah Mkhonza), "Vuka mfati" (Sisana Dlamini), "Tibongo temnumzane" (Sisana Dlamini), "Hlakanipha mfati" (Fikile Mnisi), "Kantsi wawukhona yini?" (Sisana Dlamini), "Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika" (Thembekile Msibi) and "Washikitela mfati" (Cynthia Hlophe).

To advance the theme, the different poets exploited a number of figures of speech including: repetition, simile, metaphor, personification, animation, imagery, oxymoron, euphemism, juxtaposition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole and onomatopoeia; to achieve the following effects: repetition - to emphasise a point, simile - to compare two things that are similar by using 'as' and 'like', metaphor - to compare two similar things by calling one by the other instead of using words such as 'as' and 'like', personification

- to attribute human qualities to a non-human entity, animation - to attribute animal qualities to a human being, imagery - to create a mental picture of what the poet is trying to communicate, oxymoron - to contradict oneself deliberately in order to achieve a certain effect, euphemism - to use gentle words instead of using harsh words to describe a situation, juxtaposition - to present two things that are different side by side in order to accentuate their differences, rhetorical questions - to engage the reader in the dialogue by challenging her to think about the questions that have been asked, hyperbole - to exaggerate deliberately in order to draw the attention of the reader and onomatopoeia - to create a sound effect in order to create an auditory image for the reader (Khumalo and Vilakati, 2012).

2.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, different theories that are significant in the analysis of the poetic texts have been discussed, the philosophical ideas were selected according to their relevance in explaining the issues the poetic texts address. Although a range of theories were identified as being appropriate in advancing an understanding of women's social challenges in Eswatini, as expressed in the poems, it is worth noting that feminism featured prominently. A wide range of feminist thoughts were explored in terms of how they may enable one to interpret the poems adequately. Furthermore, literature that explains the significance of literature, particularly, poetry, was discussed. Moreover, the significance of poetic language in the analysis of poems was explained. The theories have been central in foregrounding the different ways in which the Swati society constructs womanhood and gendered identity, revealing that while some women have embraced oppression, there are some who resist domination but they desire freedom from social bondage. The poets who have composed the feminist poems are an example of those women who, having been inspired by feminist ideologies, are spearheading that transition.

CHAPTER THREE

SECOND WAVE FEMINISM POEMS

3.0 Introduction

The first poems addressing gender and feminist issues appeared in an anthology that was published in 1986; coincidentally, this was the period during which second wave feminism was in effect. As earlier noted by Barry & Grady (2019), it was during this movement that research work on feminist concerns, which had previously been obstructed, gained recognition. In Eswatini, conversations on women's issues were spearheaded by Glory Mamba in her three poems: "Umfati", "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" and "Umloyi", but she exercised caution by not being radical; instead, she opted for a gentler approach, one that Nkealah (2017) refers to as "snail sense". The poems seem to lean towards the Eurocentric definition of women. The poems present women's identity from a victim's point of view, which ideally fits Eswatini's social construction of a traditional timid woman. While this trend appears distinctly in poems which are told from the third person "Umfati" and second person "Ngihlushwa yindvodza", respectively, it is not so pronounced in "Umloyi" where the speaker is a child. Speaking in the first person, the child demonstrates a revolutionary attitude and she expresses herself without much inhibitions (Verschuur & Destremau, 2012). Her bitterness and defiant anger are in spite of the fact that the child had equally been exposed to a culture that is oppressive towards women and girls. However, unlike most women, she had not embraced a victim stance of suffering in silence like a subaltern (Spivak, 2003). The generation gap that exists between the women in "Umfati" and "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" and the child in "Umloyi" could be the reason that their response towards victimisation is different; while the older generation is timid, the younger is valiant. How the different generations have been socialised to behave in society is a factor in their response to how the community treats them.

3.1 Poem (i) “Umfati”

“Umfati” is a narrative poem that tells a story about the plight of married women. The persona, who is an observer, is narrating issues that are happening in two households where the men are womanisers and the women are suffering a similar plight. The narrator, who appears to be a member of one of the homes, starts by praising a woman for embracing domestic slavery, and then she goes on to relate the escapades of men in two families. The title of the poem “Umfati” indicates that the poem is about a woman, and a reading of the text reveals the hardships that she encounters from handling domestic chores to raising the husband’s children born from his illicit affairs. The persona also describes what happens in the other family. By comparing the experiences of the women in the two homes, she shows that women experience the same kind of plight across the Swati society.

Below is the poem “Umfati”.

Umfati (Glory N. Mamba)

Stanza 1

1. *Yemfati longesheya,*
2. *Utsi bhu! bhu! – ni na?*
3. *Ngitsi bhu! bhu! sidvwaba,*
4. *Ngoba nani kuhlala phasi umfati,*
5. *Lutfuli kwakhela, lulale, esidvwabeni, nani!*

6. *Uyasukuma akhwishitele umfati,*
7. *Lwati lwakhe alukhiphe lonkhe.*
8. *Amise umuti wakhe,*
9. *Yize isebenta nendvodza yakhe.*

10. *Uyasukuma umfati,*
11. *Hhayi kuhlala ati.*
12. *Lona lelo gama uyaliphikisa “umfa’ ti”.*
13. *Litsi uyawufa ati,*
14. *Ngoba kufanele lihletjwe lakakhe livi,*
15. *Lihletjelwe indvodza ebusuku sekulelwe,*

16. *Hhayi kuvakala emini libalele lwati lwemfati,*

17. *Libalele beva bonkhe,*
18. *Kungafuneki bonkhe bati lwati lwemfati.*

Stanza 2

Stanza 3

A woman

Hey woman over there,
What is it you are shaking?
It is a leather skirt I am shaking,
For a woman cannot sit down,
Lest your leather skirt collects dust!

A woman gets up and gets busy,
And displays all her skills.
To support her home,
Despite that her husband has a job.

A woman gets up,
She does not sit around knowingly.
She negates the name “*umfa’ ti*” woman
The name suggests she lives to tell,
For she speaks in a whisper,
She whispers to her husband while they
sleep at night,
A woman does not display her
knowledge,
For all to hear,
Not everyone will know what a woman
Knows.



19. *Bhula sidvwaba sakho mfati!*
20. *Laba lihle kadze lakakho lilungelo,*
21. *Kutsi ngetento njalo lubokwatiwa lwakakho
Lwati*
22. *Hhayi ngelivi lona ngoba lingaze linqonge,*
23. *Kuthula etibindzini temadvodza likuhliphite.*
24. *Yebo imisebenti yemfati,*
25. *Vele ticucu tendvodza iyatibutsa;*
26. *Kutsi imiti imile, yakhile, imihle kangaka nje!*
27. *Yimisebenti yebafati.*

Stanza 4

28. *Ha! Sidvwaba semfati,*
29. *Kusibalula kodvwa nje ngingacala ngakuphi?*
30. *Sona lesi imisendvo yaso inesandla!*
31. *Sandla sekukhwacelisa tibi tendvodza,*
32. *Tibi ibuye itihudvula ngeticatfulo,*
33. *Ticatfulo beyinyatsela ngato lapho kukubi
khona.*
34. *Bantfwana lamuhla basindzana kangaka nje,*
35. *Babatsatfu vo, babamfati munye!*

Stanza 5

36. *Sidvwaba semfati,*
37. *Ngisitsandza sidlalisa emabaleni ketfu,*
38. *Sitsi vutfu, vutfu, siya, le, na le,*
39. *Umfati welikhaya alifakele sizotsa,*
40. *Sidvwaba sakhe silifakele sitfunti likhaya
Laketfu,*
41. *Likhaya laketfu lingenjengelakubo Hlengiwe.*

Stanza 6

42. *Ingani naboHlengiwe uyabachwandzela,*
43. *Uyabawashela,*
44. *Uyabayisa esikolweni,*
45. *Ibhansi uyayekhwela ayomcupha bhanana
EKhubutha,*
46. *Abuye awaphise nemahewu, awabhake
Nemafethi.*
47. *Sikhelekhele sendishi enhloko, tinwele
tingacotfuki;*
48. *Inguzuma yeligabha esandleni, tiphanga
tingadlotfuki;*
49. *Emagundwane emakethe kum'balekela
angadzinwa.*

Stanza 7

50. *Galaza welibhodo umcisha umphefumulo*

Shake your leather skirt woman!
Your rights have been in place for a long
time,
Your skills are displayed through your
Acts
You do not reveal your competence by
talking,
When you talk, you disrupt the peace
within a man.
The acts of a woman,
Consist in cleaning up after a man,
Homes are intact, they are beautiful!
It is because of the acts of women.

Ah! You leather skirt of a woman,
Where do I begin to laud the leather
skirt?
Your deeds have hands!
The hand that covers man's flaws,
The flaws that he brings home with his
shoes,
The shoes that walk on evil soil.
Raising children is very expensive these
days,
Just three are enough for one woman!

A woman's leather skirt,
I like to see you wearing it in my yard,
The skirt shakes about moving this way
and that way,
A family woman dignifies her family,
Her leather skirt gives dignity to our home,
Our home is like that of Hlengiwe's.

Hlengiwe's mother fends for them,
She washes their clothes,
She educates them,
She boards a bus and goes to
stock up on bananas at Khubutha,
She brews mageu, and bakes fat cakes.

She carries a heavy basket on
her head, but her hair does not fall off;
On her hand, she carries a large
jug, but her Swati bangles do not break;
At the market place, rats duck
from her.

A huge pot is about to kill her



<p>51. <i>uNaboHlengiwe.</i> 52. <i>Bane vo bantfwana labakhanulwa esibhedlela, Nguye</i> 53. <i>Cobo lwakhe,</i> 54. <i>Kepha lababili unina wabo akekho la,</i></p> <p>55. <i>Nalabanye lababili ngalokunjalo;</i> 56. <i>Labo-ke bona bafake umtukulu,</i> 57. <i>UNaboMtukulu- ndzini wabuyela esikolweni,</i></p> <p>58. <i>Luswane lwakhe lwagcogcwa nguyise.</i></p>	<p>It's Hlengiwe's mother. She birthed four children only at the hospital, She herself, There are two more whose mother is not here, Two others; Those are grandchildren, The mother of the grandchildren went back to school, Her baby was rescued by her father.</p>
Stanza 8	
<p>59. <i>Loyo galaza akadlali akahleki.</i> 60. <i>Tinswane letimbili titsandza kufika,</i> 61. <i>Teyise waHlengiwe;</i> 62. <i>Wente budvodza phela kungabaphiki bantfwana bakhe.</i></p>	<p>The giant pot is no joke. Two infants have just arrived, They are for Hlengiwe's father; He acted in a manly manner by not denying paternity.</p>
Stanza 9	
<p>63. <i>Kepha sidvwaba nani, kunikwa unina waHlengiwe loyo.</i> 64. <i>Leso sidvwaba singekho, kute umfati Kulelokhaya.</i> 65. <i>Sidvwaba singekho, kute kwalelokhaya.</i></p> <p>66. <i>Vele likhaya alikho, ichashiwe lendlu.</i> 67. <i>Naso-ke sibindzi seyise waHlengiwe!</i></p>	<p>The leather skirt (wife) bears the Responsibility. If the leather skirt is missing, there is no wife in that home. In the absence of a leather skirt, there is no home That is not a home, it is a house. This is how bold Hlengiwe's father is!</p>

(Ntiwane et al., 1986)

3.1.1 Poetry analysis “Umfati”

The poem opens with a rhyme in the first two lines. The rhyme typifies two women on either side of a fence. The friendship between these women results from their similar experiences. They identify with one another because they have already self-categorised as virtuous wives (Hogg et al., 2004). These women are exchanging pleasantries and engaging in small talk. Their conversation centres on their home chores and how they display their capabilities as wives. To prove their capability, they work around the clock without taking a moment to rest, lest their leather skirts collect dust (lines 4 and 5). As capable wives, they have taken it upon themselves to support the family despite the fact that their husbands are employed. These women are not just working moderately, but they work like slaves to prove that they are indeed capable wives: “*Lwati lwakhe alukhiphe lonkhe*” (line 7).

The women are forging a relationship of friendship, probably because they both operate at the same level of being wives, and their marital experiences have drawn them together; this is the case in the oral poem “Ye mfati longesheya”, but in the oral poem “Ye Nabo Thoko”, where a woman, with a senior position is giving orders to another, supposedly with a junior status matrimonially, there is no friendship; the women are not at the same level socially. As already mentioned, a woman’s social status in a family set-up, is elevated once she becomes a mother-in-law, in which case, she will have authority over fellow women, not men: even then, becoming a mother-in-law is not always guaranteed.

Lines 2 and 3: “*bhu! bhu!*” is a repeated onomatopoeia, describing the sound that a leather skirt (*sidvwaba*) makes when a woman is moving about doing her chores. The repetition of the onomatopoeia enhances the image of *sidvwaba* and its accompanying sound. Of note is that the leather skirt, which is traditional wear for Swati women is heavy. When the woman wears it while doing her chores, she bears the weight of both the skirt and the burden of the chores, similarly, in the oral poem “Ye mfati longesheya”, the same imagery is created, on top of that, it is stated that *sidvwaba* has an unpleasant odour, shown by the symbol of *licaca*. In line 5 there is a personification *lulale*, suggesting that should the woman rest, her *sidvwaba* would collect dust. The personification is used as encouragement to the woman that she should stay busy, lest she appears to be lazy. For the speaker to suggest that her leather skirt will collect dust once she rests is an exaggeration which serves to show that society frowns upon a woman who is slacking, but applauds one who has embraced domestic slavery. Another onomatopoeic word in line 6, *akhwishitele*, mimics the actions of one who is moving about hastily and it paints an image of a woman that society commends; a good Swati woman should show vigour. The two issues that stand out in this stanza are woman as a domestic slave and the oppressive dress code. Society dictates how a woman ought to dress even if the dress does not feel comfortable: a typical example is the leather skirt that the woman in the poem is said to be wearing. Seemingly, women are aware that *sidvwaba* is used to oppress them, in the oral poem “Ye mfati longesheya”, the speaker describes it as being heavy, having an unpleasant odour, and as being used to capture and confine a prideful woman.

The second stanza continues with the description of the virtuous wife. She is always working; she does not rest because work is virtue for the woman. She works to make her husband look good and every good work that she does is attributed to her husband. Lines 14 and 15 say: “*Ngoba kufanele lihletjwe lakakhe livi...Lihletjelwe indivodza ebusuku sekulelwe*”. These lines suggest that a woman is not supposed to display her competence, but instead she is to share any brilliant ideas that she might have with her husband. It is “un-Swati” for a woman to appear more knowledgeable than her husband, thus in the stanza, a woman’s minority status has been portrayed.

Stanza 3 urges the woman to present herself worthy by not being talkative; she has to maintain a calm spirit to prove her worth and she is warned against being loud lest she disturbs her husband’s peace. “*Hhayi ngelivi lona ngoba lingaze linqonge, ...Kuthula etibindzini temadvodza likuhliphite*” (lines 22 and 23). This attitude typifies what is happening in the politics of the country where freedom of speech is stifled. Further on in the stanza, the woman is praised for having taken in her husband’s children sired outside the marriage: “*Vele ticucu tendvodza iyatibutsa*” (line 25). By this act, she has ensured the stability in the home while at the same time submitting to emotional abuse. Although the persona appears to be praising the woman, one finds it sarcastic that the woman is lauded for allowing herself to be taken for granted. This stanza reveals society’s perception of a virtuous woman: she is timid because society stifles her rights to self-express.

In the fourth stanza, the persona continues to praise the woman, albeit sarcastically. She is praised for mothering her husband’s children; the children that he sired outside the marriage. Sarcasm highlights the plight of the woman, it seems as if she is being praised for submitting to oppression and the man is being celebrated for his waywardness. This is a strategy to draw attention to the social maladies that the poem depicts.

The euphemism *tibi* (line 31) refers to the outcome of the man’s promiscuous act; which has resulted in him having children out of wedlock. *Tibi* serves to ‘dignify’ men’s promiscuity. While on one hand the woman is working, on the other hand, the man is creating trouble. Lines 32 and 33 elaborate on the issue of the man’s promiscuity, described by means of imagery, how his acts can be likened to someone dragging

rubbish with his shoes, into the family compound. This act of misdemeanour is a very costly act. The speaker acknowledges the burden of raising children born in wedlock, stating that it becomes worse when more children are added into the family. Consequent to this, the woman is pushed to poverty with the many mouths that she has to feed. Many women in Eswatini face a similar plight because they have to put up with their husbands' promiscuity without question. Their poverty is created deliberately.

Stanza 5 presents a woman as one that makes a home dignified. The speaker seems to give more attention to the *sidvwaba* that the woman wears. The entire stanza refers to the skirt as if it is the mark of womanhood, as if the woman is synonymous with the leather skirt. *Sidvwaba* is a very significant tool of oppressing women; the society uses it to police women's bodies (Arndt, 2002); done for the benefit of men. The persona describes the movement of the skirt as the woman goes about her daily chores. In line 37, personification describes the leather skirt as making dancing moves. This description creates an image of the skirt on the woman's body. In line 38, there is an onomatopoeia imitating the sound that the skirt makes as it moves this way and that. As the stanza draws to an end, the persona uses a comparison to introduce another issue; she compares her home with another one: *Likhaya laketfu linjengelakubo Hlengiwe*, thus creating suspense. One is left wondering about Hlengiwe's home and how it compares to the home that has been referred to all along. What stands out in this stanza is the emphasis on the leather skirt which is presented as a significant mark of a married woman, yet it is awkward for her to wear while going about with her home chores. Culturally, she is expected to wear the skirt as a sign of virtue. The leather skirt features as a symbol of oppression that is used against Swati women. They wear the skirt to prove that they are real women, thus conforming to what society dictates. Since women want to be socially accepted, they tend to embrace it so that they may fit into the category of an ideal woman that has been socially constructed.

Stanza 6 elaborates on Hlengiwe's mother and how her home compares to the other home. The comparison, albeit frugally, serves to reveal the commodification of women. Hlengiwe's mother provides for her children but there is no mention of the contribution that her husband makes towards the welfare of the family. In line 42 Hlengiwe's mother

is described as though she were a chicken. The word *uyabachwandzela* is an animation used to describe the acts of a hen that scratches the ground in search of food for her young ones. Chickens are known for being constantly engaged in a search for food and Stanza 6 presents Hlengiwe's mother as working around the clock to provide for her family like a domestic worker. This is ironic because men are said to be providers, so one would expect that the man be the one bending his back to support the family. Not only does she provide for their welfare, she also washes their clothes (line 43) and pays their school fees (line 44). The rest of the lines in the stanza suggest that she is unemployed, but despite that she uses her ingenuity to ensure that her family is provided for; she engages in micro-businesses such as buying and selling fruits, brewing traditional drink and making doughnuts to sell. She does all these just to ensure that her family is catered for; the tendency to make women responsible for the welfare of children is shown in the oral poems: "Thula mntfwanami" and "Koboyi koboyi", but the manner in which this attitude is expressed in the two poems is different; while in the first instance, the message is obvious, in the second one, it is implied that a child is the mother's responsibility.

Further on in the stanza in line 47 there is imagery that serves to describe how laboriously the woman carries on her chores. She carries a heavy basket on her head: "*Sikhelekhele sendishi enhloko, tinwele tingacotfuki*". The basket is heavy, it is expected that her hair will fall off on account of the weight on her head, but that is not the case. Here, one perceives this to mean that the woman is so tough that her body is able to withstand tasks that would otherwise break her. Moreover, in line 48, the woman is said to be carrying a large jug, in addition to the heavy basket that is on her head, painting an image of slavery. The woman is a pathetic figure of a domestic slave bearing a heavy weight in an effort to provide for her family. Again, one wonders about the whereabouts of the husband. As the head of the family, is it not his responsibility to ensure the welfare of his family? The woman is bearing this weight going to the market where she will be selling her wares. Conditions do not get better when she arrives at the market: where she sets up her stall, the conditions are abhorrent. The place is infested with rats: "*Emagundwane emakethe kum'balekela angadzinwa*" (line 49). This scene describes poverty, particularly from the perspective of rural women. Generally, it is in the face of poverty that rural women try to make ends meet.

The woman is presented as one who does all the domestic chores and at the same time she acts as the breadwinner. Ironically, the man who is traditionally considered as head of the family is not performing his responsibilities, but it is the woman who is doing her own part as well as doing what should be done by the man. The woman is presented as a domestic slave; she works around the clock doing hard work.

In Stanza 7, the woman returns home and she is faced with more hardships: “*Galaza welibhodo umcisha umphefumulo*” (line 50). After a long day at work, the woman is faced with cooking for a big family! The description of the pot reveals its size, which suggests that she is cooking for many people. The question now is: Who are these people that she is cooking for? The mystery of the huge pot unfolds in the stanza; there are many mouths to feed, and most of them are a result of the carelessness of *Uyise waHlengiwe*. The man has sired many children out of wedlock. Also, there is another child who was fathered by the son of Hlengiwe’s father. The mother of this additional child is a school girl, who after giving birth to the child brought her child to be cared for by NaboHlengiwe. In the Swati culture, a girl is free to bring a child to the family of her lover to be raised by the grandmother (mother of her lover) in the event that the father of the child does not pay maintenance. In a number of cases, the mothers raise the children single-handedly but, in this case, the child is raised by the grandmother (NaboHlengiwe). NaboHlengiwe has three children of her own. Lines 54, 55, 56 and 57 suggest that there are four extra children in the picture, of which one lives elsewhere, thus making a total of six children that NaboHlengiwe has to raise.

The burden of raising children born out of wedlock serves to show that the husband of NaboHlengiwe is promiscuous. The woman has to bear the burden of the man’s promiscuity. This is another form of oppression that the woman suffers. In the Swati culture it is the woman’s duty to care for her husband’s children, and these children are never referred to as illegitimate. In contrast, when a woman is suspected to have engaged in an adulterous affair that has resulted in the birth of a child, the child is called *livezandlebe* – a demeaning word used to refer to a woman’s love child. The double standards are evidence of a two-class society with the woman at the bottom of the social strata.

Stanza 9 repeats the sentiments on the responsibilities that the woman is given. In line 59 the word *galaza* helps to explain the size of the pot that is used for cooking to cater for the many mouths in the home. Additionally, there is personification *Loyo galaza akadlali akahleki*: this expression is used to refer to a person who is serious. It is as if the speaker is saying that the pot is huge in a 'serious' way. The next line expands on the issue of the man's irresponsible behaviour. He has probably sired two children almost simultaneously from different women, hence the- children are of the same age "*Tinswane letimbili tisandza kufika*" (line 60). It is as if Hlengiwe's mother is a dumping ground! The woman has clearly been dehumanized by the irresponsible acts of her husband, he, on the other hand, is being praised for having acted heroically by not denying paternity. Line 62 says "*Wente budvodza phela kungabaphiki bantfwabakhe*", which shows that society views men as being superior. Their misdemeanours are viewed as acts of heroism and they are actually praised for acting irresponsibly. The man enjoys his manhood with his lovers, but it is the wife who bears the responsibility of raising the children. The issues that stand out in this stanza are the man's promiscuity and the woman's submission; they paint a picture of women's subjugation.

The last stanza emphasises the importance of a woman in the Swati home. Without her, the home is incomplete. A woman is what makes a home complete. Without a wife, a home is not a home, it is but a house. The irony is with how the woman, who is a pillar of a home, is taken for granted and treated in such extremely inhumane ways, as shown in the text. This indicates that women are objectified. They are necessary to making a homestead respectable, yet at the same time they are not treated with respect. Another poignant issue is that the woman, with her minority status in the home, is the bread-winner. The man on the other hand is presented as some form of deity who is venerated and praised, even when he conducts himself irresponsibly. Moreover, the man is not seen to be contributing to the wellbeing of the home. On the contrary, he is sleeping around and siring children indiscriminately, and bringing those children home to burden his wife. To advance the theme of gendered women's abuse, as well as to portray how society constructs women's identity, a number of poetic devices were explored including comparison, onomatopoeia, sarcasm, euphemism, personification and imagery: however, the imagery and onomatopoeia are the most prominent figures of speech and they function in a

complementary manner. While the onomatopoeia enhances the auditory aspect and accentuates mental images, the imagery describes a man's promiscuous and reckless behaviour and juxtaposes it with a woman's toiling and submissiveness, which are made worse by the man's acts of indiscretion. Glory Mamba reveals that women suffer in silence because they are the subaltern. Moreover, since their voices are muted, they cannot speak, even if there is something worthy that they ought to say; rather, they share their brilliant ideas with their husbands in a whisper. It is ironic that women are necessary for dignifying a home, yet still, they are downtrodden.

3. 2 Poem (ii) "Ngihlushwa yindvodza"

The poem "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" is a poem of lament by a married woman, who is complaining about her alcoholic husband who is always drunk to the point that he has neglected his duties in the bedroom. It appears that this situation has been going on for quite some time and the woman is now feeling desperate as she is approaching menopause, yet childbearing is the essence of womanhood in the Swati culture. Due to the alcoholism of her husband, the woman might not get a chance of attaining motherhood; at this point, the woman is concerned about the prospects of her missing this crucial stage of her womanhood. The woman does not seem to complain about being deprived of her conjugal rights, but by merely complaining about not being with her husband is enough evidence that she is being deprived in that regard as well. Understandably, a good Swati woman is not expected to complain about 'petty' things because as a woman, her duty is towards her husband, seeing to it that he is satisfied in all respects. Day by day the woman watches her chances of being a mother diminish as she enviously watches other women enjoy being mothers. The woman nurses hope that perhaps someday her husband will fulfil his conjugal responsibilities. As the poem draws to its end, the woman is heard lamenting that the society is patriarchal and those at the helm do not care about the welfare of women. She laments the damage that alcohol is causing to society. The tone of the poem is sad with an air of desperation and no sign of hope.

The persona speaks in the first person, and through a soliloquy, she pours out her heart about challenges that she is experiencing in her marriage. This allows the reader access into the woman's private thoughts about her situation in the marriage. As a



subaltern, the woman's voice has been muted and the only avenue available for her to express herself is a soliloquy. The poem combines both simple language and images to describe the woman's preferred state of womanhood.

Below is the poem "Ngihlushwa yindvodza"

Ngihlushwa Yindvodza (Glory N. Mamba)

I am Troubled by a Man

Stanza 1

1. Awu, Nkhosi,
2. Litsemba lekuba ngumfati,
3. Ngibe yimbutfuma, ngiwugcishate ekhakhami;

4. Litsemba lekugona, ngimunyise, ngifinyise,
Ngiphipe.
5. Hhawu, tigendzevana talabanye bafati,
6. Sekugeza simongo kushiye siphundvu,

7. Kujake esikolweni.
8. Kimi seloku kwahlala litsemba kuphela,
9. Impilo yemuka nendvodza yami,
10. Kwasala litsemba lilunguta esikhaleni selufa,

11. Lufa lwekuklayeka kwemhlabatsi ngetulu,

12. Ngaphasi kubindze lesikhulukati sigadla
Sabhatata,

13. Kumbe – ke lidvumile ngayitolo,

14. Kutawubhubuka likhowe kuleyo ndzawo.

Oh, Lord,
The hope of being a woman,
To be a woman, and make my presence
known at my in-law's place;
The hope of nurturing a baby,

Lo, other women's babies,
When it washes the forehead and
leaves the back of the head,
Hurrying for school.
With me, it's just hope,
Livelihood was taken by my husband,
What remains is hope, peeping through
a crack,
The hope one gets when she sees the
ground cracking,
Hoping that perhaps a huge sweet
potato is about to break out from the
earth,
Or – perhaps, there was thunder the
previous day,
And a mushroom will spring out,

Stanza 2

15. Mine indvodza nginayo, kodwa anginayo,
16. Anginayo ngoba angiyati;
17. Ibuya ekhatsi nekhati kwebusuku,
18. Sikhiya kube ngumzokuzuku kungena
Emnyango;
19. Nase igcine yangena,
20. Embhedzeni iyawungena ngisho neticatfulo
Imbala,
21. Kumbe-ke kube kudze kakhulu kwekhwela
Emhedzeni,
22. I vele ilale phasi kwawo umbhedze.

For one, I have a husband, but I do not
have a husband,
I have not because I do not know him;
He returns in the middle of the night,
It is a struggle for the key to get into
the keyhole;
When he eventually enters,
He will get to bed with his shoes on,

Or, it will be hard to climb the bed,

He will eventually sleep under the bed.

Stanza 3

23. Ingabe ngitawushonaphi Nkhosi yami?

What shall I do, my Lord?

<p>24. <i>Loku indvodza ngiyo phela inkhosi yami.</i> 25. <i>Nebachachi betinkinga abanayo imiyalo</i> <i>Yemadvodza,</i> 26. <i>Bati umtsetfo weswati kuphela,</i> 27. <i>Ibe umndeni nalabadzala betfu bangekho la.</i> 28. <i>Kepha iminyaka yami yona seyihambile,</i> 29. <i>Tinyonga setitawutsandza kuhlangani.</i> 30. <i>Abawunaki locondzene nemasu ekuncoba</i> <i>tjwala;</i> 31. <i>Ingani bonkhe phela bangemadvodza,</i> 32. <i>Bayadla, likhulu labo.</i></p>	<p>Since the man is my lord. Even traditional advisers have no word of advice for men, All they know is Swati law, Yet family and elders are not around. I am getting advanced in years, I am about to pass child-bearing age. No one cares about curbing alcoholism; Because all of them are men, They feast, theirs is broad.</p>
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(Ntiwane, et al., 1986)

3.2.1 Poetry analysis “Ngihlushwa yindvodza”

In the first three lines, the poem opens with an expression of supplication to God and a lament about a woman’s desperate state. She had hoped that she would make her presence felt as a woman, but alas! In line 3 there is *ngiwugcishate*, an onomatopoeic expression which imitates the sound of one who is walking with confidence. The woman laments her inability to walk confidently in her marital home, because she does not feel like she is a complete woman, since she is without children. From line 4 to line 9, the woman expresses her sadness of deferred hope in being a mother, she had anticipated to be a mother and to execute motherhood fully. She envies other women and she muses about their children growing up by conjuring up images of children bathing themselves and going to school. For her, this will remain a farfetched dream as her hopes of being a mother fade away. She blames her husband for this state, because she cannot attain motherhood as long as her husband is not available to perform his conjugal responsibilities: *Impilo yemuka nedvodza yami* (line 9). It is as if she is watching her life fade away.

The lines that follow use imaginative expressions to describe her state. *Lilunguta esikhaleni selufa* (line 10), *Lufa lwekuklayeka kwemhlabatsi ngetulu* (line 11) and lines 13 and 14 *Kumbe-ke lidvume ngayitolo...Kutawuphuma likhowe kuleyo ndzawo* (lines 13 and 14) are personifying one who is peeping. The cracking of earth that is about to bring out something palatable is like a person peeping through a hole, while being also a metaphorical image symbolising her longing to give birth.

The imagery describes the woman's perpetual state of anticipation. There are times where she hopes the husband will be able to perform his conjugal duties, but the hopes of the fulfilment of her womanhood are fading away. She got married and hoped to enjoy the company of her husband as well as being a mother, but it turns out that none of those expectations will come to fruition, because her husband is sold out to the life of alcoholism, which does not allow him to perform his duties as a man. With each passing day the woman hopes for an improvement but that never happens. As she considers other women who have children, her own condition drives her to envy.

The lament continues in Stanza 2. The persona uses an oxymoron in the first line of the stanza to describe her state of having a husband who is absent, yet they stay together: *Mine indvodza nginayo, anginayo*. Here she is stating that her marriage is a technicality: she may seem like one who is married, but in reality she is like one who does not have a husband because he is never at home. In line 16, she repeats the same sentiment, explaining that she does not know him. Here, to know implies that she and her husband do not relate intimately as people who are married should. The reason is explained in line 18 where she states that the husband returns home in the middle of the night, and when he does, he is in such an appalling state of drunkenness. He is hardly able to unlock the door: *sikhiya ngumzukuluzuku kungena emnyango*. This statement creates an image of a person who, with unstable hands, struggles to turn the key in a key hole. From a symbolic point of view, this is a sexual imagery to depict the husband's failure to perform his conjugal duties. Moreover, the onomatopoeic expression *ngumzukuluzuku* paints a vivid image of the drunken man. This description clearly shows the level of the man's drunkenness. It is pathetic! The description of the man's drunken state is elaborated on in lines 19, 20 and 21. If he eventually manages to unlock the door, the drunken man will climb in bed with his shoes on. However, if he fails, he sleeps under the bed.

The lurid description of this drunken man tells a sad story of a woman who is supposedly married, but she lives in a state of misery. The image of drunkenness being painted here is extreme, such that no person would wish to be near a person drunk like that. However, for the woman, this is her daily reality. What adds salt to injury is the fact that there is no hope in sight and it appears that she will be subjected

to this experience forever. Under the circumstances described in this stanza, the woman might as well forget all hopes of ever spending quality time with her husband. The second stanza describes the emotional abuse that the woman is subjected to. She has to live with this man and experience his drunkenness day by day while her needs as a woman are neglected. For the woman to be deprived of her conjugal rights is a form of emotional abuse.

In the last stanza, the woman seems resigned to her fate with a deep sense of desperation. She acknowledges that her problems are rooted in her husband's alcoholism. Sadly, there seem to be no end in sight to the problem of alcoholism because those in authority are not tackling it. The first line of the last stanza is a rhetorical question: *Ingabe ngitawushonaphi Nkhosi yami?* It is as if she is directing her question to God. Indeed, in this case, it is only God who can bail her out. She still laments her dilemma of having a husband who is sold out to alcoholism. What compounds her problem is the fact that the husband is her god (line 24). In Eswatini's two-class society, men are regarded as gods while women are treated as minors.

With her minority status, a woman has to submit indiscriminately to a man's authority. In line 25, the persona alludes to *bachachi betinkinga*, a traditional structure that solves problems in the society, which comprises two men who are well versed in Swati Law and Custom. People write to them and state their problems, and these two men tackle the problems according to the unwritten Swati Law and Custom. Therefore, the woman laments that the men assigned to address people's problems are not dealing with the challenge of alcoholism. She says the reason for this is that they too are men, and so they are not affected by these problems. Here, patriarchy and male chauvinism come to the fore as another challenge that Swati women are subjected to. Line 26 affirms that the traditional structures are guided by Swati Law and Custom, which entrench oppressive practices against women.

In lines 28 and 29, the persona is looking at herself and she sees life passing her by; she is getting old and reaching a stage where she can no longer bear children. As the stanza draws to a close, the same sentiments on inequality are repeated. Again, the speaker says that it is because the traditional structures comprise men that there is unfairness in how problems facing society are being addressed: "*Ingani bonkhe phela*

ngemadvodza” (line 31). Finally, she says that things go well for men because they own the world, which in this case refers to the Swati society. The rhetorical question in line 23, “*Ingabe ngiyawushonaphi nkhosiyami?*” is not necessarily a question, but it is the persona expressing her sense of desperation on her situation as she feels that her womanhood is not complete. When looking closely at the text, one gets the sense that between the woman’s two major concerns: conjugal deprivation and not attaining motherhood, which is a direct outcome of the first issue, the woman is mainly worried about her missing out on motherhood. The Swati society might have a hand in this because they tend to suggest that a woman is not complete unless she has children, to prove that, women are often called, ‘mother of’. An example may be drawn from the poem “Umfati” where a woman is referred to as Nabo Hlengiwe, similarly, in the oral poem, “Nabo Thoko”, the woman is being called, mother of Thoko.

Vivid images of women’s oppression unfold as one interacts with the poem. Other figures of speech explored are onomatopoeia, personification, oxymoron and rhetorical questions. Metaphoric images describe her longing for intimacy with her husband and her deferred hope of becoming a mother. The sexual image of a key that struggles to get into a lock and the metaphoric image about the ground cracking to give out sweet potatoes accentuate her longing for intimacy and the desire to conceive and give birth, respectively. To further accentuate the impact of the visual images, onomatopoeia was employed. The oxymoron adds to the description of the woman’s state of desperation: she has a husband but her marriage is a façade, owing to her conjugal deprivation. Finally, through rhetorical questions, she expresses her sadness. Apart from these figures of speech, the poem was written largely in regular narrative language, which according to NI, is used by writers to present narrative truth.

3.3 Poem (iii) “Umloyi”

“Umloyi” is a poem with a very angry tone. Someone has died and instead of mourning, the persona is expressing her anger towards the dead. It is as if she could not express her thoughts while the man lived, and now she has finally found an opportunity to let out steam. The persona is highlighting a number of things that makes her harbour so much anger towards the dead person. The persona, her siblings and her mother went through a lot of hardship trying to make ends meet. During his lifetime, the dead man

horded everything and did not support the family. Through the use of simple language and a few figures of speech, the persona communicates her feelings about the person who has died.

Although the persona has not been clearly defined, the tone suggests that it is a child speaking in the first person. In this poem again, as it was the case with the poem “Umfati”, the reader is allowed the rare privilege to access the persona’s private thoughts.

Below is the poem “Umloyi”.

Umloyi (Glory N. Mamba)

The Wizard

Stanza 1

1. *Ktpfw! Hamba Mloyi ndzini!*
2. *Libocaphela nelithuna ungalibolisi,*
3. *Mine angidzingi nekutsela umhlabatsi,*
4. *Ematse enele kukuvalelisa.*

Ktpfw (sound of spitting) You wizard good riddance!
Your grave should be wary, lest you cause it to decay,
As for me, I won't even throw soil,
Spitting is enough to send you off.

Stanza 2

5. *Kukhala umuntfu nakafile kantsi kwani?*
6. *Uke walubona lunyembeti kimi,*
7. *Uyobe awuloyi nekadzeni*
8. *Mine lo, ngikhalele bani, yena lo?*

What is the purpose of mourning for one who has died?
If you ever see a single tear from me,
It will prove that you are a master wizard
You think that I shall mourn your death?

Stanza 3

9. *Kwabasalanga wavuka wafuna tjwala,*
10. *Wabuya kwakhala bantfwana,*
11. *Wabuya kwantuntuta umfati!*
12. *Mine ngacedza kukhala babe adla emabele.*

Day by day you would get up and search for alcohol,
When you return, children are terrified,
When you return, the wife is in sorrow!
The last time I cried was when my own father was still alive.

Stanza 4

13. *Hamba govu-ndzini!*
14. *Liqholo lekuba nababe wasemuka,*
15. *Ekhwapheni waligodla;*
16. *Lamuhla phansi emnyameni wemhlaba liyazula.*

Good riddance to you stingy one!
You deprived us a chance to have a father,
You kept it hidden in your arm-pit;
Today it is buried deep underground.

Stanza 5

17. *Sitfombe sababe kitsi ngemanyela,*
18. *Sitfombe selihlungu lisandza kushiswa.*
19. *Emehlo kwaba kopha kwengati,*

Our father's image haunts us,
The image that remains fresh.

Eyes bleed blood,

<p>20. <i>Umlomo nawo ngalokunjalo wopha.</i> Stanza 6</p> <p>21. <i>Ngekwakho kufa ngeke siyingayinge,</i> 22. <i>Sayingayinga sacedza ukhona wena,</i> <i>udla emabele.</i></p> <p>23. <i>Wayetfwala make imikhono enhloko;</i> 24. <i>Yesikolo imali bayifuna ngesikhikhikhi.</i> Stanza 7</p> <p>25. <i>Bugovu ngibubone ngekukhukhumba</i> <i>Nentsaba yesisu,</i></p> <p>26. <i>Intsaba itawumbelwa injengoba injalo;</i> 27. <i>Yehluleka nakukunye</i> <i>lokwakusemandleni ayo,</i></p> <p>28. <i>Kubhubuka kuphume lawo manti,</i> 29. <i>Emanti agobhote</i> 30. <i>Acishe emalahle kumkakho</i> <i>nebantfwabakho.</i></p>	<p>The mouth is also bleeding.</p> <p>We are not going to stress over your death, We suffered a lot while you, lived.</p> <p>Our mother struggled; To pay school fees urgently.</p> <p>Your stinginess became evident through your bulging stomach, That huge stomach will be buried as it is; You failed dismally even in things you had the ability to do, The water gushed out, The water flowed To put out the passion from your wife and your children.</p>
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(Ntiwane et al., 1986)

3.3.1 Poetry analysis “Umloyi”

The poem opens with the sound of spitting *Ktpfw*, as the speaker expresses deep disdain for the dead man. One would expect that when someone has died, there would be mourning, but in this case, the child is spitting, saying good riddance and she calls the dead man a wizard. A wizard is linked with malevolent acts of witchcraft, and in the text it is a metaphor which serves to express the child’s impression of the man. In Eswatini, it is abominable to be associated with *kuloya* (witchcraft) to an extent that one may be banished from an area if there is sufficient evidence to prove an act of witchcraft. Calling the man *umloyi* reveals that while he lived, he did more evil than good; thus, it becomes natural to get relief when such a person dies. In the second line, “*Libocaphela nelithuna lakho ungalibolis*”, the child uses personification and sarcasm to suggest that the man might cause his grave to rot. This implies that the man was wicked; it is feared that even after his death, he could still cause damage. While still alive, the man was toxic, and it is feared that even in death, he has the ability to cause decay on things around him. The next two lines, “*Mine angidzingi nekutsela umhlabatsi...Ematse enele kukuvalalisa*” (lines 3 and 4), elaborate on the child’s

sentiments. She abhors the dead man; she even spits on his grave. The imagery painted by line 4 is sufficient evidence of how much the child detested the dead man.

What stands out from this stanza is the extent of the child's extreme dislike of the person who has died. Although it appears as if the persona is expressing herself, one assumes that these are feelings that are unspoken but the child is merely thinking. Unspoken feelings often express what is in the subconscious, and those raw thoughts are a true expression of what one feels. There must be adequate justification for this deep level of negative feeling that the child has towards the dead man.

In Stanza 2 the child uses rhetorical questions without expecting a response from anyone. She is seeking justification for mourning when someone has died. It is the custom that when a person has died, people mourn, but the child is questioning that practice. The rhetorical questions make the reader probe them further: why should mourning the death of this person be debatable whereas mourning the dead is a norm? Mourning should be earned, the speaker seems to be saying. In the next two lines she is saying that she will not mourn in any way (lines 6 and 7). She uses strong words to affirm her statement: the dead man would have to bewitch her in order to get her to mourn. The stanza ends with another rhetorical question, "*Kukhala umuntfu nakafile kantsi kwan?*" (line 5). One would think that someone is expecting her to mourn, but she is adamant that she will not. She even quantifies her tears, saying that she will not shed a single tear, "*Uke walubona lunyembeti kimi*" (line 6). This again emphasizes her stance regarding mourning the death of this man. This second stanza is not very different from the previous one because the child continues to express her feelings towards this man; they are feelings of anger and resentment. One would expect that his death would pacify the child and give her a sense of relief, but that is not the case, the tone of anger has not abated; not even by death.

Insight into how the man expressed his waywardness is given in Stanza 3. The man would get up early and start searching for alcohol; upon return, he would terrorize the children and his wife. The life of the alcoholic that he had embraced became a source of oppression for his family, as revealed in lines 10 and 11. The trauma that the family experienced from the man's alcoholism numbed the child to the point that she could

no longer mourn the dead. In line 12 there is a euphemism “*adla emabele*”, which serves to reveal that the feelings of the child were numbed long ago.

In Stanza 4 the child continues to describe the man’s stinginess and, in her imagination, she turns to address him and tells him to get lost: “*Hamba govu-ndzini!*” (line 13). In Stanza 6 the child reveals that the family suffered greatly while the man still lived, as a consequence they will not mourn his death because by mourning, they would be subjecting themselves to the same pain that they experienced while he was alive. Line 21 is an imagery painting a picture of one wandering about. The persona vows not to be bothered by the man’s death. In the next line, the reason is given: she says that they struggled a great deal while the man still lived, *Sayingayinga sacedza ukhona wena, udla emabele*. Line 23 repeats the same sentiments but differently. Here again there is an imagery: a woman has her hands on her head. This image reveals utter desperation, as a result of the helplessness that the woman and her children experienced. The mother of the child struggled alone to provide for the family, notwithstanding her state of lack, she had to pay school fees for the children: *Yesikolo imali bayifuna ngesikhikhikhi*.

In an earlier stanza, the man was said to be stingy, now in the last stanza the persona substantiates her claim. She says the stinginess was evidenced by a bulging stomach. She calls the stomach “*intsaba*” (lines 25 and 26), a mountain, which is an exaggeration created by the metaphor of a mountain. The hyperbole *intsaba* is for effect and serves to create a mental picture of the man’s stomach, thus accentuating his stinginess amid the poverty that the rest of the family was subjected to. Instead of providing for the family, the man hoarded and kept everything for himself. In (line 27) it is said that the man failed in his duties; he could not do even what was within his means. The last line indicates that the man’s actions quenched the affection that the family had for him. Both the wife and children were left numb by his actions. The man’s greed and his failure to provide for the family are two issues that stand out in the last stanza: they are acts of oppression that Swati women experience in the society.

A wide range of tropes have been utilised including: rhetorical questions, personification, hyperbole, metaphor and imagery, imagery being the most commonly used in the poem. In some instances, it is combined with other tropes such as

metaphor and repetition to heighten the visual image. By exploring various images, the writer reveals the following about the speaker: her attitude towards the man who has died, her feelings about the man's death, the man's conduct while he was still alive, the suffering that she and her mother endured while the man was alive as well as how she visualizes the man in his grave. The rhetorical questions serve to justify the persona's attitude towards the man; it is as if the speaker is guilty of feeling the way she does. The onomatopoeia is significant in underscoring the imagery in the poem. *Kwantuntula* suggests that the woman cried in a helpless manner and *ngesikhikhikhi* reveals the cruelty with which school fees were demanded for the child. Lastly, the euphemism reminds the reader that despite the speaker's angry tone, someone has died. Both visual images, created by figures of speech and the utilisation of simple words, describe the persona's anger towards a dead man. The imagery in the poem and the other figures of speech allow the reader access into the speaker's private thoughts. Once again, women are presented as the subaltern who cannot speak; their emotions can only be expressed in thoughts.

3. 4 Theoretical applications on the poems: “Umfati”, “Ngihlushwa yindvodza” and “Umloyi”

The poem “Umfati”, addressing womanhood from the perspective of a married woman and a mother, brings out a number of issues which may be categorised broadly as women's domestic enslavement and abuse, both emotional and economic. Similarly, “Ngihlushwa yindvodza” exposes womanhood from the perspective of a married woman: however, the aspect of motherhood is missing due to challenges that the woman experiences in her marriage. The third poem is narrated by a child; she expresses difficulties that her mother went through while raising children without support from the husband, this therefore exposes womanhood from a child's view point. All three poems, giving an unpleasant impression about being a wife and a mother, were composed by Glory Mamba, a woman who died single in her seventies, which could explain her negative impression about these aspects of womanhood. Her exposure to the challenges that women experience, probably gained through observation and from her engagement in various projects, alluded in Chapter 1, might have given her the resolve to not experiment with her own life (Webster and Mertova,

2007). Nonetheless, in her poetic compositions, Mamba initiates a strong debate on what it means to be a woman and the various ways in which the Swati society constructs womanhood.

In the first poem “Umfati” and the third poem “Umloyi”, the women had to bear the responsibility of running households single-handedly in spite of the fact that they had husbands who were employed. Since the men are not contributing positively towards the welfare of their families, the wives have to bend their backs trying to make certain that their households are catered for. In the first poem, the situation is worsened by the fact that the woman had to take care of children that the husband sired from his mistresses. A woman from the neighbourhood is facing a similar predicament; drawn by their similar experiences, the two women self-categorise. The two women are brought together by the speaker who recounts their challenges in a manner that reveals that women’s spousal difficulties are socially acceptable. Since the women internalise marital hardships, they are lauded for acting womanly and behaving in a socially commendable way. In her Doctoral thesis, Dlamini (2017) highlights the fact that “Women’s narratives are about being hard-working, submissive, kind, caring and what Swazi people regard as ‘good’ qualities in women” (p. 82). These traits are equally revealed in some of the oral poems: “Nabo Thoko” places emphasis on women’s submissiveness and in “Thula mntfwanami” the woman is being blamed for being lazy, which indirectly stresses the expectation for her to work hard. A reader may perceive this as suffering; yet, Dlamini’s statement indicates that there are some in the society who believe that the women are executing their duties with pride, they are unperturbed by what one views as oppression. Notwithstanding any justification that may be proffered to exculpate despotic tendencies, overworking women is clearly oppressive.

Traditionally, women in Eswatini are domesticated and they are tied to the home space, but, in “Umfati”, the woman leaves her usual domain and goes to the market to try and earn money in order to provide for the family, most sellers at the market are women because small enterprise ventures are gender specific jobs. At the marketplace where she sets up her stall, conditions are despicable. The woman takes up an additional burden because her husband is not doing his part; if the man earns

money, he spends it with his girlfriends, instead of using it to benefit the family. This same observation was made by Mdluli (2013). The girlfriends and mistresses who are accomplices in the enslavement of wives might not be aware that their role is what divides women and enable men's promiscuous behaviour.

Lack of support from their husbands force women to work harder than they would have done if conditions were favourable, making them to appear to have supernatural forte yet that is not the case. In her doctoral thesis, Mdluli (2013) made a similar observation that women in Eswatini are often portrayed as people with almost mystical strength capable of juggling their family duties and work commitments. These sentiments are echoed by Khader (2020). With their 'supernatural strength', women engage in extra work from the menial jobs that they do outside of their domestic space. Dlamini (2017) outlines chores that are said to be gender appropriate for girls and women, including:

Cooking, cleaning and looking after babies, rural women have additional work such as: planting, weeding, harvesting, grinding corn into mealie meal, winnowing maize for storage, fetching water and collecting fire wood. In winter, their responsibilities increase since they have the extra duties of repairing their roofs, weaving baskets and mats (Dlamini, 2017, p. 62).

Mdluli adds that society inculcates gendered ideologies through culture and with time, they become a part of a society's culture.

In "Umloyi" one learns from the persona who is a child, as she expresses her deeper thoughts, that her family had been subjected to poverty because the mother's husband had neglected his duties towards the family, thus causing the family much suffering. Since the man has died, one would expect that his death would appease the child, but, instead, the child is enraged. Her mother struggled alone to make ends meet while the man went on with his life, occupied with alcohol, greed and miserliness. The child's mother had to step in and provide for the family, including paying children's school fees. The state of poverty that the family was pushed to, became responsible for the emotional turmoil that both mother and children endured to the point that their feelings were numbed; hence the speaker could not bring herself to shedding a tear when the

man died. Motherhood challenges can be seen in the oral poems: “Koboyi koboyi” and “Thula mntfwanami” as well.

The concept of self-categorisation is hinted on by the speaker when she alludes to the suffering that she and her mother had endured. Moreover, the death of the man connotes a time that marked the end of coloniality and the dawn of a new era. Under colonial rule, Blacks suffered oppression and repression. The death of the man, which may be likened to the end of coloniality, brought about hope, similar to what was experienced during the period of transition from colonial rule into the post-colonial era.

Another point that brings to light women’s enslavement is portrayed in “Umfati” where the woman’s hard work benefits not only her but also the husband’s children, which are a result of his promiscuity. Society does not condemn a man’s philandering acts, but instead, they are viewed as gallantry. Good wives are not supposed to question or even to talk about such domestic matters, instead, they should conceal *tibi tendlu* (household dirt), a phrase used to describe domestic distresses. Dlamini (2017) explains that from a young age, Swati women are taught to be submissive and receptive towards men and they are not to oppose them: “Women tend to believe that their worth is determined by the level to which they conform to this set standard...” (*ibid.*, p. 60). Even so, Dlamini noted that it is not all women who embrace oppression, the enlightened ones refuse to be controlled with a ‘yoke of bondage’. Women with a slave mentality submit and revere their husbands, this is not difficult for them to do because society has successfully initiated them to being chattels of men (Goel, 2010; Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017; Barry & Grady, 2019). Their colonial mentality makes them to believe that they are inferior to men and it causes them to be oblivious to their suffering.

The women are presented as the lower-class in society, in contrast to men who are the upper-class, which thrives on women’s labour. It is women’s labour which nourishes men’s desires and provides comfort for them and, in return, the women are commended for absorbing their suffering in subdued silence. Women are the slaves and men are the masters that Langa (2010, p. 9) described: “those who are not aware of their bondage are indeed good slaves...They believe that they are wearing a gold necklace whereas they are on a leash”. The women in this poem are clearly good

slaves. They go about their daily lives believing that they are virtuous wives, yet in fact they are living in bondage.

Muting women's voices is another strategy that societies use to control them. Moreover, societies prescribe socially acceptable morality standards for women; behaviour that does not conform to the set values is said to be unwomanly. Precolonial patriarchal societies employed the same ruse to control women, for instance during the age of first wave feminism, women from the Western World who marched to the White House were castigated for relegating themselves to the level of public persuaders (Campbell, 1989; Goel, 2010). Similarly, in "Umfati", NaboHlengiwe is encouraged to be quiet lest she disrupts her husband's peace, and probably 'threaten' her marriage. Making sure that her marriage is preserved is paramount to the woman because, as Dlamini (2017) noted, "some married women utter statements, such as, *wangenta umuntfu* (he made me a real woman) to insinuate that a woman's value is derived from being someone's wife" (p. 59). Thus, women dedicate their lives to serving husbands, they also make it a point that girls are also socialised "in their gendered roles" (*ibid.*, 2017, p.60), which they ought to perform 'peacefully' and quietly.

In "Ngihlushwa yindvodza", the woman has to put up with an alcoholic husband and live in perpetual conjugal deprivation which results in a woman not being able to have children. This is the plight of the woman featured in the poem; her hopes of ever being a mother are shattered as her biological clock ticks. Her frustration is compounded by the fact that she sees other women nursing their babies. She is hopeful that maybe someday she might be lucky but sadly that hope is thwarted. The traditional structures that are given the responsibility of ensuring the welfare of members of society are not making the situation any better. These comprise men, and they show partiality in their duties. The problem of alcoholism in society is not addressed, yet it is responsible for men's neglect of their conjugal duties. The unfairness that they exercise is to the detriment of women.

Worth noting is that while the woman in "Umfati" is oblivious that she is being enslaved, the one in "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" is aware; nonetheless, both women keep their suffering to themselves because their society has successfully rendered them

'voiceless'. In their case, muting of their voices will promote 'peace' in their marriages. The emphasis on acting 'peacefully' has been used by the authorities of Eswatini to control the masses, they even gave the country the label of 'peaceful nation' (Snaddon and Nhlabatsi, 2017). Such a statement has enabled those in authority to successfully sow the culture of silence among those whom they control, including women. The culture of being a silent subaltern is what the Swati society uses to "produce and maintain a generation that accepts without question, orders given by those in authority" (Dlamini, 2017). Women therefore embrace their suffering and see to it that the culture of women's subjugation is passed on to their children, in the process, "depriving the young people from acting upon their inborn drive to be imaginative and explorative" (*ibid*, p. 60). Since the oppressed women have been systematically silenced, the oppressive voice of society is the one that speaks on behalf of the women in a manner similar to that used by Eurocentric feminists when they expressed concerns of subjugated African women. The same criticism levelled against the hypocrisy of White feminists, to be the voice of the oppressed (Collins, 1990b; Collins, 2001; Arndt, 2002; Spivak, 2003; Verschuur, & Destremau, 2012; Byrne, 2020; Vergès, 2021; Lewis & Baderoon, 2022), can be applied here to criticise the hypocrisy of cultural elements that attempt to speak on behalf of Swati women. The voice of the oppressor speaks repression and it makes sure that women's voices are perpetually muted from when they are still children. Any deviance is considered rebellion (Mdluli, 2013). Regrettably, while gender discrimination is a communal phenomenon, it is bred in families (*ibid*).

Women's servitude is also enforced through *sidvwaba*, which society imposes. While married women are expected to, and lauded for wearing *sidvwaba*, mistresses are free from this oppressive clothing item. Their freedom is also shown by the act of transferring their motherly responsibilities to married women; instead of raising their own children, they burden the wives of their lovers with raising the children. Married women wear *sidvwaba*, even while carrying out their daily chores which is awkward because of its heaviness. While one may regard *sidvwaba* as a badge of slavery which gives women the label of chattels, Mdluli (2013) perceives it to be an item that is used to make them invisible and "faceless; unknown except only to their husbands" (*ibid*., p. 8). Using dress code to keep women in obscurity, disguised as upholding culture, is done to protect the interests of men. Sadly, women's own interests are overlooked

by the patriarchal Swati society. What compounds the problem is that as subalterns, women cannot speak for themselves but the oppressive voice of society will speak to justify the act, which in fact, is an act of policing women's bodies. The practice of controlling women's bodies dates back to colonial times (Allman, 1996; Arndt, 2002; Bawa & Ogunyankin, 2018).

To sum it up, one shall cite Mdluli (2013):

From the feministic perspective this is oppressive, women's clothing makes them to be undefined, faceless and a mysterious figure that no one can approach for any reason. That on its own confines the woman to the level of being a wife and a mother, nothing more or higher than that (p. 8).

The three poetic texts expose elements of coloniality as they present women as lesser humans and it contrasts them with their husbands who are presented as superior beings. In an ideal society, a man and a woman would be expected to relate as equals by virtue of them being partners in a marriage. However, the Swati society has created a class difference typical of the colonial era where Whites were legally superior to Blacks. The colonial legacy that Eswatini inherited from her coloniser, Britain, still influences the culture of the Swati people. They also have a gendered two-class society which places men at the top and women at the bottom of the social strata. Feminist theorists expounded on similar issues, explaining how societies confined women to the domestic space where they had limited options for self-development. Women were thrust with the responsibility of raising children. Also, women had limited resources, which made their caretaking roles harder. Moreover, the subjugation of women exposed them to emotional abuse as their voices were muted. Women who insisted on speaking out were said to be acting out of character. Consequently, women suffered in subdued silence.

3.5 Summary

In their movement, second wave feminists paid attention to a number of issues, some of which are implied in the three poems, specific concerns addressed may be classified broadly as women's domestic enslavement and abuse, which, through her poetic compositions, Glory Mamba raised, and initiated a dialogue about discriminatory practices against Swati women. Since the poems were published in an

anthology released during this feminist era, it is likely that their composition was influenced by the thinking of the time. The poet therefore seized the opportunity to challenge socially entrenched and oppressive tendencies which reveal that women had been categorised as a lower social class. The different narrative voices in the three texts enable the reader to appreciate Swati women's experiences from different vantage points, they also show the nuances provided by each angle of focus.

Women's domestic work had not been regarded as being work, and as a result, no true value had been attached to domestic chores. By unveiling the drudgery of such duties, the poet brings to light that women's domestic encounters have colonial elements of capitalism and imperialism. A reader therefore appreciates the true picture of this subtle form of bondage. Another concern that second-wave feminists raised related to confining women to the domestic environment. The woman in "Umfati" explores a work environment outside the confines of her family, she does this to supplement her means for providing for the family. From this experience she encounters more hardships which invariably makes her situation worse off as rightly noted by Khader (2020) in her discussion of decolonial feminism. Although it may seem that allowing women to explore work outside the family is a form of empowerment, one should be mindful of the specific contexts of individual women.

CHAPTER FOUR

THIRD WAVE FEMINISM POEMS

4.0 Introduction

Poems published during the Third wave feminism age (1990) merge both Eurocentric ideas and decolonial attitudes. While women's assertiveness had gained new ground, there was still need for societies to allow womenfolk to have the autonomy to define their identities, including the recognition of minority groups. Third wave feminists seemed to have approached feminism from a rather more radical vantage point, which is why they overlooked women's unique contexts. For instance, they advocated for women's rights to have an abortion, which is taboo in some African contexts, including in Eswatini. From the poems in this chapter, an example may be extracted from the poem "Vuka mfati", where the narrative voice shifts from second person to first person and the speaker, a woman, exhibits defiance, which is a trait that is unheard of among Swati women. It is from this perspective that one makes the claim that third wave feminism has Eurocentric predilections which may not be suitable in the Swati context. Decolonial ideals therefore bridge this gap, making the conversations on women's rights to be acceptable.

The four poems published during the era of third wave feminism do express women's need to define their identities, different from the oppressive socially constructed ones, but that should be within acceptable confines of morality. The texts exploit a range of narrative voices to challenge the dominant voices in society: an independent observer in "Betfwele kabetfulwa", second person speaker in "Vuka mfati", third person narrator in "Tibongo temnumzana" and second person in voice "Kantsi wawukhona yini".

4.1 Poem (iv) "Betfwele kabetfulwa"

The persona is an observer, narrating a sad encounter that she is witnessing of women who are wandering about laboriously. Whether the event is real or imaginary, it provokes her to muse over the hardships that the women are subjected to. The women

are burdened with loads on their heads and babies on their backs; consequently, the speaker's curiosity is triggered and she begins to question where the women are going. Through the utilisation of different imagery and rhetorical questions, one appreciates the magnitude of the suffering the women.

Below is the poem "Betfwele kabetfulwa".

Betfwele kabetfulwa

(Sarah Mkhonza)

1. *Betfwele imitfwalo bayaphi?*
2. *Enhloko bayashisha,*
3. *Tifukutfuku titehlela,*
4. *Emehlo agcwele tinyembeti.*

5. *Betfwele imitfwalo bayaphi?*
6. *Emhlane basindwa,*
7. *Tinswane timenyiwe,*
8. *Tigcwele imihlane yenhlupheko.*

9. *Emajoke abo ayasindza,*
10. *Tinhlitiyo tabo tiyasha,*
11. *Imitimba yabo idziniwe,*
12. *Tinhlupheko talomhlaba.*

13. *Yebo ngiyabavela,*
14. *Labatala labakuphiwe,*
15. *Banemsebenti longapheli,*
16. *Batfwele kabetfulwa.*

17. *Lapho bewela kuleli,*
18. *Kulapho kuyakuhhamuka,*
19. *Batfole kuphefumula,*
20. *Batfulwe labakwetfweswa.*

They bear a load, nobody rescues them

Stanza 1

They bear a load, where are they headed to?
The load on their heads is heavy,
Sweat is dripping off,
Eyes are full of tears.

Stanza 2

Where are they headed with the burden?
On their backs, they have another weight,
Babies cling to their backs,
Filling up backs of sorrow.

Stanza 3

Their yokes are heavy,
Their hearts are in flame,
Their bodies are tired,
It is the sorrows of this world.

Stanza 4

I pity them,
They bore what was given to them,
Their work is endless,
A load has been placed on them.

Stanza 5

When they cross over,
They will finally get rest,
They will exhale,
Their burdens will be lifted.

(Mbhele, Mthembu and Zulu, 1990)

4.1.1 Poetry analysis "Betfwele kabetfulwa"

The poem "Betfwele kabetfulwa" opens with a rhetorical question, probably to draw the reader's attention to women's plight. The imagery in line 1 *Imitfwalo* (load) invites the reader to visualize the suffering of women which is likened to a physical load.

Additionally, there is a rhetorical question in the same line, *bayaphi?* This question suggests that the women seem to be on a journey but the journey is mysterious. This instantly creates an impact on the reader; one starts to ask questions about the nature of the burden which is described as if it were a physical load. The next line, *bayashisha* is also an image that is created by the onomatopoeic expression which suggests moving with laboured steps while bearing a heavy load on their heads. Again, this image accentuates the weight that the women carry. Line 3 says, *tifukutfuku titehlela*. Not only are the women bending over under a heavy weight, but sweat is also dripping off of their bodies. Their eyes are full of tears. The pitiable visual image conjured up in the reader's imagination by the description of the women who are sweating profusely draws the reader's sympathy.

In the grim image that the persona paints, three things stand out: the women are bearing a very heavy load, they are sweating profusely and they are tearful. The physical body of a woman was not designed to carry a heavy weight, but in the first stanza we see a picture of women who are subjected to that. To prove that they are not coping well with the weight on their heads, the women are soaked in sweat, which is a natural response to the burden on them. The tears in their eyes are a definite sign that they are responding adversely to the burden they bear. The women, who are mentioned in the plural – not as individuals, which adds to their commodification –, are presented as oppressed and this sets out a sad tone to the poem.

The second stanza adds another dimension to the theme of oppression. The burden is not just on their heads, but even on their backs they are heavy laden. Again, the same rhetorical question that was asked in the first line of the first stanza is asked in line 5 of Stanza 2, *Betfwele imitfwalo bayaphi?* Since the question is recurring, one's attention is drawn to the significance of what the text is trying to communicate. It becomes interesting to figure out why the persona is curious about the women's destination. Since life is a journey, it could mean that the women are travelling to their eternal destination and their journey is fraught with the burden of oppression.

Lines 6 and 7 state that, on their sorrow-filled backs, the women are carrying babies; it is this revelation that prompts one to equate motherhood to domestic enslavement. Line 8 *Tigcwele imihlane yenhlupheko* adds to the mental picture of women suffering.

The women are said to be carrying babies on their backs of sorrows. Describing the backs on which the babies cling adds another facet to the suffering of the women. Amidst their suffering, the women have an extra load; they have babies on their backs. These babies are the responsibility of the women, in the oral poem “Thula mntfwanami” the idea that women are responsible for babies is communicated. Notwithstanding their poverty, the women have to provide for the babies. *Tinswane*, which are babies, may be a metaphor for children of all ages who require attention and care. Women start to care for children from the time the children are born. During infancy, the burden is seen visibly by the baby clinging on the mother’s back, but there is more to being a mother than to carrying a baby. Lines 6 to 8 reveal that the task of raising children is made difficult by poverty, which is the state of most women in Eswatini. Two issues are raised in this stanza: women have the responsibility of raising children; and their state of poverty comes to light. The first issue may be classified as domestic slavery. Raising children does not equate automatically to domestic enslavement: however, in the context described, there is an element of servitude because the women are destitute. Moreover, the text states that they are teary. Had the conditions been favourable, raising children would have a different meaning from what it has here.

Stanza 3 elaborates on the theme of oppression in line 9 the women are said to be yoked: *Emajoke abo ayasidza* (Their yokes are heavy), this image, used metaphorically, is associated with animals; when used in this sense, it suggests extreme suffering and it also reveals the magnitude of women’s oppression. Another mental picture is in line 10: *Tinhlitiyo tabo tiyasha* ‘the women’s hearts are aflame’, which suggests that the women’s suffering is not just physical, but it also touches on their emotional states; they are agonised. Agony is a deeper level of pain which is felt in the emotions, thus, the word *tinhlitiyo* (hearts) helps one locate the pain. It is in the heart because it is said to be the seat of emotions. Again here, one gets to decipher the effect that the emotional baggage has on the women; not only are they experiencing emotional distress, but even physically they are also weighed down. In line 11 the text reveals that their bodies are worn out by the sorrows of this world. While getting tired is normal, being worn-out, on the other hand, suggests that one is at the point of breaking down. This is the predicament of many Swati women. The

burdens they bear are overwhelming. In this stanza the poet implicitly describes the condition of women in Eswatini and their feelings towards what they undergo.

In Stanza 4, the persona expresses her sentiments; she pities these women for having the burden of being mothers thrust upon them. Motherhood here is presented as burdensome. They bear children from men *labakuphiwe* (line 14). This is the very thing that gives them work that is unending. *Batfwesiwe kabetfulwa* (line, 16) poignantly states that women were pushed into this dilemma. The poet is addressing the downside of being a mother and she reveals that raising children is an endless responsibility that mothers have, a responsibility that they are not remunerated for; hence being a mother is depicted as domestic slavery.

The poem concludes in a religious tone. Women are going to find reprieve once they pass on from this world. The euphemism in line 17 *bewela* means dying. Here the poet is revealing the permanency of their suffering. It is only in death that they will finally find rest. Another figure of speech is found in line 18 *kuyakuhamuka*, an onomatopoeic idiomatic expression which signifies a sigh of relief. It seems that the women live in perpetual bondage, only to be relieved at death when they will give a big sigh! A grave image of subjugation is painted here. While they live, Swati women are subjected to hard labour and poverty which reduce them to domestic servitude.

Figures of speech, including imagery, rhetorical questions, onomatopoeia, animation and euphemism, were exploited masterfully to advance the theme of women's oppression. The effect of the careful selection of words is that the reader is instantly impacted and drawn to pity. A startling picture of oppression is painted as the poem unfolds. Worth noting is that imagery is the most dominant figure of speech utilised in this text, and where it is used, it enables the reader to conjure up a mental image of women's destitution. The women are bearing a load, they are sweating profusely, they are yoked, their hearts are in flames, they are wandering aimlessly and they are bending over under a burden. It is only death that will give them reprieve.

The imagery *Imitfwalo* (loads) suggests hardships that women bear which could be a burden that is physical or imaginary. In the text it does not state whether the load is physical or not: however, the reader gets the impression that the women are burdened.

While it is generally known that chores for women, particularly those in rural areas, involve carrying heavy objects, the use of the word *imitfwalo* does suggest a remarkable weight which may be borne by animals such as donkeys. The imagery *bayashisha* (bending under a heavy weight) somehow affirms that *imitfwalo* is a heavy burden for the women to carry. The size of the load causes the women to bend over in a dehumanising manner. Compounding the magnitude of this imagery is *tifukutfuku* (sweat) that is dripping off profusely, what is worse is that while the women are bending under a heavy weight and sweating, they are also carrying babies on their backs. Although the babies have not been referred to as being afflictions, it is suggested that having them is arduous because of the women's destitution described by the imagery *tigcwele imihlane yenhlupheko* (filling up backs of sorrow). Women are said to have *emajoke* (yokes) not withstanding that yokes are used to control animals that are working. This imagery exposes women's suffering, revealing that they work under cruel conditions similar to those that animals are exposed to. The last imagery *betfwesiwe kabetfulwa* suggests a state of permanence in the suffering. Also, it shows that women's liberation from yokes depends not on them, but on those who have placed the burdens on the women. The imagery *betfwesiwe kabetfulwa* is significant in revealing that women's domestic servitude is imposed on them. This observation confirms the assertion that women's domestic enslavement is a social construct which is disguised as one facet of womanhood (Dlamini, 2008). The other figures of speech enhance the visual images in the following ways: the rhetorical question that has been repeated serves to invite the reader to ponder about the destination of the women, and the onomatopoeia adds to the visual images as well as enhances the musical aspect of the text. The euphemism augments the sorry sight of the women.

4.2 Poem (iv) "Vuka mfati"

Dlamini wrote the poem "*Vuka mfati*" to express her sentiments on the marriage that she was in; she was the breadwinner, providing for her husband, their children and children that the husband had outside the marriage. Despite her being the provider, the husband abused her emotionally; he had multiple affairs and he would be away from home during odd hours. The poem "*Vuka mfati*" was written during one of those moments, she wrote it at around 2am or 3am, sitting in bed waiting for her husband to

return home. The fact that the man did not drink alcohol, made it obvious that he was with his mistresses that he would often brag about. Although Dlamini was not against polygamy, she was unhappy about her husband's infidelity because she was in a monogamous marriage. Had she been married under Swati Law and Custom, she would not have a problem because that marriage has provision for polygamy (*ibid.*).

The persona in "Vuka mfati" is a second person speaker, addressing a woman and giving her orders; women in Eswatini, with their minority statuses, are used to taking orders from their husbands and from other women who have a senior social position. This idea is communicated in the oral poem "Ye NaboThoko", where the woman is being instructed by another to wash a pot. The persona's voice has a tone of urgency: it is imperative that the woman gets up quickly. The persona is not entreating the woman, or even making suggestions, but she is ordering her to get up and start working. In addition, the woman is instructed to dress up in her full traditional attire which is not a comfortable outfit to wear when one is working. At first the woman that is being addressed does not say anything, but the instant she is ordered to wear her traditional attire, she breaks her silence and answers back. Although the poem is written largely in simple Swati language, there are some figures of speech that have been used effectively to engage the reader at a deeper level. These include: repetition, onomatopoeia, juxtaposition, simile, imagery, hyperbole, metaphor and rhetorical questions.

Below is the poem "Vuka mfati".

Vuka mfati (Sisana R. Dlamini)

1. *Vuka mfati kusile,*
2. *Vuka usebente ishayile,*
3. *Vuka loku baselele,*
4. *Tivukele wena utilungiselele.*

5. *Timpaka atibuyisane nawe,*
6. *Tinkhukhu tehlisane nawe,*
7. *Tingakushiyi titaze tikwengce,*
8. *Jokotela kanye nato,*
9. *Bufati kuvuka uvukele.*

10. *Balele labavunywa ngumhlaba,*
11. *Umhlaba lofana newabo,*
12. *Basabhudza, bayekele njalo,*

Get up woman

Stanza 1

Get up woman for it is dawn,
Get up and get to work, it is time for work,
Get up while everyone is still in bed,
Get up on your own and get ready.

Stanza 2

Let nocturnal creatures find you already up,
When chickens get up they should find you up,
Don't let chickens get up before you,
Hurry along with them,
Being a woman is being able to get up early.

Stanza 3

Those who are privileged are still asleep,
It is as if the earth belongs to them,
They are still dreaming, let them sleep,



13. *Batawuze bakubambelele bayekele,*
14. *Bayanumuza phela labo.*
15. *Batawuvuka babute lokunyenti,*
16. *Babute siSwati labangasati,*
17. *Babute wena bona babanikati,*
18. *Bebuve kepha bangabati,*
19. *Mfati, vuka uphangise*
20. *Batakubuta sicholo singekho,*
21. *Bakubute bona bamanyatela.*
22. *Bakubute bona bangenatihlufu,*
23. *Bakubute sidvwaba usangane,*
24. *Bakubute ngobe kutishayamtsetfo.*
25. *Sebakhala ngetimvu ebaleni,*
26. *Bangati tabogogo tatiba sebaleni,*
27. *Bakhale ngesidvwaba babhulukele,*
28. *Bakhohlwe live lelitfufukako,*
29. *Litfufuke ngakubo kuphela.*
30. *Liduku lemlungu labasita,*
31. *BuSwati banamatsela kulo,*
32. *Bayekele kuhlala kubo,*
33. *Umvunulo lesebangawati kwabona,*
34. *Liduku kepha balatisisa.*
35. *Utsini? Angikuva kahle?*
36. *Buhle bemfati bufihlwe?*
37. *Angani bagogo busebaleni,*
38. *Utsi sicholo asibotfotwe?*
39. *Ngumkosongo ngobe akanasicamelo,*
40. *Sicamelo lesakhiwa yindvodza.*
41. *Cha wena weKunene,*
42. *Ayibe yincane phela,*
43. *Ticholo atibuyise tihlufu,*
44. *Liduku libuyise umvunulo,*
45. *Ticamelo tibuyise emacansi,*
46. *Bufati bubuyise budvodza,*
47. *Budvodza lobutawuta nebuSwati.*
48. *Vuka mfati ungalali,*
49. *SoMadili yena uyabukela,*
50. *Inhliyi iyafana kuye,*
51. *Ayidvodzi ayifati iyafanana,*
52. *Lemhlaba alikho liphakadze,*
53. *Vuka mfati uphangise,*
- Leave them behind lest they delay you.
- They are enjoying manhood.
Stanza 4
- When they get up they will have questions,
They will ask about siSwati customs,
They are the Swatis but they will ask you,
They are traditionalists, yet they are ignorant about tradition,
Get up woman and make haste.
Stanza 5
- They will enquire about your head gear,
They will ask you yet their heads are shaven bald.
They will ask you yet they don't have long hair,
They will enquire about your animal-skin skirt,
They are lawmakers, hence they ask.
Stanza 6
- They nag about your grey hair that is exposed,
They forget that granny's hair was exposed,
They demand you wear an animal-skin skirt yet they wear pants instead of loin skin,
They are oblivious that the world is getting advanced,
They alone want to enjoy benefits of civilization.
Stanza 7
- They insist you wear a head scarf,
They say wearing a head scarf is being Swati,
They fail to practice siSwati,
They don't even know men's traditional underwear.
- Yet they insist you wear a head scarf.
Stanza 8
- Pardon me? I did not get that quite?
Should a woman hide her beauty?
Granny does not cover her head
You are saying the afro should be removed?
She is a tough one, she doesn't need a pillow,
- The man provides a pillow.
Stanza 9
- No, I protest,
Here is the deal,
Women's traditional afros and men's afros should be restored,
Women's headscarves and men's traditional underwear should be restored,
Traditional pillows and traditional mats should be restored,
Womanhood and manhood should be restored,
The kind of manhood that embraces Swati traditions.
- Stanza 10
- Get up woman, do not sleep,
God is watching,
To Him, everyone is the same,
There is neither woman nor men,
There is no eternity in earth.
Get up woman and make haste.

54. SoMadili Yena ukulindzele.

| God is waiting for you.

(Mbhele et al., 1990)

4.2.1 Poetry analysis “Vuka mfati”

The first stanza of the poem (lines 1- 4) urges a married woman to get up and get on with her daily chores while ‘others’ (husband) remain in bed. The husband is referred to as ‘others’, a word she uses to create social distance between them and to reveal her attitude towards him. The woman is expected to start working much earlier than anyone else. The speaker reminds the woman that it is imperative upon her to get up on her own and get ready for the day ahead. She is not so happy with the man being in bed, yet the woman is expected to be up and working. Although the repetition of the word *vuka* enhances the musical effect of the poem, its significance lies with the emphasis. *Vuka* is the main message and the word has been repeated throughout the poem for emphasis. The reader is prompted to pay attention and to ask why it is imperative for the woman to get up while her husband remains in bed, sleeping.

The first stanza shows what society expects from a woman. It is not the woman who has placed on herself the burden of waking up early, but society expects that from her. Here we see a contrast between a woman and a man. One supposes that the woman and her husband are in bed together, but only the woman is expected to leave the comfort of the bed and start working, as stated in line 2. The reason that the woman has to get up early could be two-fold; it could be that, if she has a job outside the home, she has to see to it that by the time she leaves home for work, she has already done her chores in the home. Secondly, if the woman is not employed, she has to get up early and start doing the home chores which will probably take her the whole day. These chores include, but are not limited to, cooking and washing for the husband who is still in bed.

The second stanza of the poem (lines 5-9) explains why a woman has to get up very early; she is to get up and start with her chores as early as 5 am, the same time that chickens get up (line 6). The example of chickens is the second one after *timpaka* which are nocturnal creatures. Swatis believe that witches use *timpaka* to run their

night time errands. *Timpaka* return to their homes at the crack of dawn, the same time that a woman is expected to be up. The parallel that is drawn between a woman and nocturnal creatures suggests the level of enslavement that a woman is subjected to. Swati women are treated as domestic slaves and are also made to work at night like nocturnals. Line 7 presents an image of a woman who is in a race (with chickens) to get up. The word *jokotela* in line 8 is an onomatopoeia used to create an image of how the woman is expected to hurry along; the use of this trope gives an impression that she is being dehumanised. Instead of being seen as a human being, she is classified with chickens and she has to hurry along with them. Moreover, the woman is not just working at her own pace, but she is also set to compete against chickens to prove that she is a real woman, as suggested in line 9, and thus submitting to societal expectations.

Stanza 3 has a tone of bitterness; the speaker is identifying with the woman and acknowledging her plight. Line 10 says the man is sleeping because he is a privileged being. *Labavunywa ngumhlaba* is an idiomatic expression that is laden with sarcasm. The poet poignantly shows that men belong to a privileged class. In the next line, *umhlaba lofana newabo* is a simile which means that it is as if the earth belongs to men. In a way, the text is suggesting that the position of privilege that men enjoy is to such an extent that they seem to own the earth. Ownership is a privilege of a king which is the position that Swati men enjoy in their homes. As a king, the man enjoys every privilege in his home, while the woman, who is presented as a subject, serves the king. She gets up early to work while the 'king' sleeps, and dreams (line 12). The man should not be disturbed, lest he gets up and delays the woman (line 13). Line 14 repeats the sentiment that the man is enjoying the status of being a man.

In stanzas 4 and 5 there is anticipation, albeit with dread, of what the day ahead brings. When the man eventually gets up, he will become critical about a number of things that the woman has not done; things that relate to upholding cultural norms such as her dress code. The man will demand that the woman be fully clad in traditional regalia, yet the man himself is failing to do so. 'They' (man) will ask about why the woman is not wearing her traditional head gear (line 19); 'they' (man) will question about why she is not wearing her traditional dress (line 23).

The orator is disdainful about this because of the double standards; a lot of expectations are placed on the woman, but not on the man. The woman is expected to uphold the cultural way of dress, yet the man who insists on this is not upholding Swati cultural practices (lines 20 and 21). The Swati society places high demands on women, yet the same cannot be said of men. The word *manyatela* in line 21 is deliberately used hyperbolically to describe the man's head – it is shiny. In the reader's mind, an image of a bald head, the baldness which is a sign of aging, is created. In the previous lines, the man complained about the woman's grey hair. Here the speaker is being sarcastic, proving to the man that he himself is aging. The same word may also mean that the man's head is shaven, yet in the Swati tradition, men were expected to have an afro. Here again, the double standards set for women and men become explicit. In line 24, the persona is using the metaphor *kutishayamtsetfo* to describe the man as being a lawmaker for the reason that he is the one who has the final word in the home. Also, the man is the one who dictates what is right and what is wrong; however, there is a problem with the 'lawmaker', who does not display consistency in upholding the 'law'.

Stanzas 6 and 7 elaborate on the double standards between the two sexes; here the persona states that the man insists that the woman covers her head and does not expose her grey hair. She wonders why the man insists on this because even in ancient times older women would go around without covering their heads (lines 25 and 26). The persona also wonders why the man insists that the woman should wear her animal-skin skirt (*sidvwaba*), yet the man wears trousers, instead of a loin skin. In line 27 "*bakhale ngesidvwaba babhulukele*" is an example of juxtaposition used to reveal the double standards that exist in the Swati society. The man seems to be oblivious that the world is progressing, but ironically, the man is embracing a modern way of dress (lines 28 and 29). The only waiver that a woman is allowed is to substitute the traditional head gear with a modern head scarf, but still, the man does not uphold any of the traditional ways of dressing. Further on, in lines 31 and 32, there is imagery *banamatsele kulo* and *kuhlala kubo* used to emphasize that men seem to hold on tightly to Swati customs when it suits them. They insist that a woman should dress in a certain way, yet they do not uphold the same standards where it concerns them.

In Stanza 8 the voice shifts from second person to first person where the persona adopts the tone of protest and assertiveness. Through rhetorical questions: *Utsini? Angikuva kahle?* and *Buhle bemfati bufihlwe*, the woman is speaking up for herself and confronting the oppressive system. She speaks up against being forced to cover her head, for she says the beauty of a woman is seen when her head is not covered. While it is considered unSwati for a woman to confront a man, in the poem, the woman is allowed the rare privilege to express her raw thought. Here, the text might be trying to show that if things were different, a woman would stand up to challenge a man and express her preferred identity. In Stanza 9 the speaker continues with her protest insisting that, if she is compelled to dress in a certain way, the man should be prepared to do likewise. From line 40 to line 46, she juxtaposes women's traditional dress code to men's traditional dress code and insists that if attire is what makes her a woman, it follows that men will be seen as real men by wearing traditional clothes which will 'make them real men'.

In the last stanza, the text reverts to the initial second person voice and again the speaker instructs the woman to get up, but the tone of protest seems to have abated. The speaker also seems to have come to terms with the injustice that the woman is subjected to, but instead of leaving her in a place of hopelessness, she assures her that God is not oblivious to her plight. To Him, both men and women are the same (line 48-50). The speaker goes on to say that what happens on earth is but temporary, therefore, the woman must get up and get on with her chores for God awaits her. The sudden shift from protest to finding solace in religion affirms German philosopher Karl Marx's assertion that 'Religion is the opium of the people'. The woman in this poem is clearly oppressed and she finds solace in knowing that God is watching. Most Swatis, particularly women, practice Christianity, and it is from this religion that they find comfort and draw strength to bear their crosses daily as stated in the Gospel according to Luke 9:23.

Sisana Dlamini explored a wide range of tropes in her poem to depict the social construction of womanhood. The most prominent figures of speech are repetition and rhetorical questions. Repetition serves to accentuate women's lower social status in the Swati society. Women are given orders associated with performing domestic

chores. The repetition of *vuka* is indicative of women's endless toiling. Working endlessly has elements of coloniality. The rhetorical questions which are also common in the poem, featuring towards the end of the text, serve to introduce the assertive aspect of women. Assertiveness is what feminism advocates. Also of note is the juxtaposition of the man and the woman, which is significant in exposing the contrast between females and males. As already discussed in previous sections, the other figures of speech enhance the poetic aspect of the text as well as revealing the social construction of womanhood.

While Sisana Dlamini explores a number of tropes in the poem, what stands out is how she has juxtaposed women and men. Contrasting the two sexes is significant in revealing how the Swati society creates a two-class society. Presenting *sidvwaba* as an oppressive element is another strategy that the poet explores to advance the themes. *Sidvwaba* is a cultural symbol of womanhood but the woman in the poem is against wearing it. It becomes an oppressive element when the woman is compelled to wear it while doing home chores, because it is heavy and becomes awkward for one to wear while working. Her abrupt burst and subsequent defiance, portrayed through rhetorical questions, signify her attitude towards wearing *sidvwaba*. These strategies are also significant in revealing that women have a preferred identity, that of being assertive; if women had things their way, they would not have society dictate to them what they ought to wear.

4.3 Poem (vi) “Tibongo temnumzane”

Dlamini's poem “*Tibongo temnumzana*” uses irony and sarcasm to describe a worthless man who has a lofty social status by virtue of being male. Dlamini's experience of growing under the harsh hand of a stepfather and her own experience of being married to a promiscuous man were what prompted her to compose this poem. Her own father died when she was only ten days old and the only males that she interacted closely with were her stepfather and her former husband, both men had the same traits of worthlessness as described in her poem “*Tibongo temnumzana*” (*ibid.*).

This poem is meant to ridicule a man who fails to execute his duties as head of a family. The title “*Tibongo temnumzane*” is laden with satire and the sarcastic undertone runs through the entire text. This poem is not about praising the man, as the title suggests, but it is meant to expose his failure in his duties as head of the family. Praises are given for heroic acts but in the text, the poet is being critical of the man under the guise of ‘praising him’. Figures of speech, including sarcasm, imagery, metaphor, irony, imagery, onomatopoeia, personification, symbolism, repetition and juxtaposition, have been explored to mock the man, while at the same time portraying the theme of women’s oppression in Eswatini. Metaphor is the central trope used in the poem to describe the man in various ways, including: ‘elephant’ (Stanza 1), ‘pillar’ (Stanza 2), ‘ruler / privileged one’ (Stanza 3), ‘boss / supreme being’ (Stanza 4), ‘lion’ (Stanza 5), ‘wiggling needle’ (Stanza 6) and ‘bitter leaf’ (Stanza 7). The persona adopts the stance of an observer, and in the third person criticizes the man. In the last stanza, the voice switches to first person and the speaker addresses the man directly.

Below is the poem “*Tibongo temnumzana*”.

Tibongo Temnumzane

(Sisana R. Dlamini)

1. *Indlovu leyesabeka inyatsela,*
2. *Indlovu leyesabeka ngesitfunt,*
3. *Indlovu letanasa kumatsafa ngesibindzi,*
4. *Uyabusa, uyatanasa uyindlovu.*
5. *Insika yelikhaya lilonkhe,*
6. *Insika yelikhaya nome iyendzetela,*
7. *Insika yelikhaya nome seyisekelwa,*
8. *Isimise likhaya lonkhe.*
9. *Mabusa emhlabeni kuphela,*
10. *Ezulwini ulingane nalabangasilutfo,*
11. *Tento takho takubeka,*
12. *NeliBhayibheli lakubeka inkhosi.*
13. *Manumuza kukhanya kumnyama,*
14. *Kuvela kudla ngisho ibhokile,*

The Praise Names for a Man

Stanza 1

The elephant that is feared when he steps in,
The venerated elephant,
The elephant that roams proudly in the
grasslands,
You rule proudly, you are an elephant.

Stanza 2

The pillar of the entire household,
You are a pillar even in your drunken
stupor,
You are a pillar even when you need to be
Supported,
You support the entire household.

Stanza 3

You who reign only on earth,
In heaven you are just a commoner like
everyone,
Your acts enthroned you,
Even the Bible enthroned you.

Stanza 4

You forever have the last word,
During famine, your provision is



<p>15. Lokumnanzi kungene kuwakho, 16. Bantfwana bamunye tiffupha.</p>	<p>guaranteed, Delicacies are reserved only for you, While children suck their thumbs for Hunger</p>
<p>17. Bhubezi lelibhodla kuvakale, 18. Ubhodle kwakhala umfati, 19. Wabhodla kwakhala bantfwana, 20. Bakuva ubhavumula bhubezi.</p>	<p>Stanza 5 You are the lion whose roar is heard, You roared and the woman wailed, You roared and the children wailed, They hear you roar lion.</p>
<p>21. Matfumbetfumbe njengenyalitsi yekutfunga, 22. Longamtsandzi akagcoki siketi,</p>	<p>Stanza 6. You wiggle around like a needle, The only one you are not attracted to is one who does not wear a skirt, The naïve believe you, The wise know that you are a crook.</p>
<p>23. Longati acabange ucinisile, 24. Lowatiko asho ulicili.</p>	<p>Stanza 7 You are a bitterleaf, bitterer than all, They say “babe (father)” and you become the bitter, Your deeds and your heart are bitter, You wiggle around you animal of this Earth.</p>
<p>25. Inshubaba lebaba kwengca letinye, 26. Batsi “Babe” ivele ibabe</p>	<p>Stanza 8 You shocked me when your wife died, You abandoned the mourners, You wiggled around even in that state, Your praises are infinite, father!</p>
<p>27. Ngetento nangenhliityo, 28. Utfumbelete silwane selive.</p>	
<p>29. Ungehlule sekufe umfati, 30. Washiya tinhlakane, 31. Watfumbeleta silwane kukubi, 32. Hha! Kawucedvwa Babe.</p>	

(Mbhele et al., 1990)

4.3.1 Poetry analysis “Tibongo temnumzane”

The first stanza (lines 1- 4) parades the man by describing him metaphorically as an elephant. An image of a domineering elephant is presented as being fierce, appearing to be dignified, and strolling proudly in his territory for he is the ruler. The above description sets the man apart from everybody else in the household. His description gives him the status of a deity that is to be feared; the attribution of god-like traits to a man resonates with Swatis because of their monarchical legacy. The two-class society that is prevalent in a Swati home is inherited from the manner in which the entire Swati society is organised; there is royalty at the top of the social strata and the ordinary Swati is at the bottom. The metaphor of an elephant that is used to describe the man is used as a symbol of the queen mother in Eswatini. Further on in Stanza 5, the man is referred to as a lion, which is the symbol of a king in Eswatini. These two symbols connote power and authority and they are reserved only for the monarchy. The poem

therefore suggests that in contrast to women, men have the same status as the monarchy enjoys in the country.

Line 1 introduces the man as an elephant that is to be feared; when he steps out, fear prevails. The rest of the stanza presents the man as one who is venerated, who roams around with confidence; moreover, the man is said to be a ruler. He is referred to metaphorically as an elephant. Although an elephant is not the strongest in the animal kingdom, its size is intimidating. The poet might be trying to communicate that the physical appearance of the man gives him an advantage over others in the home. The man might not necessarily be the strongest, but his physical appearance, ascribed by his sex, gives him an advantage over a woman. One is drawn to see this from the perspective of sex and gender; in the Swati society, one's sex is a key distinguishing mark and gendered social roles are ascribed in terms of one's sex. Therefore, in the text, the man's physical attributes instantly set him apart as one to be venerated. The elephant is said to be roaming freely in his territory, which may be translated to mean that the man walks proudly in his home. The word *indlovu* is repeated in every line of the stanza to accentuate the metaphor.

In Stanza 2 the man is referred to as a pillar; a pillar of the entire household. From reading this line, one is drawn to the conclusion that the man's role is significant in the welfare of the family. However, line 6 presents an austere contrast of what one is expecting from a 'pillar'. The man is said to be a pillar even in his drunken stupor. A pillar is supposed to be firm, yet in this stanza an image of a pillar 'man' that is unstable due to drunkenness is presented. This metaphor juxtaposes the man's drunkenness with a pillar. An alcoholic staggers, yet a pillar has to be firm for it to provide support successfully. In line 7 the man is said to be drunk to the point where he requires support, yet still he remains the pillar. Line 8 repeats the idea that the man is the support of the household. The metaphor 'pillar' is used sarcastically to refer to a man who is drunk. From this stanza one infers that Swati women are made to submit to men who are incapable of providing the necessary support that is required to run a household. Ascribing superiority to a man on the basis of his sex, which is done to the detriment of a woman, is a subtle form of women's oppression, a man's sex instantly elevates him to the position of superiority.

In Stanza 3 the man is referred to as a ruler and a king; lines 9 and 10 show that man's kingship is a status he enjoys on earth only, for in heaven both men and women are equal. Although society tends to say that man's superiority is a God-given right, the poet seems to oppose that view by pointing out that a man's rule is only on earth; in heaven, both men and women are equal. The metaphor *Mabusa* (line 9) describes the man's position of privilege. The persona could have said, *uyabusa*, but she opted to call him *Mabusa* – a proper noun expressed metaphorically, to describe him as the privileged one. In the same stanza there is a Biblical reference, *Ezulwini*; there is a comparison between heaven and earth; in heaven, both women and men are equal, yet on earth, men are superior. This expression emphasises that men's superiority is only for earth, which could also indicate that men's superiority is man-made and a social construct.

Line 10 presents women as insignificant, *nalabangasilutfo*, in contrast to a man who has been enthroned, *tento takho takubeka*, by his 'noble' acts (line 11). This statement is ironic because it suggests that a man became a ruler on merit, yet the previous stanza portrays him as incapable of being a leader. In the last line of Stanza 3, the persona cites the Bible as being another reason why man has superiority (I Corinthians 11:3). Man's superiority is affirmed by the metaphor *Manumuza* in line 13. Both *Manumuza* and *Mabusa* are metaphoric proper nouns which emphasise a man's supremacy. As head of the household, the man is entitled to a life of comfort, even when conditions are adverse for everybody else. Line 13 states that the man reigns at all times. In line 14, the poet qualifies the statement in the previous line: even during times of famine when food is scarce, there is always enough for the man. Line 15 reveals that it is choice food that the man enjoys even during hard times while children starve (line 16). *Bamunye tiffupha* is imagery used to paint a picture of children who are starving, they try to pacify themselves by sucking their thumbs. The image painted in this stanza exemplifies the lion family, where the male lion gets to eat the best portions while the female and the cubs eat what is left over.

In Stanza 5, the man is described as being abusive; he is metaphorically referred to as a lion that roars and strikes terror in the woman and the children. Roaring is a threatening sound associated with a lion, the most feared animal in the jungle. By

using the metaphor *bhubezi* and the onomatopoeic word *ubhavumule* in line 20, the persona creates an image of terror which has an element of emotional abuse.

Stanza 6 portrays the man as a womaniser. Line 21 reveals that the man is sneaky in conducting his immoral acts. The image of a needle shows how devious he is in his affairs, so that he may go about unnoticed. *Matfumbetfumbe njengenyalisi yekutfunga* combines a metaphor and an onomatopoeia to create a vivid image of the man's shenanigans. Like a needle, he wiggles about. The writer of the poem could have used any other metaphor, but she opted for the image of a wiggling needle to describe how dangerous the man is and that one can get really hurt by a needle if she comes into contact with it carelessly. Line 22 further explains the degree to which the man is immoral: he desires every woman. The only person he is not interested in is another man: *longamtsandzi akagcoki siketi*. In line 23 the persona says the man is deceptive, and only the wise realise how devious he is, *lowatiko asho ulicili*. The man's immoral behaviour exposes women to sexual abuse as women tend to fall prey to men's lustful urges; both the wife and the other women are made to be objects for satisfying men's desires. In "Mine ngiyamshova umgcaki", the same sentiments are expressed but the oral poem shows that the problem is being compounded by the fact that the women engage in a contest where they compete for the man's attention.

In stanza 7 the man is described as a bitter leaf. It is the negative connotation of a bitter leaf that is being referred to here, as a bitter leaf is very bitter, *lebaba kwengca letinye*. This symbolism is explored to show the depth of the man's cruelty and the word *babe* (father) has negative connotations, as the father is said to be 'bitter'. The juxtaposition of father and bitter creates an austere contrast between what is expected of a father and what he is in reality. The poet goes further by saying that the man is bitter both in deed and by the condition of his heart (line 27). The stanza ends with some of the sentiments expressed in the previous stanza that the man wiggles around. In this case, the man goes about 'poisoning' his prey with his bitterness. Here, the text shows that the effect of the man's bitterness is not confined to his home, but he affects everyone he is in contact with: *utfumbelete silwane selive*.

In the last stanza, the poem paints a picture of the man's escapades in situations where he would be expected to behave in a more responsible manner. In the event

that death strikes, everyone is expected to be on their best behaviour, but, ironically, the man being 'praised' in this poem carries on in his usual irresponsible ways. It is said that during the mourning period, the man failed to restrain himself but instead he went about doing his immoral acts: he left mourners behind and went about seeking pleasure. This is despite the fact that in Eswatini rules regarding mourning and observing the mourning period are more favourable for men than for women. While men are free to resume their usual business shortly after the funeral, women, on the other hand, are expected to be confined for a period of about two years. Despite this, the man failed to wait for the burial to be finalised before he could get on with his usual shenanigans. Thus, he is described as *silwane*, another metaphor which emphasizes how inhuman he is; the man's acts render him an animal. Lastly, there is *Hha*, an expression that is associated with praising someone. Again, the speaker seems to be singing praises for the man, yet it is obvious that she is indeed being sardonic.

In this sarcasm-laden poem, the writer explored metaphor extensively, both as a single word as well as a phrase, which constitutes various tropes such as symbolism, repetition, imagery and onomatopoeia to contribute to both the semantic and the musical aspects of the text. While the musical aspect of the text is not to be discounted, it is worth noting that the focus was given to the semantic aspect. This was done in conformity with Tsur's cognitive poetics. When metaphors are combined with other poetic expressions, the effect is heightened, one is able to extract the unspoken message of the text. Metaphors have been utilised to describe the many facets of the man including: domineering, fearful, vital, privileged, terrifying, devious and distasteful, but to describe him as being vital is sarcastic. Furthermore, the lofty position of the man, juxtaposed with the woman's lower social status, covertly reveals women's oppression.

4.4 Poem (vii) "Kantsi wawukhona yini?"

The title of the poem is a rhetorical question of lament: in it, Dlamini reflects about the hard life that she had growing up without a father, it is as if, she experienced abandonment at a young age. The idea of being abandoned, is clearly captured by lines 4-6 of the oral poem "Koboy koboyi", where the speaker is accusing a mother for neglecting her child: "*Watala umntfwana, wam'bek' etjeni, wadliwa timphetfu*".

Dlamini's mother was the one who bore the burden of raising four children without the support of their father. This was despite the fact that Dlamini's mother had remarried, hoping that her new husband would help her raise the fatherless children. The thwarted hopes of not getting out of the marriage what she had hoped for, were made worse by the fact that the step-father made life harder for the family, especially for the girls, including Dlamini. Her prospects of going to school were threatened by the step-father who would insist that Dlamini should not be allowed to go to school.

At the time of narrating the poem, the persona has reached adulthood and she is looking back to the period of her growing up without a father. She was raised by her mother single-handedly and life was hard because of the absence of the father; now she is aggrieved about having grown up without one. Growing up, she would hear others calling their fathers, and she would imitate them, now the sad reality of not having had a father is haunting her. The persona imagines her mother struggling alone to raise her; she is, nonetheless, appreciative to God who fathered her while she grew up.

This poem is presenting a slight shift from the other poems analysed in this chapter. The preceding poems presented men, including fathers, as irresponsible, but in this one the persona laments not having had a father. She has convinced herself that the struggles that she experienced growing up would have been avoided if she had had a father. As a researcher, one understands the persona's sense of sadness to be a result of not having had an experience of being raised by her biological father. The image that she has is a fantasy. From this seemingly contradictory perception of what a father is, one concludes that there is an image of an ideal father, on the other hand it is apparent that some fathers do not live up to the expected standard. However, this is not the theme of the poem.

Below is the poem "Kantsi wawukhona yini?"

Kantsi Wawukhona Yini?

(Sisana R. Dlamini)

1. *Kutsi "Babe" ngishito kanyenti,*

So you were around?

Stanza 1

| I have said "Father" many times,



2. <i>Ngatsi “Babe” ngilingisa linyenti,</i> 3. <i>Awusekho Babe kulomhlaba.</i>	I have said “Father” imitating others, You are no longer alive, Father.
4. <i>Ngangilisho ligcwale umlomo,</i> 5. <i>Ngive basho labatiko,</i> 6. <i>Awusekho wahamba kudzala,</i>	Stanza 2 I would say it with confidence, I have heard it said by those who know, You are no longer around, you have been long departed,
7. <i>Ngangingati kantsi wahambisisa,</i> 8. <i>Wahambisa kwelituba laNowa.</i>	I did not know that you took a long journey, You have been gone like Noah’s dove.
9. <i>Akaphelanga lalishumi ngifikile,</i> 10. <i>Awungibonanga kepha sewuvile,</i> 11. <i>Wangetsa libito lesikhumbuto,</i> 12. <i>Lisibonakaliso ngawe impela,</i> 13. <i>Kantsi wawukhona kulomhlaba?</i>	Stanza 3 It had not been ten days since I arrived, You had not seen me, but you had heard, You gave me a name for remembrance, A name that reveals you, So you were around?
14. <i>Umfelokati kufunana netinyamatane,</i> 15. <i>Umfelokati kugulelwa luswane,</i> 16. <i>Tigobhote abukene neluswane,</i> 17. <i>Lungenayise lusele lungenanyanga,</i> 18. <i>Uhambile wena kulomhlaba.</i>	Stanza 4 Your widow seeking herbs for the baby, The widow, with a sick child, Tears flowing as she gazes at the baby, Left fatherless at under a month old, You have left this earth.
20. <i>Kuhlupheka kuwavusa onkh’e manceba.</i> 21. <i>Kuhamba kwakho kuyayibanga,</i>	Stanza 5 Suffering makes me alive to my grief. Your departure, causes,
22. <i>Ledvutane nalekhashane inhlupheko,</i> 23. <i>Kwasita uyise wetintsandzane kimi.</i>	Suffering from near and far, The Father of the fatherless rescued me.
24. <i>Litsemba lenginalo alipheli,</i> 25. <i>Liyakutfolakala litfuba sibonane,</i> 26. <i>Ungati nami ngiciniseke,</i> 27. <i>Kutsi nawe wawukhona kulomhlaba</i>	Stanza 6 I still have hope, That a chance will avail for us to meet, For you to know me so that I am assured, That you once lived on this earth.

(Mbhele et al., 1990)

4.4.1 Poetry analysis: “Kantsi wawukhona yini?”

In the first stanza the persona muses about a time in her life where she would call “father”. She was too young at the time to understand what father meant, so she mimicked other children when they called their fathers. Line 3 explains why she grew up without a father: her father had died. “*Awusekho Babe kulomhlaba*” is a euphemism to state that the father had died. The same sentiments are repeated in stanza 2 where she reiterates that her father is long departed. In line 6 the same euphemism *wahamba* (he left) is repeated. When he died, it was as if he was leaving. Additionally, it is stated that the father had been dead for a long time. *Awusekho kulomhlaba* shows that the

man departed for another world, which is not this present world. Death is accorded high respect in Swati culture and particularly the death of a significant individual; instead of saying that the father died, a euphemism is used to refer to the death.

Stanza 3 has a repetition of the same word *wahamba*; the repetition emphasises the fact that her father died. The expression *wahamba* has an element of imagery; one imagines the man 'leaving'. Line 8 "*Wahambisa*" *kwelituba laNowa* is a Biblical reference describing the permanence of the state of death. The dove that Biblical Noah sent to find out if water had receded after the flood never returned (Genesis 8:12), so did the child's father. In the next stanza, more details about the time when the man died are given; the persona was only ten days old and he left before he could set eyes on the baby. According to Swati custom, men are not allowed to see infants until they are one month old, but at the time of his death, the man had already named the child, and that name has served as a remembrance, and proof that he indeed lived.

In Stanza 5, the text, through the voice of the persona, reveals the hardships that the mother of the child went through raising the child; the mother is described as the widow, which indicates that she was the wife of the deceased. The stanza reveals that the widow raised the child and took care of her medical issues: "*Umfelokati kufunana netinyamatane*" (line 14). This revelation serves to show the role that a father has in raising his children: however, many Swati men neglect their duties and they leave all responsibilities to the women (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Brogna, 2018). Stanza 6 is about the hardships that the persona experienced growing up. Although the nature of the challenges that the child went through have not been explained, it is clear that growing up without a father brought her suffering. Nonetheless, the child acknowledges the role that God played in her life; if it had not been for Him, she would not have made it. God is the Father of the fatherless (Psalm 68:5). In the last stanza the child expresses hope of being reunited with her father in the afterlife, where they will get to know one another: "*Liyakutfolakala litfuba sibonane*" (line 25). The reunion will finally convince her that she too had a father.

Euphemism and Biblical allusion are the two figures of speech utilised in the poem, their relevance aligns with the mournful tone of the text. Euphemism is the prominent trope because in the Swati culture, death is treated with great respect. Like the

euphemisms, Biblical allusions add to the sombre tone. The rest of the text uses simple language. “*Kantsi wawukhona yini?*” is the second poem dealing with death; in the first one, “*Umloyi*”, the tone is that of anger instead of mourning. While in the latter, death was a loss to the speaker, in the former, death was a relief.

4.5 Theoretical application on the poems: “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Vuka mfati”, “Tibongo temnumzana” and “Kantsi wawukhona yini”

The four poetic texts: “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Vuka mfati”, “Tibongo temnumzana” and “Kantsi wawukhona yini” uncover discriminatory practices that the Swati society has used to subjugate women. Exposing the problems advances the agenda that feminists have to unshackle women from social repression. “Betfwele kabetfulwa” addresses womanhood as expressed through challenges associated with motherhood. The theme of oppression is depicted by presenting a mother who is thrust with the burden of raising children in an environment of economic deprivation. Issues including: unpaid labour, overwork, being compelled by circumstances to be a bread-winner, emotional, religious and economic abuse, stand out in the text. At a broader perspective, the challenges may be categorised as domestic enslavement and abuse. Similarly, “Vuka mfati” explores womanhood in the context of being a wife. There is a vivid contrast between a woman and a man: while, on one hand, the woman is presented as a domestic slave, the man, on the other hand, is described as the master who lives off the woman’s labour. She labours around the clock, from early dawn to twilight, ensuring that her family is provided for. The woman’s servitude is also enforced through oppressive clothing that she is compelled to wear while doing house chores that is not remunerated for (Broyna, 2018).

The theme of women’s oppression in “Tibongo temnumzana” is unveiled through exposing a man’s flaws and his failure to carry out his duties in the home. Drawing attention to the man’s weaknesses, while at the same time referring to him as the pillar of the family, completely shatters his image, albeit, mordantly. The woman is presented implicitly, and her subtle appearance in the text serves to juxtapose her minority status with the man’s dismal failure in his role as head of the home. Lastly in this category is “Kantsi wawukhona yini?”, a poem that expresses the sadness of

growing up without a father. The child is recounting, with not much detail, the struggles that she encountered growing up without a father. The child also refers to the struggles that her mother went through raising her single-handedly. She was too young to have witnessed what her mother went through, so it is assumed that at the time of expressing her thoughts, she had grown up. She now understands the challenges that women go through to raise children alone, hence womanhood is expressed from the perspective of a mother who is compelled to be a breadwinner and has to raise children single-handedly under trying conditions. These are subtle forms of women's oppression. While the child laments the state of fatherlessness, one may consider it a blessing in disguise. The child and her mother experienced financial oppression because the man was dead, but it would have been worse for them to struggle alone while the man was around, as it is the case with women and children shown in the other poems.

One of the ways in which women in Eswatini are subjected to domestic enslavement relates to their motherhood roles. While it is generally accepted that motherhood is natural for women, it becomes a form of bondage when it happens within adverse conditions of destitution and when it is used as a standard with which one attains an acceptable level of womanhood. In the text "Betfwele kabetfulwa", the narrator recounts hardships that women experience as mothers, and she uses the metaphor "load" to describe babies that the mothers bear on their backs. Not only does the metaphor accentuate the image, but it also dehumanises the babies by reducing them to objects. In spite of this harsh reality, Swati women strive to attain the status of mothers because from a young age, they are socialised such that they understand that their destination is achieving motherhood (Dlamini, 2017). Motherhood is a status that is attached to the duty of raising children, sometimes, single-handedly.

Feminists view this as domestic enslavement, especially in light of claims, propagated by patriarchal societies, that women's inferior brainpowers match their small physiques and qualify them as domestic serves, attending to the needs of their husbands and children (Goel, 2010). This mentality is revealed in "Betfwele kabetfulwa", "Vuka mfati" and "Tibongo temnumzana". Women's socialisation prepares them for that reality (Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017; Rani, 2012; Barry & Grady (2019).

While women bear the burden from conception and childbearing to raising the children, the children do not belong to them but they are for the husbands, whose surnames they take (Langa, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017). This happens even in cases where the fathers are not involved in the children's lives, as depicted in the text "Kantsi wawukhona yini". Child-bearing is important for preserving the man's family lineage (Dlamini, 2017). Women in other African nations have had a similar encounter, in Kenya, for instance, women played a significant role in the country's liberation struggle, but after independence politics were regarded as a domain for men (Arndt, 2002).

It is worth noting that womanhood challenges that unmarried mothers experience are different from those that married mothers have. On the periphery, it may seem that unmarried women are worse off because they lack spousal support, yet the reality, as revealed by the poetic texts, is that married women have worse challenges. While on one hand, unmarried women do not have the expectations that married women have on their husbands, wives on the other hand, do. Sadly, those hopes usually go unfulfilled, which becomes a burden emotionally and, in most cases, financially. In a number of cases, the husbands that the women look up to for support, are the ones who make their situations worse; this reality is shown by "Betfwele kabetfulwa", "Vuka mfati" and "Tibongo temnumzana". Women, particularly wives, are socialised such that they live according to standards set for them, which includes deriving joy from pleasing their husbands and extended family (Dlamini, 2017); unfortunately, the same standard does not apply to men because they are free to do as they please (*ibid.*). This disparity foregrounds the idea that, in Eswatini, women and men belong to different social groups, typical of a colonial setup (Brognna, 2018; Rajan and Park, 2005; Collins, 1990a).

Economic oppression of the class that was being dominated was one of the ways in which the inequalities between classes emerged. Similarly, women's lower social status is exposed by how the economy is distributed in the country as well as at family level (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Brognna, 2018; FAO, 2019; Human Development Report, 2020b): however, for women in rural areas, the situation is dire (Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, n.d; *Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals*, 2012). The poetic texts show the different ways in

which women are financially oppressed. In “Betfwele kabetfulwa” the text reveals that destitution is a permanent condition for women, a state from which they will be relieved when they die. The same sentiments are expressed by “Tibongo temnumzana”, albeit in a subtle way. While in the former, the speaker paints a mental image of extreme destitution, in the latter, the persona describes the man as being greedy and enjoying lavishness alone while the rest of the family languishes in poverty, in order to juxtapose the woman’s poverty with his opulence. In “Kantsi wawukhona yini”, a child’s lament for a father who had died is what brings to light women’s financial oppression.

In an attempt to escape their poverty, the women explore the world of work and they enlist in the labour market. Taking up an additional task of a job becomes a burden because the women already have their domestic chores and the duty of nurturing children, which they are not remunerated for (Mdluli, 2013; Rural Women’s Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Dlamini, 2017). All four poems in this chapter exemplify this point. While the Eurocentric perspective of feminists considers it an achievement for women to explore the work space, Khader (2020) brings it to one’s attention that when women become employed, it makes their situation worse because of the additional tasks associated with it; she therefore makes a statement which implies that certain cultural practices by Africans are not as bad as they seem. Polygamy, for instance, allows for the sharing of responsibilities among wives. Decolonial feminism, therefore, becomes relevant in addressing Black women’s womanhood challenges.

The poems suggest that work that women do can be classified under two types; unpaid labour, which is the work that they do in their domestic environments and menial labour that they do outside of their home spaces, for which they are paid a meagre wage. Nonetheless, for both work that women do domestically and that which they do outside the home space, men are the legatees. This sad reality may be likened to the events that took place during colonial times when resources that weaker nations produced were pillaged by dominant ones (R’boul, 2020).

To further ground their control over women, society prescribed a dress code (*sidvwaba*) for them; Langa (2012) refers to it as a badge of slavery, Mdluli (2013) regards it as a form of concealment. As a badge, *sidvwaba* is used to label a woman as being a property of her husband; as concealment, *sidvwaba* creates a hedge

around the woman so that she is protected from other men and preserved for her husband. This practice is clearly rooted in slavery, where bondservants were seen as nothing more than chattels for their owners; slaves were used to bring enjoyment to their owners, yet their own interests were never considered. In the poem “Vuka mfati” this concern is addressed; the woman being given orders, including the instruction to wear *sidvwaba*, grudgingly obliges because although she is vehemently opposed to wearing *sidvwaba*, her rights to exercise the freedom to refuse have been stripped. While the Swati society, in the guise of culture, expects women to dress in a certain way, men are at liberty to dress as they please. This view is expressed in the text when the speaker notes that there are double standards with regards to the wearing of traditional clothes. The man, according to the text, has embraced modern clothes. Compelling a woman to wear what she is not comfortable with is a form of abuse. Other forms include: the practice of compelling women to submit, indiscriminately to the authority of men, physical abuse, sexual and spiritual manipulation.

Compelling women to submit to the authority of men is one way of exercising control over them, it is also a stratagem that society uses to allocate power to men. Dlamini (2017) made a similar observation which she articulated as, “submission is regarded as an appropriate trait for women”, adding that, “women are expected to accept, without question, orders given by those in authority:” (*ibid.* p. 69). Earlier, Freire (1996) had noted that society prescribes what is acceptable as, “one of the basic elements of the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed is prescription” (p. 29). Hurtado (1989), in his discussion on postcolonialism, explains that subordination has to do with relationships; power is allocated according to socially constructed structures. This statement expressly explicates the situation in Eswatini where, culturally, women are socialised to submit to men; Biblical pronouncements such as (Ephesians 5: 22) are used to enforce this belief system. Hence the poems: “*Betfwele kabetfulwa*”, “*Vuka mfati*” and “*Tibongo temnumzana*” express this notion.

The third text is the one that poignantly captures this idea in an emotional manner. A reader is utterly repulsed as she engages with the text where a wretched image of a man who has dismally failed in his duties as a husband, is uncovered. What is appalling is the undertone of the poem which expresses society’s expectation for the

woman to submit to the husband. Culturally, men in Eswatini are regarded as heads and they enjoy sovereignty in their homes. The king-subject liaison that exists between a man and a woman typifies the master-slave relationship that epitomized the colonial era (Chambers and Watkins, 2012; Collins, 2001). Worth pointing out is that men attain their superior status on the basis of their natural sex. With their different physical anatomy, women are perpetually at a disadvantage; this fact provokes one to ponder if women who are subverting their natural sex through undergoing medical procedures are prompted by the discrimination that Swati women are exposed to. Also, one is provoked to consider if the outlawing of induced sex change is a deliberate move by the Eswatini government to control and maintain the natural sexual orientations of its citizens. Although the observation on the issue about one's sexual orientation, and the debate on whether or not, to subvert one's natural sex, does not directly relate to the texts, it is, nonetheless, an idea worth pondering.

Physical abuse and sexual manipulation, as suggested by “Tibongo temnumzana”, are other harsh realities that women in Eswatini are exposed to. Regrettably, some of the cases are not reported because there is a culture, among Swati people, of keeping secret *tibi tendlu* (household dirt) (Dlamini, 20007; Langa, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Dlamini, 2017), and traditional structures do not condemn the practice entirely (Nhlapho, 1992). In order to find solace, women turn to religion, which then becomes an element of oppression (Marx and Engels, 1990). All the four poems in this chapter reveal religious oppression of women. Oppression of women, through the various ways indicated above, results in the construction of a certain identity, and when the women align themselves with the dictates of society and behave accordingly, the oppressive identity is enforced, and through repetition, a culture of subjugation is cemented (Adichie, 2015). Studying the poems has shown that the Swati society succeeded to construct a colonial image of women (Verschuur, & Destremau, 2012). Feminist poets, therefore, expose these concerns in these four poems (“Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Vuka mfati”, “Tibongo temnumzana” and “Kantsi wawukhona yini”) written during the age of third wave feminism, and by so doing, they nudge women to the awareness of their reality, which then results in a revolution, culminating with the construction of a preferred identity. Collins (2001) captures this idea where she encourages all “Black women to create new self-definitions that

validate their standpoint” (p.169); thus, “Betfwele kabetfulwa” proposes an alternative identity of women who are assertive. Dlamini (2017) sums this up succinctly in the statement below:

The role of Swazi women in performance continuously shifts between the condition of ‘objectivity,’ (where they conform to the ‘prescriptions’ by men) and ‘subjectivity,’ (where they take full responsibility for their own lives, deciding what they want for themselves (p. 82).

4.6 Summary

This chapter has shown the different ways that Swati women poets use to expose oppressive gendered practices against women; moreover, it has brought to the reader’s attention women’s responses towards being subjugated. From reading the texts from different perspectives, particularly through the feminist lens, the reader understands the fact that the Swati society uses gendered practices to construct women’s identity. Also, a reading of the texts reveals that women have a preferred identity, different from the one that society creates in the guise of culture. The reader is therefore challenged to engage in a debate on gender issues. Having been influenced by third wave feminism, the poets have invaded the space that, though discriminatory censorship, had initially been reserved for males (Collins, 1990b); they exploited the literary sphere to “challenge socially acceptable value systems” (Dlamini, 2017); precisely, the practice of policing their bodies through dress-code is being challenged, it is as if the woman finally understands that by continuing to wear *sidvwaba*, she is endorsing patriarchy, but, by being defiant, she is embracing the spirit of third wave feminism which is opposed to participating in behaviours that promote masculinity. Both simple narration and poetic language, which took pre-eminence, have been utilised as vehicles for communicating the poets’ feminist ideas.

What is more, the influence of the poets’ backgrounds is unmistakable in the texts; Sarah Mkhonza’s moving exposition of motherhood is probably influenced by her own mother’s experience of being a domestic worker; the difficulty that the mother went through, working hard but earning a paltry wage to support her children, is coming out strongly in the poem. It is as if, the woman spent her life wandering about aimlessly, like the women in “Betfwele kabetfulwa”. Similarly, with Sisana Dlamini, each of her poems, seems to recount a certain aspect of Dlamini’s life. “Vuka mfati” and “Tibongo

temnumzana”, have tell-tale signs of the marriage that she once had; her experience with an abusive ‘good-for-nothing’ spouse has influenced her perception about husbands, hence the image that she depicts of husbands. However, her conception of fathers is different; she believes that they are better, this is despite the reality that she had with a step father who ill-treated her.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM POEMS

5.0 Introduction

Poems published during the fourth wave feminism movement exhibit a general sense of assertiveness and confidence of women who, having rejected a ‘snail sense’ approach, have embraced the ‘camel’s disposition’ to map out a desired destiny (Nkealah, 2017). The use of technology tools (Situmeang, 2019), marking this age of feminism, suggests women’s aggressive approach in overturning patriarchal structures and replacing them with revolutionary and novel ideals. As with the MeToo movement, feminist compositions held society accountable for atrocious acts committed against women over many years (Barry & Grady, 2019). The three poems: “Hlakanipha mfati”, “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika” and “Washikitela mfati” were probably influenced by the thinking of the age of fourth wave feminism, and published during the same time. The two: “Hlakanipha mfati” and “Washikitela mfati”, are radical in exposing social injustices against women and they suggest a more drastic attitude. From another perspective, “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika” seeks to restore women’s dignity in a manner, which, in the Swati context, is inconceivable.

5.1 Poem (viii) “Hlakanipha mfati”

Mnisi’s poem “Hlakanipha mfati” was inspired by what she had observed in society; in the poem she urges women to value their worth. She wrote the poem as a reflection on the abuses that she went through in her marriage. She hoped to share her thoughts, through her poem, with other abused women in her church, in her neighbourhood and via the *SNAT Eagle*. The opportunity to have her poem published in an anthology that is studied by secondary school learners was availed when she attended a writer’s training workshop for Swati Language teachers. After the workshop, teachers were urged to write their own poems, and Mnisi perfected her poem “Hlakanipha mfati” which she had already composed. Her poem was selected for publication in the anthology *Sabalala Misebe*. For Mnisi, having the poem included in the anthology was by chance since reading and writing for publication are generally uncommon in the

country (*Fikile Mnisi, personal communication, 28 March 2021*). This poem questions a number of things that are done by men against women and children. These bad acts have come to be accepted by society as the norm and women accept them without question. In this text the poet is asking how long this will go on; she touches on a number of things including emotional abuse, sexual abuse of children, economic abuse, children turned abusers and women's slave mentality. These issues are prevalent in the Swati society but they are kept under wraps and not spoken about. The phrase *tibi tendlu* is used to hush up those who want to speak, and so the problem propagates from generation to generation until it becomes the new normal. The poem ends with the persona urging women to know their worth and to get wise.

The woman persona speaks in the first person and she is addressing fellow women. The first-person voice suggests that she is directly involved in the issues that she is addressing. The advantage of first-person reporting is that the reader is able to see things from the persona's point of view and to learn about her feelings on what is happening. The persona is honest about how she feels and how she would wish for things to go. By using simple language, for the most part, the theme of oppression is addressed with much clarity. Figures of speech explored in this poem are rhetorical questions, repetition and imagery. All the stanzas save the last one, which advises women to liberate themselves from this slavery, ask the question, *Kutawuze kube nini?* This is an important question that suggests that women's oppression has been going on for a very long time and it urges women to end their suffering.

Below is the poem "Hlakanipha mfati":

Hlakanipha Mfati (Fikile Mnisi)

1. *Kutawuze kube nini sithula,*
2. *Kepha sibe sisha ngekhatsi?*
3. *Kutawuze kubenini,*
4. *Sihlukubeteka sithulile*
5. *Kepha tingcondvo tetfu tibe tilimala?*

Stanza 1

Wise-up woman

For how long are we going to keep quiet,
Yet, we burn from inside?
For how long,
Are we going to keep quiet while we are
abused
While we become psychologically
damaged?

Stanza 2



6. <i>Labanengi betfu,</i> 7. <i>Sebalimele ingcondvo ngenca</i> <i>Yekhlukubeteka.</i> 8. <i>Yebo labanye baseMentali</i> 9. <i>Bagula ngengcondvo,</i> 10. <i>Kepha solo sithulile,</i> 11. <i>Kutawuze kube nini?</i>		Most of us, Have been damaged psychologically because of abuse. Some of us at the mental asylum Their brains are damaged, Yet we remain quiet, For how long?
12. <i>Kutawuze kubenini bobabe</i> 13. <i>Balala bantfwabetfu sithulile</i> 14. <i>Sitsi tibi tendlu?</i>	Stanza 3	For how long will fathers sexually Abuse our children while we remain Quiet And saying it is domestic matters?
15. <i>Kutawuze kube nini sithulile</i> 16. <i>Batsatsa wonkhe umholo wetfu</i> 17. <i>Bawudle netincanakazana sithulile?</i>	Stanza 4	For how long Will they grab our salaries And spend it with their mistresses?
18. <i>Kutawuze kube nini sithulile</i> 19. <i>Sitsatse imali yetfu sitsenge timoto,</i> 20. <i>Lesingatigibeli?</i> 21. <i>Ingani tigitjelwa ngubabe netincanakazana,</i> 22. <i>Kepha ibe ibhadalwa nguwe,</i> 23. <i>Kutawuze kube nini?</i>	Stanza 5	For how long will we remain quiet And pay for cars That we never ride? For only the husband and his mistresses ride those cars, Yet we pay for those cars, For how long?
24. <i>Sitsi sihlalele bantfwana</i> 25. <i>Sibe sihleti etikwelilahle lelivutsako.</i> 26. <i>Bantfwana bakhule babuka</i> 27. <i>Khlukubeteka kwetfu,</i> 28. <i>Bafunge bagomele</i> 29. <i>Batsi angeke bendze.</i>	Stanza 6	We say we keep marriages for the sake of our children Yet we are sitting on hot coals. Children are watching As we endure abuse, And they vow Never to get married.
30. <i>Bantfwana bakho babe</i> 31. <i>Bahlukubeti ngoba babonile</i> 32. <i>Bobabe basihlukubeta.</i> 33. <i>Kutawuze kube nini?</i>	Stanza 7	The children belong to you father Abusers watch As fathers abuse us. For how long?
34. <i>Umcamelo onkhe Malanga</i> 35. <i>Ulala umanti kucabanga lokungapheli,</i> 36. <i>Ngitambhadala ngani SHYLOCK?'</i> 37. <i>Bantfwana batawudlani?</i> 38. <i>Kuze kuse make acabanga</i> 39. <i>Imicabango lengapheli,</i> 40. <i>Lete timphendvulo,</i> 41. <i>Kutawuze kube nini?</i>	Stanza 8	The pillow daily Is wet perpetually How will I repay the loan shark? What will the children eat? The mother worries about what the children will eat Thinking endlessly, With no answers, For how long?
42. <i>Hlakanipha mfati utimele,</i> 43. <i>Likusasa lakho lichakazile,</i> 44. <i>Tetsembe utati kutsi umcoka.</i>	Stanza 9	Wise up woman, Your future is bright, Have self-confidence knowing

| you are important

(Khumalo, Vilakati, 2012)

5.1.1 Poetry analysis “Hlakanipha mfati”

Stanza 1 opens with the repeated rhetorical question, and it questions women’s silence on their oppression. The rhetorical question *kutawuze kube nini?* runs throughout the poem. By asking this question without necessarily expecting a response from anyone, the woman is challenging the reader to think deeply about the issues that are being raised. Women are challenged to ponder certain questions and to think about why they allow themselves to suffer different forms of oppression. The rhetorical question that has been repeated throughout the poem provokes the reader to take note of the questions that the poet is bringing to attention; thus, repetition is a poetic strategy that serves to foreground an issue.

Stanza 2 substantiates the claim made in the previous stanza; as a result of mental oppression, a number of women are in a mental asylum, yet still, women remain silent. The attitude of the women towards their suffering is not making their lives any better, but instead it has resulted in many losing their minds. Striving to live up to societal expectations results in the women suffering nervous breakdowns. In Stanza 3 the woman questions women’s silence when their children are sexually molested, justifying their silence by claiming that this is a domestic matter, *tibi tendlu*. This phrase is very common in the Swati society where it is used as a cover-up for all forms of domestic abuse. Families have a tendency of sweeping such issues under the carpet for many reasons, including fear of losing support from the perpetrator. Strangely, even those perpetrators who do not provide any support for their families are protected under the same blanket of *tibi tendlu*. Such abuse does not only affect the direct victim, but all members of the family are emotionally troubled by the act of incest. The woman, who in most cases is the mother of the victim, suffers double jeopardy; the man molests her daughter and still wants to sleep with the wife. This practice exposes women to sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and hence, the high rate of infection which stands at thirty-one percent among Swati women.

The practice of referring to Swati women as *lutsango* (traditional fence) promotes the tradition of silence among women. Women are lauded for suffering in silence and ‘protecting’ the image of families. This is ironic because men are viewed as the ‘protectors’ of their families. The reality presented in the poem is that men are the perpetrators, exposing their families to harm. In stanza 4, the woman addresses the issue of men taking their wives’ money and she questions why the practice is allowed to persist. She also states that the men who take their wives’ money spend it with mistresses, “*Batsatsa wonkhe umholo wetfu*” (line 16) “*Bawudle netincanakazana...*” (line 17). The awareness that the money is spent on mistresses is appalling. It further serves to expose women’s economic oppression which is done under the guise of submission, yet in fact, it reduces wives to domestic slaves. Usually, it is rural women who are exploited and pushed to domestic servitude, but in this stanza the victim is a woman who has a job. In most cases women who are able to hold well-salaried jobs are those who are educated; hence, the stanza reveals that economic oppression and domestic slavery happen across the board; both illiterate and literate women fall victim.

In the next stanza it is made clear that the woman referred to is well-salaried, she is said to be paying the instalments of a car; only with a good salary can one afford to pay a car instalment. From this, one can infer that the woman being referred to here has a good education which has qualified her for a good salary. In lines 19 and 20, the persona laments that women do not ride the cars that they pay for, but they are used by the husband and his mistress: “*Sitsatse imali yetfu sitsenge timoto... lesingatigibeli*”. Line 21 says: “*Ingani tigitjelwa ngubabe nesincanakazane*”. The man is called *babe*, which means ‘father’. The title ‘*babe*’ automatically accords the man special privileges as head of a household. Men are regarded as more important than women, with a status similar to the one of a colonial master.

The woman is unwilling to end her oppression claiming that she is doing it for her children. “*Sitsi sihlalele bantfwana*” (line 24) ... “*Sibe sihleti etikwelilahle lelivutsako*” (line 25). Line 24 suggests that the reason given by the woman is merely an excuse; it is not the real reason that she is putting up with her suffering. Further on (line 25), there is an imagery which serves to describe the condition that the woman is subjected to: it is as if she is sitting on hot coals. This image creates a mental picture which

reveals in no uncertain terms the degree of the woman's suffering. In her book, *Romanticizing Garbage*, Langa (2012) laments the plight of women who allow themselves to be continually oppressed. These women give excuses to justify their oppression; in Stanza 6, this observation plays out where the speaker confesses that, as women, they put up with being ill-treated. Instead of leaving, they claim to be making a sacrifice for their children by continuing to stay in dysfunctional relationships.

The woman's suffering happens in the open to the point that the girls in the family vow to never get married: "*Bantfwana bakhule babuka*" (line 26), "*Kuhlukubeteka kwetfu*" (line 27), "*Bafunge bagomele*" (line 28), and "*Batsi angeke bendze*" (line 29). Not only is the woman's suffering a public spectacle, but it affects her daughters' attitude towards marriage. To the girls, marriage is modelled as evil, and they would not wish to go through the same. The suffering that women experience in their marriages not only traumatizes children, but it also distorts their perception of marriage. Worse still, boys become initiated into a distorted view of manhood. Stanza 7 indicates that boys grow up to be abusers, because they see their fathers abusing their mothers; "*Bantfwabakho babe*" (line 30), "*Babahlukubeti ngoba babonile*" (line 31), "*Bobabe basihlukubeta*" (line 32). Women abuse perpetrates the culture of abuse in society.

Women are plunged into debt; on the other hand, they have to think about the next meal to feed the family. In this stanza the woman has had the responsibility of providing for the family thrust on her, and meanwhile the man who is supposed to be the breadwinner is not taking care of his responsibility. At night while the man sleeps peacefully, the woman is trying to figure out ways to make ends meet. In line 34, we learn that the woman is not coping well; her pillow is soaked in tears because at night she cries instead of sleeping. She thinks about her debt; she owes a loan shark but she has no idea how she will repay the loan. The stanza reveals that women are breadwinners, providing for their families. It is ironic that men claim to be the heads yet it is the women who provide for their families. The men neglect the duty of providing for their families in spite of the fact that they have the capacity to do so.

In the last stanza the poet is urging the woman to get wise and assert herself because she has a bright future. The woman has to have self-confidence and know her worth. This stanza is proposing an alternative identity that the woman should embrace;

moreover, she is assured that embracing the new identity will bring positive change to her life.

The text employs rhetorical questions and imagery to outline some of the unfair practices that women experience in their marriages. The question: *Kutawuze kube nini?* is addressed to women and it is repeated nine times to quiz women about their silence. The repetition of the question implies that women have kept quiet for a long time, thus enabling the perpetuation of unfair practices against them. Oppressive practices that have been accepted as the norm include acts of incest that men commit against their children, financial exploitation and economic deprivation that men subject their wives to. The imagery emphasises the hardships cited above and they further reveal the impact that these challenges have on the younger generation.

By using simple interrogative expressions and a few images, the poet has uncovered some of the difficulties that women encounter in their homes. Instead of merely highlighting the issues, questions are posed. Of note is that the rhetorical question does imply that women's silence is implicated in the perpetuation of their oppression. While one interrogates why women have remained silent, it does seem that the writer is exposing the long-term effects of silencing women. Women have embraced silence as part of their socially acceptable identity. Their silence, which is a societal construct, is to the detriment of society as a whole, as already noted. This poetic technique has proved to be effective because the reader has been challenged to ponder the questions. As the poem draws to an end, elements of feminist agency are introduced; women are urged to reject timidity and they are encouraged to embrace confidence and independence from oppressive chauvinistic practices that have defined them.

5.2 Poem (ix) “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika”

This poem opens with a rhyme which is chanted in admiration of a woman's traditional leather skirt (*sidvwaba*). Leather skirts are worn by traditionally wedded wives in their matrimonial homes, and since the leather skirt is associated with a traditionally wedded wife, the meaning of *sidvwaba* has been stretched to mean a wife. *Insika* is a pillar, but in this poem it refers to the man, the head of the family. The title of the poem “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika” is symbolic, meaning that the wife is wrapped around

the husband. This title creates an image of control; the woman's influence is all over the husband and it seems that she is in charge of how the man runs the home. The text presents *Sidvwaba* as being an important symbol of control; a woman is dominating an entire family. The same symbol is used to control women; in the oral poem "Ye mfati longesheya", a woman is about to be 'captured' and given a 'label', through the use of *sidvwaba*.

The man's decision making is contrary to the norm and it defies logic, which makes his reasoning questionable. The wife to the husband is implicated as being the force behind the man's illogical behaviour. The persona, only identified as a family member, is a first-person narrator. She is engaged in a monologue, supposedly addressing the man's wife. Through the exploration of symbolism, imagery, metaphor, onomatopoeia and juxtaposition, the persona paints an unpleasant image of a man who is being controlled by his wife. Indirectly, this poem is attacking a woman for putting her husband under a spell so that she could control him. The man's poor leadership skills are blamed on a woman. From a feminist point of view, one is inclined to uncover the ironic undertone of the poem. The Swati society is used to having women thrown to the margins by families, especially by in-laws and including spouses. When a husband appears to be taking sides with his wife, foul play is usually suspected. The persona covertly suggests that the wife has, through magical means, taken charge of her husband's faculties.

Below is the poem "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika".

Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika
(Thembekile Msibi)

1. *Utsi bhu bhu ni na?*
2. *Utsi bhu bhu sidvwaba?*
3. *Sidvwaba yini kuwe?*
4. *Ngumgamula fecela?*
5. *Ngumkhumula nsika?*
6. *Ngumgila nsika?*

**The traditional leather skirt wraps
around the pillar**

Stanza 1

What is it you are shaking?
You are shaking your traditional leather
skirt
What is a traditional leather skirt to you?
Is it one that cripples a scorpion?
Is it one that undresses the pillar?
Is it one that trips the pillar?

Stanza 2



7. <i>Insika isits' inkatsa</i>	The pillar prepares to carry a water gourd
8. <i>Intante nembit' enhloko.</i>	
9. <i>Iyekel' inyandz' enhloko</i>	A water gourd sits on his head.
10. <i>Iyenzetele, iyebhutele, iyingayinge</i>	He staggers, he fumbles, he wanders
11. <i>Ibe sitsingitsingi emaceleni,</i>	He is a fool on the side,
12. <i>Emvakwakho, embikwakho.</i>	He is a fool in the front and back.
Stanza 3	
13. <i>Insika nguNdabazabantu,</i>	The pillar is the court president,
14. <i>Ndabazabant' emabaleneni,</i>	The court president in the compound,
15. <i>Simangali nguwe,</i>	You are the accuser,
16. <i>Babekwacala bendlini nebekhaya.</i>	Family members are the defendants.
17. <i>Lahlala libalahla lingakatsetfwa</i>	They are found guilty even before the case is tried
18. <i>Sahlala sibekiwe sigwebo,</i>	The verdict is already decided,
19. <i>Yindesheni kuwe,</i>	You salute,
20. <i>Kutfotfobala etinyaweni takho.</i>	You tread with timidity.
Stanza 4	
21. <i>Luyanongotela lulwimi lwakho,</i>	You have a slippery tongue,
22. <i>Lushelalisa kwabhotela wemantongomane,</i>	It is as slippery as peanut butter,
23. <i>Lungena lutfungulute tibilini,</i>	It glides into the depth,
24. <i>Luhlabe kuhle kwesikhal' emhlabankhomo,</i>	It injures like a spear, inflicting a wound, on a cow,
25. <i>Luyaphuhluta luyaphihlita luyacanganisa,</i>	It damages it destroys it confuses,
26. <i>Sitfozi nesihlungu salo.</i>	It leaves lingering pain.
27. <i>Semamba lemnyama yelusiba emhlane.</i>	The pain inflicted by a black mamba.
Stanza 5	
28. <i>Insika yawa ingakawi,</i>	The pillar has fallen while still erect,
29. <i>Belitfumbu nebengati baphoswe' etaleni,</i>	Blood relatives are thrown into the dump
30. <i>Bekufika benebe' egumeni,</i>	Newcomers sit comfortably,
31. <i>Emavetandleb' aphonsw' emsamo,</i>	Illegitimate children are safe inside,
32. <i>Lugcwembe lunikwa emavetandlebe,</i>	They are served the best portions,
33. <i>Lunikwe bachamuki.</i>	Newcomers are given the best portions.
Stanza 6	
34. <i>Sidvwaba sichwakele esigicini,</i>	The traditional leather skirt sits comfortably on the seat of authority,
35. <i>NguMcondzisi- tinkhulumo,</i>	She is the Speaker,
36. <i>Bayeskhulu lusendvo, atsi:</i>	The family council are the members of the Honourable House, they say:
37. <i>'A – yi! Ne – yi! '</i>	'Ye-e-s' No-o! '
38. <i>Kubindvwa kubonwa!</i>	We remain silent yet we can see!
Stanza 7	
39. <i>Wagiga wagiga inhliyiyo nendlebe,</i>	You have tied up the heart and the ear,
40. <i>Litfunutfunu lenhliyiyo kubendlini nebekhaya,</i>	You are impatient with your blood relatives,
41. <i>Libeketela lenhliyiyo kumavetandlebe nebangaphandle,</i>	You are patient with illegitimate children and with newcomers,
42. <i>Ayinamtfebeba kumavetandlebe nebangaphandle,</i>	You are attentive to illegitimate children and to new-comers
43. <i>Inemtfwebeb' indlebe kubendlini nebekhaya,</i>	You do not listen to blood relatives
Stanza 8	



44. *Kitsi sidvwaba ngumkhumulansika,*
45. *Kitsi tinsika ngum'nsinsi wekutimilela,*
46. *Yekutimilela ingemaseko ngimisumphe,*
47. *Kuwe tinsika yiminsinsi yekumbelwa,*
48. *Bomakhontangelulwimi,*
bomakhonjwangenhloko.
49. *Sibi sihlava sakho,*
50. *Sihlava lesiphehle sadla insika,*
51. *Saphehla sadla ingcongwane,*
52. *Yawa ingakawi insika nengcongwane*
53. *Inhloko yafa iphila,*
54. *Saphehla saze saphehla,*
55. *Emehlo angete abona abe abuka,*
56. *Yaphehla yepuhluka, yaphihlika insika,*
57. *Yawa, yaphihlika ingcongwane,*
58. *Kwaphihlika, kwaphihlika konkhe.*

In our family, the traditional leather skirt
is one who undresses the pillar
In our family pillars are natives
Natives are the originals
To you pillars are the new-comers,
Those who just came, those we point
at with our heads

Stanza 9

Your poison is very bad,
Your poison has corroded and eaten
up the pillar,
It has eaten up the roof,
The pillar and the support have fallen
while still erect
The head is dead while still alive
Corroded until it is corroded,
Eyes cannot see yet they see,
The pillar has been corroded, the pillar
has crumbled,
The roof has crumbled,
Crumbled, everything has crumbled.

(Msibi and Magagula, 2014)

5.2.1 Poetry analysis “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika”

The idea that the wife is in control of her husband's life is introduced in the first stanza of the poem through rhetorical questions; also, two key symbols, *sidvwaba* and *insika*, are presented to refer to a wife and her husband, respectively. Stanza 2 describes the husband symbolically in a manner that suggests that he has been bewitched. One is able to conjure up an image of a man who is doing chores that are culturally associated with womanhood: the man is preparing a small hassock to place on his head in readiness to carry a water gourd on his head, he carries a bundle of fire wood on his head, he staggers side to side and back and forth like one who is insane. This is an austere image of a man who is under his wife's spell. The Swati expression used to describe such an experience is *lijazi lensimbi* (an iron coat). When a man is believed to have been bewitched by his wife, he is said to be wearing an iron coat. *Lijazi lensimbi* is believed to have magical powers for controlling a man and making him do

what the wife wants him to do. This description sets the tone for the rest of the poem which shows that the man's acts are a result of him being under a spell.

The third stanza dramatizes an image of a family court where the wife has a case against her in-laws and the husband is presiding over the suit. The case is prejudged and a verdict is in the wife's favour. Moreover, the wife is saluted by the husband: "*Yindesheni kuwe...Kutfotfobal' etinyaweni takho*" (lines 19 and 20).

In Stanza 4 the speaker uses imagery and juxtaposition to describe the woman's talk as being as smooth as peanut butter, *bhotela wemantongomane*. Her speech is said to go down smoothly but deep down it inflicts damage like a spear, *Luhlabe kuhle kwesikhali*, and causes much destruction, like one inflicted by a black mamba snake. By juxtaposing the smoothness of peanut butter and the poison of a snake, the persona is presenting the wife as extremely destructive. There is also the image of a spear that is created to accentuate the destructiveness of the woman.

In the next stanza, the husband is accused of always taking his wife's side and turning against his blood relatives. Moreover, the man is accused of giving preferential treatment to the wife's relatives, including children that she had premaritally. Imagery is used to describe and to contrast the man's blood relatives with the woman. Instead of using simple expressions, the persona has opted for elevated language to paint a vivid image of blood relations: *Belitfumbu nebengati* (those from your mother's womb and those of your blood). This also describes the level of relationship that has been disrupted by the wife who has been referred to as *Bekufika* (newcomers). There is also an indication that the wife has brought her own children to the marriage. The phrase *emavetandlebe* (children born outside a marriage) is a derogatory term used to refer to children that a woman brings into a marriage. Strangely, that expression is not used to refer to children that a man sired outside the marriage.

Stanza 6 elaborates on the preferential treatment given to the wife. It is said that even the family council sides with her. The persona describes the scene of a family court by mimicking what happens in a legislative house. She dramatizes the scene by making use of expressions such as, "*A – yi! Ne – yi*" (line 37), which are prevalent phrases used in a parliamentary house. Another phrase, *Kubindvwa kubonwa*, has been added

to indicate that the man's family members are aware that the man is under a spell but they will keep quiet about it. Stanza 7 uses the repetition *Wagiga, wagiga* (You wrapped, you wrapped) to emphasise that the man has been bewitched, adding that the wife has taken charge of his actions. The man can only hear what the wife and her family say but he is deaf to anything that his blood relatives say. This contrast shows that the wife has turned the man against his own blood relatives.

The next stanza contrasts what is accepted as normal and what is abnormal. For instance, s/he is familiar with having elders exercising authority. However, in this situation, a wife (a newcomer) is the one who has authority in the family. The last stanza reiterates the persona's sentiments on what s/he has observed. S/he is convinced that the wife is using supernatural powers to control her husband, also lamenting the damage caused by the woman's spell. The husband has been emasculated and he is now a weakling. Although he appears to be in charge, he no longer has authority: "*Sibi sihlava sakho, Sihlava lesiphehle sadla insika, saphehla sadla ingcongwane, Yawa ingakawi insika nengcongwane, Inhloko yafa iphila...Emehlo angete abona abe abuka...*" (line 49 - 58).

The text is generally rich in poetic language, particularly symbolic expressions. Other prominently used figures of speech are onomatopoeia, repetition, metaphor, and imagery. An onomatopoeia *bhu bhu* introduces the woman who is the central figure in the poem. The trope imitates the movement and sound that *sidvwaba* makes as a woman walks about, it also accompanies the movement of the woman. She is being introduced as *sidvwaba*, a metaphor which is the most outstanding trope in the text. *Sidvwaba* has been used as the symbol of a woman, in the Swati culture, a married woman is identified by wearing *sidvwaba*, a traditional leather skirt. *Sidvwaba* is a cultural symbol of womanhood, and it is one of the items used to preserve culture. Throughout the text, *sidvwaba* is used to refer to, and to depict the different facets of the woman. She is said to be one who undresses the pillar (the man). To undress connotes to emasculate the man. Furthermore, she is described as one who causes the man to fall; moreover, she is said to be the Speaker. A speaker is one who has authority in a legislative house, so in this context, the woman is said to be having authority over the entire household.

There is also imagery which serves to describe in more visual terms a man that has been emasculated; the imagery captures a pathetic figure of a man who has lost his masculinity; he is doing chores said to be for women while the woman sits on a seat of authority (*uchwakele*). This visual image describes a scenario that is unacceptable among Swati people; a term used to refer to such conduct by a man is *lijazi lensimbi* (iron coat), which the man is said to be wearing. Another image used is the one that describes the woman's captivating speech; it is said that the woman's tongue is as smooth as peanut butter, which is to say that she has a silver tongue. The final lines of the poem are a repetition of the paradox *insika iwile ingakawi*, serving as a lament for the man who has lost his manliness.

5. 3 Poem (x) “Washikitela mfati”

Hlophe wrote her poem “*Washikitela mfati*” in response to the loss of her mother. In the poem not only does she lament her demise, but she also uses it as a vehicle to advance her feminist agenda. The deceased woman described in the poem had a great impact on many lives while she lived. Her demise, which is obviously being lamented, had left a void. The deceased was not just a mother, but she was an embodiment of a womanhood that is worthy to be celebrated. When the poem was written, it was not intended for any specific audience but through it, Hlophe got an outlet to pour out her emotions. Her poems are usually composed when she is going through an emotional experience in life, she uses her writings as a vent; thus, she has journalled several poems compiled over time. At one point, Hlophe decided to share her collection of poems, including “*Washikitela mfati*” with some colleagues who then suggested that she should forward them for publication when an opportunity availed itself. When the opportunity came, Hlophe's poem was selected to be included in the anthology *Sabalala misebe* which is a prescribed text for learners in secondary school (*ibid.*).

This poem is a dirge, mourning the death of a woman. As a daughter, cousin, mother, grandmother, wife and daughter-in-law, to various people, the woman's impact had been unmistakable. They all remember her with fondness and her death has left a void. Accepting her death is hard; it is as if she will come back to life. The persona is a child to the deceased, but now she is a grown woman. She uses the phrase:



washikitela, which denotes haste; it is as if the woman was in a haste to leave the earth. It is ironic that her departure from this life is seen as being hasty, because the life of a Swati woman is characterised by *kushikitela*, haste and busyness. Women have a myriad of responsibilities that they have to perform on a daily basis and so haste characterises their lives. When a woman dies, she leaves behind a number of people who depended on her and she leaves behind a void, thus her death is seen as being hasty.

Below is the poem “Washikitela mfati”.

Washikitela Mfati (Cynthia Hlophe)

1. *Washikitela mfati,*
2. *Washo ushona ngelisango.*
3. *Washiya kulenga konkhe emuva,*
4. *Washo ushona ungasavalelisanga.*

5. *Washikitela mfati,*
6. *Washo ushona ngentfuba,*
7. *Ungasajeceti nemuva,*
8. *Ulingise umkaLothi eBhayibhelini.*

9. *Wena wabona lihhashi lemjako,*
10. *Umgibeli alifake lona lihhasitela.*
11. *Ngilo lela lisuka emankayi,*
12. *Lishaya intsambo, libuke embili.*

13. *Washikitela makoti wamkhulu*
14. *Sasala ebaleni sizulazula,*
15. *Sibhulana sodvwa, sibuhlongolwane,*
16. *Ngekusitsela kwesitsandvwa setfu.*

17. *Lobhazabhaza sitamhlala nabani?*

18. *Likamelo lakho lishaywa ngumoya,*
19. *Umbhedze wakho solo wagcetjwa,*
20. *Kube shengatsi sitakubon' ungena.*

21. *Lulwimi lwebatukulu bakho ludzimate*
Lushelele,
22. *“Likamelo lagogo lelo wena phuma,*

You are in such haste woman

Stanza 1

You are in such haste woman,
There you go through the door.
You left everything hanging,
You left without bidding farewell.

Stanza 2

You are in such haste woman,
There you go towards the graveside,
You did not even look back,
Like Lot's wife from the Bible.

Stanza 3

You were like a race horse,
That had been harnessed,
It gallops at such speed,
It reached its destination, looking ahead

Stanza 4

You hastened, daughter in law of my
Grandfather
We remained behind wandering about,
Seeking answers, confused,
Because of the departure of our loved
one.

Stanza 5

Your big house, who shall we occupy it
with
Your bedroom is unoccupied,
Your bed is still made,
It is as if we shall see you enter.

Stanza 6

Your grandchildren's tongues
sometimes slip
“This is grandmother's room, you, go



<p>23. <i>Ungadlaleli kulo gogo utawubuya esibhedlela</i></p>	<p>out” “Do not play in grandmother’s room, she’ll return from hospital”</p>
<p>24. <i>Ngilalele ngimdzala tehle tishisa ngatintsatfu esihlatsini.</i></p>	<p>As an adult, I listen and warm tears roll down my face</p>
<p>Stanza 7</p>	
<p>25. <i>Lengcumangcuma ledliwa mahloni ebaleni?</i></p>	<p>What about that imposing vehicle parked in the yard?</p>
<p>26. <i>Lebekufanele ikutsatse ikubeke make wami,</i></p>	<p>Which was to transport you my mother,</p>
<p>27. <i>Ekhabyonyoko kulela lamshiyalowa kwemfula,</i></p>	<p>Transport you to the other side of the river,</p>
<p>28. <i>Utfunge tinini takho bomzala kanye nabomalume.</i></p>	<p>To your relatives; cousins and uncles.</p>
<p>Stanza 8</p>	
<p>29. <i>Washikitela mfati webantfu,</i></p>	<p>You hastened wife of somebody,</p>
<p>30. <i>Washiya kushaya lobadzako wasebusika,</i></p>	<p>You left a cold breeze,</p>
<p>31. <i>Lobuhlungu, nalohlabako,</i></p>	<p>A bitter and harsh breeze,</p>
<p>32. <i>Lokhipha inyembeti lengayiphi esweni,</i></p>	<p>Which causes one to shed a tear,</p>
<p>33. <i>Ivakashele tindlebe ite yome ebutfongweni.</i></p>	<p>Until it dries when one is asleep.</p>
<p>Stanza 9</p>	
<p>34. <i>Washikitela make wetfu,</i></p>	<p>You hastened our mother,</p>
<p>35. <i>Wasishiya netindlela takho tekulunga.</i></p>	<p>You left us, you kind-hearted one.</p>
<p>36. <i>Sasala sibambenengelutsandvo lwakho,</i></p>	<p>You left us united by your love,</p>
<p>37. <i>Hamba kahle ntfombi yababe.</i></p>	<p>Farewell darling of my father.</p>

(Msibi and Magagula, 2014)

5.3.1 Poetry analysis “Washikitela mfati”

In the first stanza, the daughter of the deceased uses a euphemism to describe the death of her mother, *washo ushona ngelisango*, you left through the door. The persona speaks about her mother’s death as if she is addressing her. To say that her mother left through the door without bidding them farewell, suggests that the death was not expected. In stanza 2, the phrase *Washikitela mfati* is repeated to once again draw one’s attention to the fact that the woman’s death was sudden. A Biblical allusion is used to further paint the picture of one who leaves in haste, *Ungasalingisi umkaLothi eBhayibhelini*. The speaker wishes that her mother would have turned back like Lot’s wife, thus emphasising the difficulty in accepting her mother’s death. The story of Lot’s wife who turned into a pillar of salt after looking back towards Sodom is usually told as a warning, but here it is presented as something to be envied. This is not to suggest that the speaker had wished for her mother to turn into a pillar of salt, but it expresses

her feelings towards her mother's departure, she wished that her mother would have looked back and stayed alive.

In the next stanza, death is likened to a race horse; this again, is to emphasise that the woman left suddenly. The horse is said to have run and reached the winning line. As such, an image of a horse that won a race is painted, *Lishaya intsambo libuke embili*. The image of winning implies that death was a gain for the woman. Additionally, there is the statement: *libuke embili*, which indicates that the woman was looking forward to her departure from this life; it is intriguing to note that she had no desire to remain on this earth; one wonders why she would look forward to her death. Notwithstanding that she had been described as one from a well-off family, the duties associated with womanhood, had probably wearied the woman to the point where she anticipated a departure from this world.

In Stanza 4 we learn that the deceased has been a daughter-in-law, *Washikitela makoti wamkhulu*. Being a daughter-in-law is one aspect of womanhood which is associated with a myriad of responsibilities. Now that she is departed, the child and other family members are left wandering about: *Sasala ebaleni sizulazula*. Further on, in Stanzas 5 and 6, one learns that those who have been left behind will feel the void left by the woman's departure. Grandchildren also feel the void and they have not come to terms with the fact that the woman's departure is permanent. Somehow, they believe that she would still return: *Gogo utawubuya esibhedlela* (line 23). This also serves to explain that the woman succumbed to sickness. Her death had not been as sudden as it is being suggested by the phrase *washikitela*, but the woman first went through a sickness and she eventually died. Despite having gone through this process, her death is considered to be sudden. This serves to explain her significance in the lives of the people that she had left behind. Stanza 7 shows that they had been planning trips which the woman's death had interrupted.

An image of a cold winter breeze described in Stanza 8, highlights the atmosphere created by the death, it is as if her death had exposed them to harsh conditions and so they weep, *Lokhiph'inyembeti...* (line 31), endlessly until they fall asleep. In the last stanza the speaker states that the woman had been a kind person, and she had

impacted them positively and her legacy lives on. Finally, she bids her farewell, *Hamba kahle ntfombi yababe*.

Imagery which features prominently serves to describe the different ways in which the woman's death has been viewed. For instance, there is an image of a race horse suggesting that her departure had been hasty. *Emankayi* further adds to the description of the speed which culminates with one reaching the winning line. Moreover, imagery describes the effects that the death has had on different members of the family. The people were left wandering about, which signifies a state of hopelessness; there is also an image of a cold breeze, to suggest helplessness. The euphemism reveals the respect that death is accorded in Eswatini, it also supports the mournful tone of the text. The Biblical allusion to Lot's wife, repetition and the onomatopoeia contribute towards accentuating the images described earlier.

5. 4 Theoretical applications on the poems: “Hlakanipha mfati”, “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika” and “Washikitela mfati”

The different scenarios portray the different ways that Swati women are oppressed, some of which suggest that the woman is a willing victim because she does not resist the suppression but she chooses to be a silent subaltern. Discussions in previous chapters had several examples of this but the texts in this section present women with a different mindset. After exposing injustices, they suffered, the texts reveal their preferred reality, which is a shocking subversion of longstanding societal practices.

“Washikitela mfati” recounts different roles that a woman had played in the lives of family members; after her demise, there is a lament because of the void left behind. The period of mourning is not just a ritual but it is a moment of reckoning for those who had been left behind. The people for whom the lament is made were beneficiaries of services rendered by the woman; thus, womanhood in this poem is associated with providing service to different members of the family. Most of these roles are associated with the domesticity of women which is initiated early in life (Langa, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017). In this text there is no overt indication of abuse that the woman is exposed to, but her domesticity is unquestionable.

From a different angle, “Hlakanipha mfati”, blatantly equates womanhood with abuse. Notably, even women who are enlightened, through being exposed educationally, are not exempt from being oppressed, as indicated in one of the scenarios that are described in the text. Women’s oppression in “Hlakanipha mfati” is shown through the presentation of a woman who is financially able to support herself and the rest of the family, but is financially held back by her husband. Instead of providing, the husband demands money from her and he spends it with his girlfriends. Worse still, the man molests children sexually. Consequent to the compounding stress, the woman breaks down and ends up being committed to a mental asylum. It is on these grounds that the speaker encourages this woman and others to change the way they respond to being exploited; she argues that women will be able to experience a better reality if they stop responding to oppression with a victim mentality (Spivak, 1999; Collins, 2001; Lather, 2003; Schwarz and Ray, 2005; Nkealah, 2017).

The different forms of women’s oppression highlighted in “Hlakanipha mfati” suggest that women either have no rights or they have limited rights, which propagates their domination (Dlamini, 2008; Langa, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Rural Women’s Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Dlamini, 2017; Brogna, 2018). “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika”, therefore, proposes a revolutionary approach of addressing the social scourge threatening women in Eswatini. The text seems to lean towards Nkealah’s camel approach in its depiction of a preferred version of womanhood. Thembekile Msibi’s poem explores sarcasm and swapping of socially acceptable gender roles for a woman and a man; this allows the reader to reflect on the harsh reality of women in a gendered society. The man in the poem is doing womanly chores, thus acting disgracefully, according to socially acceptable standards, and his wife is blamed for it. There is also a hint that she is using magical powers to control her husband. Through the use of symbolic language, a mockery of a Swati man is described in the following ways: he is undressed by a woman (emasculated), he prepares a head hassock and he carries a water gourd. Carrying a bundle of fire wood, he staggers side to side as he tries to balance the weight on his head. On the other hand, the wife sits on a seat of authority judging cases remotely (through the husband). This description is not just culturally inappropriate but it is taboo in Eswatini where gendered roles are enforced to discriminate between the two sexes. A reading of the poem through the lens of

feminism enables one to conclude that sarcasm is a strategy to expose society's double standards and prejudice against women, it also suggests that there is another identity that is preferred by women. Over and above, it indicates that the relationship between woman and man is always conflictual.

Reading the texts through the lenses provided by the different theories underpinning the study is significant in exposing findings from these poems and unveiling the different ways in which womanhood is constructed, including: the creation of double standards for women and men, domestic enslavement of women, financial, sexual and emotional exploitation of women. In "Washikitela mfati", the various ways in which a woman's death has been described, shows the level of loss experienced by those who had depended on her. This poetic style is effective in revealing the various aspects of womanhood and the importance of a woman in the welfare of different members of family and in ensuring that they enjoy a comfortable life. The woman served the family members without being remunerated, thus indicating that she was a domestic slave (Becker, 1999; Rani, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Dlamini, 2017; Barry & Grady, 2019; R'boul, 2020). A close look into the poem indicates that the woman had looked forward to dying. The image of the horse reaching the winning line suggests that to the woman, death marked the end of a race. Theoretically, the ending of the race may be paralleled to the ending of coloniality. When coloniality ended, the post-colonial era came into effect. As already described in earlier chapters, this era gave reprieve to nations that had previously suffered domination, including exploitation (Fanon, 1952; Said, 1978; Schwarz and Ray, 2005; Chambers and Watkins, 2012). In a similar manner, the death of the woman marked the end of a period of domestic servitude that the text had suggested, it also ushered in a time of rest from the drudgery associated with being a woman.

5.4.1 Social class differences

The Swati society is arranged in such a way that in almost all sectors, both domestic and in the work place, double standards prevail for the two sexes (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Brogna, 2018; FAO, 2019; World Report, 2020); this ensures that the social divide which disadvantages women is kept wide. However, domestic spheres are dominated by women, and in some cases, women find

themselves juggling their own 'gender appropriate' chores with those of men, when the men fail to do their part (Lorber, 1994; Langa, 2012; Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017). Society applauds women who do 'men's roles', and they are said to be manly; ironically, men who do 'women's roles' are frowned on and the women are blamed for bewitching them. For instance, it is taboo for a married man to be seen doing laundry, cooking or changing a baby's diapers, as seen in "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika". Gendering of roles is serious to the extent that some men marry for the purpose of having wives who will take care of the domestic chores that are associated with womanhood.

5.4.2 Double standards

Double standards are also seen when domestic cases are to be decided; often times than not, in cases involving a woman and her in-laws, the case is predetermined to be in favour of in-laws. In "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika", the situation is opposite because the man, presumed to be under a spell, takes his wife's side, and as it is to be expected, the woman is blamed for this. Moreover, if a woman has had children premaritally, they are referred to in a derogatory manner (*emavetandlebe*), which is not the case with a man's out-of-wedlock children (Dlamini, 2008; Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017). Nonetheless, in the text, the children are being favoured; this also is anomalous in the Swati context, which then cements the allegation that the woman is using supernatural powers to control the entire household. These examples, which signify a deviation from the norm, and consequently viewed with cynicism, as depicted in the text, are indicative of the discriminatory treatment of women in Eswatini.

The juxtaposition of a woman and a man in "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika" in a manner that undermines what is culturally acceptable, not only exposes the discrimination of women, but it also reveals women's desired identity. Notwithstanding the culture of subjugating women in the country, women folk are aware that they are not being treated fairly; over and above, they have an image of a desired reality, best expressed by Allen Ginsberg (2018) in his definition of poetry as "the one place where people can speak their original human mind. It is the outlet for people to say in public what is known in private". Thembekile Msibi's exploitation of poetic language, particularly, symbolism and juxtaposition, is effective in communicating what is in the minds of

women, hence Dlamini (2017) contends that women are exploring the literary space, which had previously been dominated by man, to express their concerns.

5.4.3 Domestic enslavement

Other ways that the society uses to subjugate women, including abuse, have been succinctly communicated by Fikile Mnisi and Cynthia Hlophe. Their texts reveal clearly the extent to which women, including girls, have been captured mentally such that they uphold the belief that “they exist to serve and to please their future husbands and their extended families” (Dlamini, 2013, p. 69). In “Washikitela mfati”, the woman, in her role as wife, spent her life serving the husband in accordance with the Swati culture and as a result, she is fondly referred to as *ntfombi yababe* (line 36). Now the husband feels the void she has left behind. As a daughter-in-law, she has served the in-laws, *makoti wamkhulu* (line 13). Being a daughter-in-law has implications of hard work. Culturally, a wife is said to belong to her in-laws, *mfati webantfu* (line 22), not just her husband alone (Mdluli, 2013; Dlamini, 2017). Her death has left a void even in that area. Moreover, womanhood has implications of motherhood, *washikitela make wetfu* (line 33). The children have also lost a mother and the duties that she had performed will be left unattended (Becker, 1999; Rani, 2012; Barry & Grady, 2019). Other important roles that have been left vacant are those performed by a grandmother. All these roles and others that have not been alluded to in the poem have been left unattended. It is worth noting that womanhood is associated with many responsibilities, some of which appear insignificant until the woman who had been taking care of them dies. Those she leaves behind mourn her death because her demise has exposed their dependence on her. For the woman, death is a relief as she finally gets to rest, although the text does not overtly reveal that she had been oppressed, there is, nonetheless an indication that she had looked forward to her departure from this life (line 12). Worth pointing out is that, taking care of one’s family is not a bad thing but it does become oppressive when the responsibility is thrust only on women.

In a similar manner, one may add that the poets are not against women sharing their resources with their family members, but what is a problem is when women are financially exploited, particularly, by their husbands. Fikile Mnisi uncovers the different

ways that men use to extort women's finances to the extent of rendering them poor (Chanda, 2005). Men refuse to contribute towards the upkeep of their families, they lure their wives to buy cars which are used by the men and their girlfriends and they demand that their wives give them salaries, to which, the women respond timidly as shown in "Hlakanipha mfati". A similar observation has been made earlier by MacMahon (1995), Chanda, (2005) and Parashar (2016). These examples exhibit a colonial legacy whereby the colonised worked hard to create wealth for their masters (Fanon, 1952; Said, 1978; Collins, 2001; Schwarz and Ray, 2005; Chambers and Watkins, 2012).

The abuses noted above cause women to suffer inner turbulence, which is worsened by their silence. Muzzling of women's voices is typical of Swati politics where the masses have no freedom of expression. Women are abused and as subalterns, they remain quiet. This attitude has caused many to succumb to mental anguish (Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Snaddon and Nhlabatsi, 2017; Brogna, 2018; FAO, 2019). Women's silence is enforced by oppressive cultural practices that dictate how women are to conduct themselves. Swati women are encouraged to be timid and not question the *status quo* (Dlamini, 2008; Mdluli, 2013, Rural Women's Assembly in Swaziland, 2016; Dlamini, 2017; Brogna, 2018). Oppression is engraved in them and they are duly praised for it (Dlamini, 2017; Snaddon and Nhlabatsi, 2017). The women internalise suffering because of the helplessness of their situations. The gendered society of Eswatini condemns them to perpetual bondage and traps them in a prison of hopelessness, typical of the colonial era. As a consequence, children, both female and male get a distorted perception of a family and they grow up with a negative view about marriage. Girls vow that they will never get married and boys are initiated into being abusers as portrayed in "Hlakanipha mfati". This disrupts the fabric of the family and adversely impacts on future generations. However, if women will stand up and resist oppression, the future will be bright, as indicated by the last stanza of the poem. Visualising a desired future, as suggested by the poem, is what gives one the urge to continue striving towards that goal, in a like manner that Afrocentric feminist scholars (Collins, 2001); and fourth wave feminists push their agenda through social media (Munro, 2013; Phillips and Cree, 2014; Situmeang, 2019; Peroni and Rodak, 2020; *National Women's History Museum*, 2021).

5.5 Summary

The poems in this chapter have shown that women had become more aggressive in demanding to be treated with dignity, revealed in “Hlakanipha mfati” and “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”. They start by covertly exposing social ills perpetrated against them, evidenced in “Washikitela mfati” and “Hlakanipha mfati”. They then expressed their determination in seeing a change, even going as far as creating a scenario where social roles for women and those for men have been traded, as shown in “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”. The attitude exhibited by poems written during earlier years has subsided and these poems feature women who are radical and goal oriented and their drastic approach proves to be effective in stimulating a debate on gender issues.

The impact of the poetic texts is as distinct, to the reader, as that produced by messages posted on social media by fourth wave feminists. Messages communicated through these poems disconcert traditional structures and threaten patriarchy in an unprecedented manner. This impact is similar to the one yielded by information posted on online platforms which circulates rapidly and reaches a wider audience quickly. What is more, the texts have managed to hold powerful men (patriarchs) accountable for the atrocities that they had committed against women (Situmeang, 2019; Barry & Grady, 2019), a goal that the fourth wave feminism movement sought to accomplish. One may therefore close by acknowledging Dlamini (2017) for her clear articulation on the significance of literary compositions in charting a desired identity for women. She avers that performances of Swati women shift roles from ones previously accepted to be norms to new ones, forging a way to new identity. Women decide what they want for themselves” (p.69).

In analysing the poems, one becomes conscious of the fact that the poets’ backgrounds have had an influence on the texts; Fikile Mnisi’s belief system about dysfunctional marriages is clearly expressed in her poem, moreover, the conviction that she has about women’s capability to manage their own affairs successfully, is strongly expressed in the text. With Cynthia Hlophe’s poem, there is not much that relates to her background except the fond memories she has for a mother who has died. Similarly, if there is an influence of Thembekile Msibi’s background on her poem, it is not easily detected; the symbolism that saturates the text, makes it difficult for one

to say with certainty what the author had intended. However, the feminist point of view employed in the analysis of the poem yielded a wealth of information on womanhood in the Swati context.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This study comprises six chapters: the introductory section gave a general overview including; a motivation for undertaking the research, a definition of key concepts, background information on Eswatini in terms of the political, economic and most significantly, the social position of women; also alluding to the fact, and giving examples to show that, although a number of women, as reflected in the poems, may be described as being victims of the patriarchal society, there are some who have subverted that constructed gendered stereotype and have created a different reality. Also included in the chapter was a discussion of the research methodology: a description of the poets, which indicated that the poets' personal backgrounds, have, to some extent, influenced their poetic compositions; a brief synopsis of poems that have been studied, looking into the selection criteria and describing the anthologies from which they had been extracted; also, a few oral poems, included as an interface of the selected ten poems, were presented and discussed briefly in Chapter 1.

The second chapter focused mainly on literature review; giving more attention to philosophical concepts that are fundamental in studying the poetic texts, including: postcolonial theory, postcolonial feminism, self-categorisation and a range of feminist philosophies such as: African feminism, post-colonial African feminism, decolonial feminism, intersectional feminism and the different waves of feminism movements. Also included in the chapter was a description of, and a motivation for choosing interpretivism, as an epistemological paradigm; the role of literature in society, as well as the significance of poetry as an agent of social change, touching on relevant concepts such as: feminist poetry, cognitive poetics, poetic techniques used in the texts and metaphor. Towards the end of the chapter, the discussion focused on how stories, including the selected poems, could be read through the perspective of narrative inquiry; finally, the significance of stories was explained.

The next three chapters: 1, 2 and 3 were dedicated to analysing the poetic texts; the centrality of figures of speech in the study of each poetic text cannot be stressed

enough, in each chapter poems that represent a certain feminism movement were grouped and discussed in the following order: presentation of poem, translating and analysis through relevant theoretical lenses. Themes emerging from each text were identified and interpreted in terms of how they contribute towards an understanding of the social construction of womanhood; moreover, where relevant, oral poems were referred to in order to highlight certain issues raised in the poems.

This last chapter of the thesis is where one reflects on the entire project, starting with presenting general findings; other areas addressed include: giving the rationale for adopting a diachronic approach while analysing the poems, by explaining the reasons for grouping the poems according to the different waves of feminism. Next, the significance of poets' biographical information in interpreting poems is explained, this is in spite of the fact that the focus of the study was on poetic texts, rather than on the poets themselves. This is followed by highlighting the importance of the oral poems in contributing towards an understanding of the selected poems. The next section explains how the philosophical lenses, particularly, decolonial feminism, have contributed towards an interpretation of the poems. After that, one reflects on the ten selected poems and the readership; how, despite the small number, the poems are able to reach a potentially wide audience which could advocate women's rights. Further on, the significance of the research is explained and lastly, recommendations for future research are proffered.

6.1 Summary of findings

Women in Eswatini have a minority status, this is despite the provisions made by the Constitution of the country which gives them rights that are equal to those of men; moreover, women have been reduced to domestic slaves and they are subjected to a number of inhuman practices, hence, they categorise themselves as second-class citizens, which further conditions them to accept, without question, many atrocities that subject them to being exploited. The injustice propagated against women have been unchallenged for some time because women had remained silent, and they timidly absorbed suffering. Moreover, texts revealed that among the oppressed women, there are some who are oblivious of the fact that they are being abused, but they perceive the hardships that they go through as being a part of the reality of womanhood. The

gate-keepers of patriarchy do not have a problem with such women because they are neither a threat to the longstanding oppressive societal practices nor, to patriarchs; instead, they play a key role in ensuring that women's oppression is propagated. However, some women, including the authors of the poems, have risen to voice out their discontent and to raise an alarm through their poetic compositions which have nudged readers, including the researcher, into an awareness of the suffering of women in Eswatini. The researcher's feminist spirit was stirred up when she first encountered some of the poems when she was a school learner, more than two decades ago; her inclination towards feminism became deepened after reading the poems and she has continued to question gendered social practices which discriminate against women, hence this research.

The poetry studied here tactfully exposes a number of the issues addressing the oppression of women in Eswatini, masterfully unravelling society's atrocities against women and laying bare cultural practices which mask women's subjugation. Against this backdrop, the study was conceived and undertaken. The main aim was to investigate how poetic texts by selected Swati women poets represent the social construction of womanhood and gendered identity: seeking to discover how poetry can be engaged as a form of social action that contests the dominant discourses in society. Ten poetic texts by six Eswatini women poets were studied from the interpretivist perspectives and by applying postcolonial theory, a wide range of feminist philosophies and self-categorisation theory. Some of the poems used more tropes than others but the effect came with the mastery in the usage of the figures of speech. The careful choice of words and the exploration of imagery enabled a clear definition of the tone of each poem. The texts were analysed through the lens of NI and by applying cognitive poetics principles. The study revealed that the social construction of womanhood and gendered identity may be represented textually and that poetic texts may provide an avenue for that.

The Swati society utilises certain cultural elements including gendering of roles to create womanhood, these elements are taught at an early age; in families and sometimes in schools, and girls grow up fully aware of what is expected of them. As the underprivileged members of society, girls and women serve the interests of men,

meanwhile, boys are raised to become men with a sense of entitlement; having been taught what they ought to expect from girls and women. Culturally, girls are taught about and initiated into womanhood by mothers, and boys are taught about and initiated into manhood by fathers; the manner of initiation perpetuates the culture of oppression of women and male chauvinism respectively. Roles assigned to each sex are discriminatory and they enforce a social divide between females and males. Women give in to their oppression by conforming to social dictates, because they want to be socially accepted and not labelled as deviants, thus they reduce themselves to slaves. The female gender is given a lower social status and the male gender is ascribed a superior social position. Through analysing the poetic texts these issues were uncovered, and below, they are summarised as categories of women's oppression presented in different forms: emotional, physical, sexual and religious, wherein, emotional abuse being the most prevalent that women experience.

“Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Tibongo temnumzane”, “Umfati”, “Hlakanipha mfati”, “Umloyi” and “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika” reveal emotional abuse by showing that, under the guise of culture, women are subjected to a plethora of inhuman practices. Another subtle form of emotional abuse is where women are accused of bewitching their husbands; in “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”, a woman who is treated with respect by her husband is suspected of using supernatural powers to control the husband. Men's drunkenness is another form of emotional abuse which impacts negatively on family finances; “Tibongo temnumzane”, “Ngihlushwa yindvodza” and “Umloyi” expose this facet of abuse whereby women put up with drunken husbands and they suffer silently. Men's drunkenness is implicated in other family problems such as men's failure to perform their conjugal obligations and failure to provide for their families. Physical and sexual abuse of women and children is another form of emotional abuse, and conjugal deprivation, as well, despite its subtlety. In “Ngihlushwa yindvodza”, the woman laments that she is nearing menopause, yet she still does not have any children owing to her connubial deprivation. As a good Swati woman, she keeps this to herself because she has to protect the image of her husband. The woman has only her husband to meet this need, and if the husband fails in this regard, she suffers silently. Even if she may be tempted to resort to adultery, although not mentioned in the poem, yet a possibility, under the circumstances, she would try to avoid it because society is

not lenient with women who have been implicated in adultery, not even if the adultery has resulted from her deprivation in the bedroom. Women's emotional anguish is also caused by men's promiscuity as described in "Umfati", "Tibongo temnumzane" and "Hlakanipha mfati". This is so more especially because women are not allowed to express certain feelings. Some men engage in promiscuous acts which expose women to HIV infection. Even though men have an option of marrying many wives, as provided by polygamous marriages, they continue to act recklessly in sexual matters.

Physical and sexual abuse perpetrated against women and children are serious social problems that victims are afraid to report because they fear being castigated by their in-laws; thus, such transgressions, including incest, usually go unreported because they are *tibi tendlu* (domestic affairs). "Tibongo temnumzane", "Umloyi" and "Hlakanipha mfati" reveal the existence of the problem. Religious oppression is another form of abuse that is used to keep women in bondage. Women do not challenge their abusers because they have been taught that their suffering is temporary, thus they nurse the hope that things will get better for them in the afterlife; their Christian belief encourages them to be good slaves who accept the present suffering as their God-given cross. "Betfwele kabetfulwa", "Vuka mfati", "Tibongo temnumzane" and "Ngihlushwa yindvodza" are clear depictions of religious oppression.

Economic oppression is closely related to the other forms of abuse described above; poverty, men's irresponsible and reckless behaviour, neglect of their duties and adverse working conditions, subject women to economic oppression. Women are forced to bear the burden of providing for families single-handedly; in an effort to provide for their families, women work under deplorable conditions, as shown by "Umfati" but in spite of the adverse working conditions, women work because they are left with no other option but to provide for their families. Women take menial jobs including but not limited to domestic work, field and plantation work, factory work and being shop stewards. In some cases, women endure these hardships to satisfy men's greed. After spending their money on themselves, the men come home to demand food from their wives. In other cases, the men use extortion to push women to poverty; meanwhile the women give in without putting up a fight because society expects them

to submit. “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Umloyi”, “Tibongo temnumzane” and “Hlakanipha mfati” depict this issue. In “Hlakanipha mfati”, the abuse has an element of cruelty; the man takes his wife’s money and spends it with his mistress; moreover, the woman is made to pay for a car that she does not ride in but it is the husband and his mistress who use it. Raising children in the face of abject poverty, which is exposed in “Umfati”, “Vuka mfati”, “Tibongo temnumzana”, “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Kantsi wawukhona yini”, is an elusive form of economic enslavement; although very common, it is not easily seen as being oppressive because motherhood is considered natural for women: however, what has been overlooked is the challenge of raising children in poverty.

The different ways in which women are oppressed are reflected through the poetics texts; unfortunately, some of the unfair practices are a violation of the country’s Constitution, thus revealing that in the execution of laws of the country, there is a disconnect between theory and practice. It further shows that women who lack knowledge are susceptible to exploitation, because they are not aware of their rights and even if they were, they would not have the relevant skills to defend their civil liberties.

The poems painted a grim picture of the effects of the suffering of women which, in severe cases, cause women to lose their minds and be committed to mental asylums. Due to women’s oppression, the culture of the Swati society is impacted; while on one hand, girls develop a phobia towards marriage, which is a recent phenomenon, on the other hand, boys are initiated into being abusers, which propagates the culture of women’s oppression. Boys learn as part of their socialisation that being a man is to be an oppressor of women; the poem “Hlakanipha mfati” has revealed this point.

Notwithstanding the abuse that they experience, women have a preferred identity; they yearn for independence and equality with men; moreover, they desire to be treated with respect by their husbands and by their in-laws. The poem “Hlakanipha mfati” reveals that women want to embrace self-confidence, and being encouraged by the poet to understand their worth, women reject what society has socialised them into in order for them to attain independence. The poet is rejecting popular notions of socializing women which do not encourage women to express themselves. Culturally, women are hailed for being timid. Changing cultural practices will ensure that future

generations are protected from being tainted by the effects of women oppression that society is guilty of having perpetuated. The birth of this utopian society is reflected at the end of the poem “Hlakanipha mfati”. Furthermore, “Vuka mfati” and “Hlakanipha mfati” reveal that women would prefer to not have oppressive clothing imposed on them; they reject the socially imposed ‘badge of slavery’. The poem reveals that the women want to be free from being oppressed in this manner; through the poems, the poets become the voice of the voiceless.

6.2 Grouping of poems according to different waves of feminism

The ten poems have been published in four different anthologies, they cover a period of twenty-eight years from 1986 to 2014, and they spread over three waves of feminism movements. A close reading of the poems suggests that they conform to a certain pattern that may be traced to the different waves of feminism movements, each appearing to represent a certain attitude of dealing with problematic patriarchal practices within the Swati society. Therefore, in studying the poems, the same pattern has been followed: poems have been grouped according to their years of publication, which distinctly fits them into three waves of feminism: second, third and fourth. “Umfati”, “Ngihlushwa yindvodza” and “Umloyi” were all authored by Glory Mamba and first published in the same year in 1986, which was during the second wave feminism movement. “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Vuka mfati”, “Tibongo temnumzana”, “Kantsi wawukhona yini” were all published during the third wave of feminism in 1990.; Sarah Mkhonza authored “Betfwele kabetfulwa” and Sarah Mkhonza, authored the other three poems. Two of the poems were published twice, each on different years. “Hlakanipha mfati”, “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika” and “Washikitela mfati”, published during the fourth wave of feminism, have three different authors: Fikile Mnisi, who published “Hlakanipha mfati” in 2012, Thembekile Msibi and Cynthia Hlophe, both published “Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika” and “Washikitela mfati”, respectively, in 2014. However, as earlier noted that due to the scarcity of poems that can be analysed using a feminist framework, three of the poems: “Ngihlushwa yindvodza”, “Vuka mfati” and “Tibongo temnumzana” have been published in two anthologies and on different years. It is worth noting, therefore, that the classification of the poems in terms of waves of feminism was based on the years in which the poems were first published. There

seems to be a progression in terms of how women perceive their oppression and respond towards same in the three movements represented by the ten poems. While poems published during earlier years, present women who are generally timid, or even oblivious of the fact that they are being ill-treated, as shown by “Umfati” and “Ngihlushwa yindvodza”, in later years, the women have a completely different outlook.

In Eswatini, poems that have a feminist tone first appeared in a published anthology in 1986, a year that falls within the second wave feminist age. This observation is important in showing that feminist debates, initiated by poetic texts, began during the same age that feminist writings first gained recognition globally. While De Beauvoir’s book, *The Second Sex: Influence on the feminist movement* broke ground in the feminist sphere in Europe, Glory Mamba’s three poems started a debate on similar issues in Eswatini. Poems that have been classified under second wave feminism feature women who may be described as helpless victims of the oppressive patriarchal system; conducting their affairs according to the dictates of society, self-categorising with other oppressed women and turning to religion for solace. For them, being identified as virtuous women is more important than being freed from the suffering that they experience. The women’s attitude of conformity and embracing labels given to them by society and living in bondage, enables one to appreciate the problems that abound in society during the time when the second wave movement came into effect. Exposing such issues and helping women to face their reality, starts the process of emancipating them from social enslavement.

The four poems representing the third feminist movement continue with the message of advocating for women’s rights; the attitudes of the different speakers, in three of the poems: “Betfwele kabetfulwa”, “Vuka mfati” and “Tibongo temnumzana” suggest a shift from victim mentality to survivor mentality. This transition shows the behaviour of subjugated women and that of women who are exposed to the message of liberation, respectively. For instance, the women in “Betfwele kabetfulwa” are helpless victims, subscribing to societal injunctions, in “Vuka mfati”, although the woman has experienced abuse, she exhibits an attitude of defiance, worse still, in “Tibongo temnumzana”, the speaker is ridiculing a man, which is in fact an approach she has adopted to negotiate her rights. By exposing the man’s flaws, she is inviting the reader

to evaluate the merits of ascribing sovereignty to an individual on the basis of his natural sex.

Women represented in poems published in 2012 and 2014 are not only aware that they are being oppressed, but they can even identify the various ways in which they are being taken advantage of; this is clearly shown by Fikile Mnisi's poem "Hlakanipha mfati". The women, in the fourth wave poems go further to express their feelings on being subjugated, even pointing out how their suffering has impacted their lives. Over and above that, they confidently articulate how they would wish to be treated, adding that they have a role to play in order for them to see a change. The women are not waiting for a saviour to deliver them from oppression but they understand that they are responsible for changing their story. The poem "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika" takes the challenge a step further by constructing a utopian image of a woman's reality, which, unfortunately, appears too ambitious. Given the current *status quo* in Eswatini, it is hard to fathom the scenario described by the poem; hence, the speaker insinuates that supernatural powers are at work. Nonetheless, the radical attitude implied by the two poems is the same one that is exhibited by feminists during the fourth wave movement.

The discussion above shows that classifying poems according to the different waves of feminism movement helps put in perspective the evolution that has taken place during the different periods in which the poems were published, precisely indicating that there is a relationship between the different feminism movements and the focus of the poems. One is inclined to conclude that women poets were inspired by the thinking of the time and they produced poetry which reflects dominant belief systems and achievements realised during those eras.

6.3 The influence of poets' backgrounds on their poetry

Glory Mamba's poems focus mainly on the challenges that women face in their marriages, yet still, she is mindful of the fact that children are equally impacted by the suffering of their mothers, thus she understands that womanhood, as a category of the victimised members of society, may be understood intersectionally. In "Umfati" and "Ngihlushwa yindvodza", she reflects about what it means to be a wife in the Swati

context, this, despite the fact that Mamba is one of the poets who had not been married, which therefore shows that one need not have first-hand experience with marriage in order to understand difficulties associated with being a wife. Webster and Mertova's (2007) discussion on the significance of stories underscore this point. Similarly, in "Umloyi" Mamba ponders difficulties that children undergo when father figures neglect their responsibilities. Although, it could not be established whether Mamba's poems are a result of her experiences, there are nonetheless indicators suggesting that Mamba stayed single to avoid going through the challenges that she outlines in her poems.

As an advocate for women's rights, Mkhonza addresses a wide range of topics which have a bearing on womanhood, similarly in "Betfwele kabetfulwa", she implicitly alludes to the different ways in which women are oppressed. However, her attention is given to challenges of motherhood. Mkhonza's background and vast skill as a writer, as revealed in Chapter one, might have influenced her articulate composition of the poem which recounts the harsh reality of motherhood as experienced by destitute mothers in Eswatini.

Sisana Dlamini's three poems, "Vuka mfati", "Tibongo temnumzana" and "Kantsi wawukhona yini" were inspired by her experiences as: wife, mother and child; and her poems reflect those different womanhood encounters. Her unfavourable connubial experience is echoed in both "Vuka mfati" and "Tibongo temnumzana", where she presents men as being the cause of the suffering of married women; conversely, her growing up without a father, is mirrored in "Kantsi wawukhona yini". Dlamini's difficult marital experience and her perceived image of a father, is what shaped her attitude towards men as husbands and men as fathers, respectively. While she views husbands in a negative sense, Dlamini does not hold the same opinions about fathers, this in spite of the fact that both husbands and fathers are men and by virtue of them being male, they have a comparative advantage over women. From this observation, one may conclude that Dlamini's perception of men is not prejudiced; instead of classifying all men as being bad, she views each category of men in its own merits.

Mnisi's own experience in a marriage that she had to terminate, formed her belief system regarding the reality of being a wife, this is reflected in her poem "Hlakanipha

mfati” where she muses over what married women go through. Her plea is that women should master enough courage to abandon oppressive unions and establish a better life without worthless husbands, this, after, Mnisi enumerates husbands’ transgressions against women and children. Likewise, her involvement in counselling work, where she witnessed cases of women, including those from the church, at the verge of suicide, bolstered her conviction that since the root cause of women’s suffering is husbands, women ought to free themselves from oppressive unions; this position is expressed strongly in her poem. Mnisi is an embodiment of the idealistic future of women that she fathoms; as a divorced woman, she enjoys a flourishing life and most importantly, she is able to empower other women in different spheres, including in composing poetry that addresses such concerns.

In “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”, Thembekile Msibi combined her vast knowledge of the Swati culture and her writing prowess, to express her subversion of womanhood, thereby exposing the weaknesses posed by socially sanctioned gender discrimination. Reading the text through a feminist lens enables one to perceive the oppressiveness of some cultural practices; while it seems normal for women to operate according to gender appropriate roles, it becomes culturally abominable when roles for women and those for men are traded. Although Msibi might not have intended to expose the weak points of the Swati culture, a feminist reading of the text brings out these concerns. This observation explains the significance of cognitive poetics in reading a poetic text; in that, a reader’s cognitive ability is central in forming an understanding as to how the world’s systems operates (Steen and Gavins, 2003).

Cynthia Hlophe’s poem “Washikitela mfati”, which she composed as an emotional relief following the death of her mother, might not have been intentionally composed to advance Hlophe’s feminist agenda, however, through reading it from a feminist perspective, one is able to appreciate the implied meaning on the social construction of womanhood. Although Hlophe was raised in a family that practised gender equity, which she reveals in her dirge, “Washikitela mfati”, there is an indication that some gendered tendencies existed. As she recollects, with fondness, the role that her mother had played in the family, one deciphers traces of exploitation; the deceased woman serviced every member of the family such that upon her demise, a void was

created. As it is the case with Thembekile Msibi's "Sidvwaba ngumgigela nsika", Hlophe's poem, read through cognitive poetics, brings out the text's feminist attitude.

6.4 Interfacing poetic texts with oral compositions

As noted in Chapter one, oral poems may enable one to gain an insight into issues that form part of dominant conversations in a community, which may well include gender related topics. However, since the poems are recited in open spaces, community members learn, internalise and recite them whenever they desire; this explains why some of the lyrics from oral poems are infused in song and in other literary genres, including the poetic texts in this study. While studying the poems one got the sense that oral poems might have an effect on the composition of literary texts, hence, they might assist in providing more insight in the interpreting of the poems.

All five oral poems allude to different aspects of womanhood, which when studied closely, may indicate how those elements are instrumental in the social construction of women's gendered identity. Some of the issues implicated in forming women's identity include the following: women being burdened with motherhood responsibilities, in "Ye NaboThoko" and "Thula mntfwanami"; policing of women's bodies through the use of *sidvwaba*, in "Ye NaboThoko" and "Ye mfati longesheya"; treating women as minors, in "Ye NaboThoko"; absent fathers, in "Koboyi koboyi"; domestic enslavement of women in, "Ye NaboThoko" and "Thula mntfwanami"; men causing strife among women in order that they may derive sexual pleasure, in "Ye mfati longesheya" and "Mine ngiyamshova umgcaki"; women being made pleasure tools for men, in "Mine ngiyamshova umgcaki"; women self-categorising with other women who are facing similar challenges, in "Ye mfati longesheya". Other issues that the oral poems expose, which are not mentioned in the poetic texts are: women being accused of being careless, in "Koboyi koboyi" and "Thula mntfwanami", women being accused of having loose morals, in "Ye Nabo Thoko", "Koboyi koboyi" and strife among co-wives, in "Mine ngiyamshova umgcaki".

6.5 Significance of feminism in interpreting of the poems

As the central theoretical lens, feminism has been significant in explaining how womanhood is constructed through the manipulation of social elements such as

gendering of roles, which culminates in the creation of a two-class society where females are made inferior to males. Yet still, feminism gives insight into how the Swati society may be healed through reconstructing women's identity and closing the social divide between the two sexes. Feminism, therefore, aims at unifying the oppressed women, so that together they may challenge their oppressors. The poetic texts are inspired by feminism and they give a voice to the suppressed voices of Swati women. Spivak (2003), in "*Can the Subaltern speak?*", advocates for those who have been previously silenced to be given a voice, she argues that, when the oppressed speak, they draw attention to their plight, which is a step towards their liberalization. The poetic texts exposed a number of social ills that are instruments of women's oppression: before those issues were put down in print, the world at large, including the oppressed women, were oblivious of their reality. Through the intervention provided by feminist ideology, women poets became encouraged to state the challenges that Swati women have been experiencing. In this context, the intervention is the composition of these texts which expose oppressive practices against Swati women.

The feminist ideology proposed by Suhadi et al. (2016) emboldened women poets to use their texts to challenge gender stereotypes by addressing issues which have been considered taboo in Eswatini. Studying the poetic texts reveals that the poets have managed to break the barrier that had muzzled women's voices and prevented them from challenging society. Feminism is concerned about women's rights such as ownership of property, socio-economic status, recognition of the domestic work they do, and the home-based work they do without remuneration (Chanda, 2005; Rajan and Park, 2005). Thus, the poetic texts uncovered these issues and incited women to demand better conditions. As it has been noted in previous chapters, these poems are studied in secondary schools in Eswatini, which provides a forum for learners to interrogate the subject matter on women's oppression. An envisioned consequence is that school-going girls would realise that they belong to a disadvantaged social class, and this awareness would cause them to desire as well as to demand a better reality for themselves, through the advancement of the feminist agenda. They may carry out their advocacy via technology tools, which is in fact a platform that is proving to be effective in influencing change in society.

6.6 Interpreting the poems through the epistemology of decolonial feminism

Epistemological lenses are crucial to reading poetic texts in a meaningful way, thus, several theories have been reviewed, nonetheless, decolonial feminism has provided a clearer insight into the realities of womanhood as expressed in the poetic texts because, while the other feminist movements address challenges of women in general, the decolonial theoretical framework is contextually more suited to express challenges of women in Eswatini. Through this lens, one learns that the reason why the women experience numerous challenges, is that they are not considered as important members of society, but they are perceived as those existing merely to serve the interest of men, who by virtue of their natural sex, enjoy a higher social status. This belief system automatically creates a social divide which sets men at the top, and women at the bottom of the social strata. Therefore, when reading the poems and encountering discriminatory practices, which disadvantage women, one understands that the problem is rooted in the belief system of the people. Through decolonial feminism theoretical lens, a reader is able to trace women's subaltern attitudes to their socialisation; having been raised in a culture that suppresses self-expression, women embrace an attitude of timidity, which makes it easy for their oppressors to take advantage of them. Furthermore, decolonial feminism explains how women's attitudes have evolved over the years and how the transition that they have undergone, has shaped their thinking and initiated a change for the better, resulting in the construction of a new image.

6.7 Value of narrative inquiry in interpretation of the poems

Through narrative inquiry, one has gained the understanding that women poets exploit the medium of poetry, to tell stories about the reality of womanhood in Eswatini, basing on their lived experiences. The poets manipulate poetic language to get their message across and they manage to evade the threat of censorship. Being familiar with NI led one to enquire about the poets' backgrounds because such information is important in interpreting their poems. A poets' impression about things, her value system and beliefs are uncovered when one studies the poet's background; this information becomes useful when reading a text. Further, NI allows a reader to gain insight into

an issue without necessarily having to experience it with her own life; this saves one the trouble of experimenting and experiencing painful events. In the poems, for instance, readers are warned about the various challenges that women experience in society.

6.8 Value of poetic language

In studying the ten poetic texts, it was discovered that language usage by poets proved to be a significant vehicle for exposing issues affecting Swati women in their families and in society. The language; including simple narration, figures of speech, women's soliloquies and some words that have a symbolic meaning, revealed women's feelings about their experiences. The narrative language was not only used to describe women's experiences without giving a critique of those events, but, it also enabled the reader to pay attention to the message being communicated in the manner in which it had been communicated.

Figures of speech exploited elevated words, in some instances, with hidden meaning, to emotively expose various ways in which women are dominated, with imagery proving to be the most preferred one, appearing widely in almost all the poems. Similarly, metaphor was used frequently. Onomatopoeia was another trope which featured prominently, helping to accentuate the imagery in the poems. Other figures of speech appearing often were repetition and rhetorical questions. An important observation made was that all the figures of speech functioned in a complimentary manner, which resulted in the message being communicated with greater effect. Women's experiences were communicated through soliloquies; this strategy was significant because it allowed women to express their private thoughts. The significance of accessing one's private thoughts cannot be discounted, because private thoughts express one's reality as it is perceived by the speaker. Also of significance in exposing the message in the poems was the use of the word *sidvwaba*. A number of the poems, including oral ones, allude to *sidvwaba* which connotes oppression. Although the term refers to a traditional clothing item, which is significant in preserving the Swati culture, the poems revealed that women have a negative attitude towards it because *sidvwaba* may be paralleled to a badge of slavery.

6. 9 Value of poetic texts

The poetic texts prove to be an effective vehicle for raising awareness of social injustice that is perpetuated against women in Eswatini. It is consciousness of this that invites members of society to engage in a fight against the scourge in order to preserve future generations, this is so because perception leads to liberation of the oppressed according to Schwarz and Ray (2005). Women: female teachers, learners and even publishers, reading these texts will realise the different ways in which womenfolk are oppressed; those among the readers who are experiencing a similar fate with the women reflected in the poems, will have their appetite for freedom stirred up. They will then break free from the social shackles of bondage, become assertive and demand change; men will be compelled to change their ways and start acting responsibly which will ultimately give birth to a new society, an ideal society that feminists envision, where people will be valued not for being a certain gender but for being humans. Vehemently, one may assert that, by means of poetry, writers are able to evade the red tape of literary scholarship and successfully, albeit subtly, effect change in society.

6.10 Reflexion about selected poems and the readership

The primary reading comprised ten poems, which is very few; scarcity of poems that could be analysed through a feminist framework is the reason for this. However, an additional five poems were included as supplementary material. In Eswatini, until recently, poetry could only be published when it had been integrated in anthologies used in schools. Although the small number of poems may appear as a limitation, Lichtman (2013) believes, a small sample is acceptable for a qualitative study as this one. However, one appreciates the richness of the poetic compositions which compensated for the small number (Webster and Mertova, 2007). For instance, from a single poem, one could uncover a wealth of information regarding the social position of women which directly relates to how the Swati society constructs womanhood.

Primary readers of the poems are secondary school going learners but, their teachers, curriculum designers and publishers have access as well. More importantly, in schools, the poems are not just read insouciantly but they are analysed in depth, helping readers to appreciate the messages in the texts with greater clarity than they

would if they had adopted a casual reading. While, at face value, it may seem that the readership is narrow in scope, the reality is that a greater audience is reached over time because the poems are studied as part of a compulsory school subject in all public schools in the country, this means that every learner who enrolls in these schools, will at some point study the poems, on condition that the texts are still part of the school curriculum. For one, this has been a reality because after first encountering some of the poems while still a secondary school learner one has not ceased to interrogate gendered practices and to utilise the same teaching platform to draw learners' attention to the reality of women's subjugation. One would expect, therefore, that readers, particularly learners, who identify with the issues raised in the poems participate in the debate on feminist concerns and further share the message with others.

6.11 Significance of the study

The study is significant in revealing that poetic texts have the ability to expose social issues in an impactful manner, uncovering that in Swati society women are still being treated as second-class citizens. In this 21st century, some women are dehumanised and exploited in ways that epitomise the colonial era. It also uncovered that some women absorb their suffering silently as good slaves would do, despite that they are aware of their plight (Langa, 2010). In their private thoughts, as revealed by the findings, the women long for independence, but they lack the courage to demand equality and a change. It is of significance that poetic texts are able to address these issues in subtle ways without attracting much criticism from male chauvinists, who are beneficiaries of the oppressive social system.

Moreover, it reveals that poetic texts can effectively depict the different aspects of womanhood, wherein, oppression is a key element, further revealing that being a woman predisposes one to a number of socially constructed maladies. Moreover, it is of significance to learn from the study that identity is an important aspect of a woman's life, thus, women conform to certain oppressive social practices because they seek to be identified as good women. Also, the oppressed women tend to identify themselves as belonging to the same class; they forge certain relationships and friendships, thus their shared experience of oppression becomes a unifying factor; hence, they self-

categorise. Nevertheless, there are some women who do not fit into the category of oppressed women, the study has revealed. This is a significant finding because it shows the diversity of women in the Swati context; while some settle in their downtrodden states, the poetic texts bear testimony to the fact that there are women who do not mind to be labelled as social deviants, what they are concerned about is upholding their dignity and also empowering other women to do the same. Education gives them the confidence to clearly articulate their positions and to stand their ground. Regrettably, some of their efforts are met with disdain, resulting in them being given labels, this is evident in “Sidwaba ngumgigela nsika”.

It is significant to learn that through using poetic language, one is able to express deeper thoughts and yield greater impact on the reader. As shown in the study, the poetic texts explored figures of speech which were packed with meaning; the poets seemed to have picked their words with greater tact for maximum impact. In alignment with cognitive poetics, the reader managed to uncover deeper meaning by unpacking the poetic devices. This resulted in an in-depth understanding of the message on women oppression. This effect would not have been achieved without the exploration of figurative language. Moreover, through poetry, a number of issues implicated in the oppression of Swati women were brought to the fore. The awareness of such injustices prompts the reader not only to empathise with the women, but also to sympathise with them because sympathy is what moves one into action.

While women are the primary focus, the reader understands that society at large is being threatened by the oppression of women. As it has already been stated, society is urged to change its attitude towards women; treating women as domestic slaves should end, moreover, the different forms of abuse instigated against women ought to come to an end and the economic oppression of women has to stop. Although these atrocities affect women directly, they are a threat to the entire Swati society; the future of the youth is at stake and this would impact future generations; thus the poetic texts raise an alarm about the urgency of the matter and invite readers to take action.

6.12 Recommendations

The gap that other related researches have missed by overlooking the significance of exploring poetic texts to expose the different ways of constructing identity, has been addressed in this study; moreover, the value of poetic language in understanding social interactions has been stressed. On the basis of the findings arrived at, one may make the following recommendations: that the scope of the research be widened so that it may include poetry written by men. Since men have been implicated in women's abuse, their perspective on this subject might provide a source of useful data and further provide more insight into the issue. Furthermore, future researchers could be encouraged to consider documenting oral poetry to avoid the loss of useful data. A number of potential sources of information remain in obscurity because information has not been documented. Moreover, future researchers may explore how rural women's experiences on gender-related issues may possibly be documented so that that information could be used in composing poetry. The poetry may in turn be published in anthologies that are studied in schools, which are currently scarce, possibly adding to the number of feminist poems studied in schools, and consequently, reaching a wider audience.

Also, from studying the poems, the researcher appreciated the value of poetic language in communicating a message emotively. However, it is not guaranteed that readers of poetics texts are able to handle figurative language, which may result in them missing out on crucial information. To that end, it is recommended that future researchers could seek out how skills for interpreting figurative language may be imparted to members of society so that their level of proficiency in handling obscure language may be improved. Furthermore, since the poems were studied through the lens of Tsur's cognitive poetics, which focuses on the significance of language in interpreting poetics texts, it is recommended that future research could consider other aspects of a poem including syntactic organisation, sound, rhythm and metre.

In light of the fact that poetic compositions are capable of exposing the problem of women's subjugation, consequently stimulating the debate on the subject, one firmly believes that the same avenue of poetry may be explored in order to heal society, Therefore, one may strongly recommend that poetic compositions be published in

bulletins that are accessible to both rural and urban women. Making the message of women's emancipation from social bondage readily available to women from different social backgrounds, may trigger a dialogue on the subject. When women's conversations are inundated with the message of liberation, it may affect the way they perceive womanhood. Since globally, technological tools are exploited to communicate and to reach a wide audience within a short space of time, Swati women poets may be urged to adopt the approach of the fourth wave feminist movement, and fully utilise online platforms as a vehicle to advance their feminist agenda; this movement, as shown in a discussion in earlier sections, bears witness to the fact that information travels rapidly in cyber platforms. Over and above that, the concerns raised in the ten poems, particularly those with a message of women's liberation from social oppression, evidenced by "Hlakanipha mfati", may be expressed in oral poetry to directly target mostly uneducated women and those from rural areas who do not have easy access to published material nor technology tools.

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Ms Siphwe Angelica Angela Langa (213572417)
School Of Arts
Howard College

Dear Ms Siphwe Angelica Angela Langa,

Protocol reference number: 00012040

Project title: Textual Representation of the Social Construction of Womanhood and Gendered Identity: A case of selected Eswatini Women Poets

Exemption from Ethics Review

In response to your application received on _____, your school has indicated that the protocol has been granted **EXEMPTION FROM ETHICS REVIEW.**

Any alteration/s to the exempted research protocol, e.g., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. The original exemption number must be cited.

For any changes that could result in potential risk, an ethics application including the proposed amendments must be submitted to the relevant UKZN Research Ethics Committee. The original exemption number must be cited.

In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE:

Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Chatradari Devroop
Academic Leader Research
School Of Arts

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