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Within racism and sexism : the black woman in Peter Abraham's " tell freedom"

Ndayisaba, Justine; Sous la direction de : Mr Eric Njeng Sipyinyu

2005
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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

WITHIN RACISM AND SEXISM: THE BLACK WOMAN IN PETER ABRAHAMS' *TELL FREEDOM*

By Justine Ndayisaba

Supervisor
Mr Eric Njeng Sipyinyu
Lecturer, University of Burundi

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements For the Degree "Licence en Langue et Littérature Anglaises"

Bujumbura, March 2005

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DEDICATION

To mama and mutama

For their love and care,

To my sisters and brothers,

I warmly dedicate this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have greatly contributed to the production of this thesis but some of them deserve special thanks.

My thanks go first to my supervisor Mr Eric Njeng Sipyinyu, lecturer at the University of Burundi for his scholarly guidance. He patiently and kindly accepted to read and criticize this thesis from the early drafts to the final state.

My thanks are also addressed to my parents, for their moral and financial support. I am grateful to them for having sent me to school.

Last and not least, I would not fail to thank Mrs Léocadie Ndorere and Odette Ndayisenga whose help has greatly contributed to the completion of this work.

ABSTRACT

This work aims at analysing how racism and sexism interact to keep the South African Black woman in a position of subordination. The black woman's role as a wife and a mother is made very difficult in a system that dehumanises the black people as a race. She is forced to suffer doubly because, she is an object of violence from both the whiteman and the blackman.

In view of this, this work is based on the hypothesis that the south African Black Woman's subordination and oppression are due to her blackness and her femaleness.

It is in this perspective that Abrahams expresses the idea that the oppressed group has to be wise and courageous so that they can overcome the sufferings that affect them.

INTRODUCTION

Blacks have been kept under slavery, oppression and domination because of the racial prejudices that take the roots in history. This phenomenon is evident because of the historical situation and the persistent discrimination. In brief, prejudices are the consequence of this discriminatory philosophy, and they have the function of justifying the maintenance of the black race in a position of inferiority, that is, economic, social and political.

The sexist prejudices are formed following the same logic. Contemporary societies have tried to make prejudices in order to legitimise and justify the situation of dependence, subordination and inequality of woman to man in society. Thus in western countries, the arising of private property requires a new type of family, that is, the middle-class family in which the husband wants to see himself at the top, while the woman is legally declared to be dependent. The family that arose in fourteenth century succeeded of feudalism. A social system which places woman at the bottom of society. She had to depend on her husband. In order to justify the inability of the new married woman in the middle class family, the lawyers of that period borrowed ideas from the Roman law that proffers ideas on the powerlessness of the woman. All this proves that prejudices have been invoked to justify the new type of family characterized by discriminatory practices and legislations towards the married woman. Later on, myths that make the woman inferior spread in western countries.

Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, discriminatory practices of capitalists towards, working class women and women of middle-class family emerged. Women at work were distinguished by their unskilled work, their low pay; they had unequal pay for equal work with men. Their concentration was in a limited segment of industry. In every type of manufacturing in which women were employed, female workers held women' s jobs, that is, the ones that required the least training and that could be learned quickly. The highly skilled work was reserved for men.

In Africa, profound changes came with colonialism and its attendant technologies, cash cropping and wage economy. Colonial officials tended to visualize women in terms of their physical strength, instead of observing women's actual functions. From that perspective, they envisioned women's responsibilities largely limited to nurturing and conserving society, while men were engaged in political and economic activities. Colonialism created disparities between women and men in terms of work. Colonialists considered men as breadwinners and as a result, recruited men only, thus keeping women in farm alone.

Hence, both men and women are deeply aware of this question of gender - based subordination. It is usually viewed as a natural corollary of the biological differences between them. It is reinforced through religious beliefs, cultural practices and educational systems both traditional and modern that assign to women lesser status and power. This is the reason why, in this world,

the woman is considered as a person who cannot have full rights to enjoy her life. She is oppressed and exploited by the male world. She is always frustrated and she is also disadvantaged in many matters. She is a slave of the man. She is exposed to his aggression and brutalities. And consequently she endures physical and psychological threats from her society.

In view of the above, the following questions may be put : to what extent are black women more oppressed than their male counterparts in south Africa ? How does the black woman carry the burden of motherhood ? To what extent the black woman is oppressed as a black person ?

This study aims at analysing the situation of the black woman in South Africa vis-à-vis the racial abuses and sexism as well. It will show how in this world where everything is structured according to power and influence, woman, especially the black woman finds herself at the bottom of the social ladder.

The present analysis will focus on Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* and other materials that are related to this topic. The researcher will be speaking about the deplorable situation of black women in South Africa.

Before going any further, it is worthwhile defining some important concepts such as racism and sexism. Racism is defined in The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, as "the tendency to identify oneself racially and to show hostility or lack of moral respect for members of other race (418)".

Sexism is defined by the same source as:

> The practice that is supported in many different ways that are critical to our socialization into our sex roles, and therefore makes domination acceptable in society through language, visual association, and stereotyping especially on the basis of mothering or caring role of women. Sexism is also important because all women experience it in different ways, depending upon their social and economic situation within the family and in jobs and limit the ways in which women seek to actualise their potential. (449)

This work is based on the assumption that the South African black woman finds herself at the bottom of the social ladder. She has a double burden in the sense that she suffers both as a black person and as a woman. As a black protagonist, she suffers together with the Blackman. And as a woman, she suffers both from the white man's oppression and that of her black patriarchal community.

As far as theoretical orientation is concerned, this work will be carried out under the confines of the feminist theory. And the major proponents of this theory are Simone de Beauvoir, Kate millet, Sandra Gilbert, and Lisa Tuttle whose work entitled *Encyclopaedia of Feminism* defines it as follows :

> This term from Latin (femina = women) originally meant having the qualities of females. It began to be used in reference to the theory of sexual equality and the movement of women's rights, replacing womanism in the 1890's.

She goes on to state that :

> Feminism originates in the perception that there is something wrong with society's treatment of women, it attempts to analyse the reasons for and dimensions of women's oppression and women's liberation. (107)

Feminism is concerned with differences and marginalization of women. Feminists believe that our culture is patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favour of the interests of males. Feminist criticism exposes patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices. It strives to promote discovery and revaluation of literature by women. It examines also social, cultural, and psychosexual contexts of literature. Feminist critics reread male texts and describe how women in those texts are constrained in culture and society. In this sense, Sandra Gilbert stipulates that feminist criticism:

> Seeks to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the

> connections between sexuality and genre and gender, psychosexual identity and cultural authority.
>
> *(A Handbook of Critical Approches to Literature, 184)*

So, this theory is related to the present work in that it will be concerned with mistreatment of black women in south African society by both the White man and the Black man.

This work is significant since it will reveal the hardships of black women in South Africa and these hardships will help women in the whole Africa to be aware of their difficulties. So, they will be able to fight for their rights.

The field of this work is not a first-hand field because there has been a number of critics that have been interested in this particular relationship between woman and man. Let us consider a writer like Simone de Beauvoir who deals with problems of women in different periods of time and with different events. For instance since the French Revolution she states that:

> In the country, the peasant woman took a considerable part in farm labour, she was treated as a servant, frequently she did not eat at the table with her husband and sons. She slaved harder than they did and the burdens of maternity added to her fatigue (*The Second Sex*, 106).

Here, she means that though chaste and industrious, the woman is unclean. She is surrounded with taboos. She may do everything she can and even work harder than a man, but she is still not considered in her family.

With regard to these patriarchal times, de Beauvoir aims at showing that man wrested from woman all her rights to possess and bequeath property. When it is admitted that a woman's children are no longer hers, by the same rule they have no tie with the group where the woman comes from. De Beauvoir finds that through marriage a woman is no longer lent from one clan to another. She is torn up by the roots from the group into which she was born and annexed to her husband's group; he buys her as one buys a farm animal or a slave. He imposes his divinities upon her, and the children born to her belong to the husband's family. She owns nothing, she does not enjoy the dignity of a person. Friedrich Hegel in defining the relation of master to a slave shows how this applies to the relation of man to woman. He declares that

> The advantage of the master comes from his affirmation of spirit as against life through the fact that he risks his life ; but in fact the conquered slave has known the same risk. Whereas woman is basically an existent who gives life and does not risk her life, between her and the male there has been no combat. (*The Second Sex*, 78).

Hegel makes himself clear that a woman is weak. She has the only role of giving birth to children. She cannot risk her life- she is not adventurous like her male counterpart.

According to Honoré de Balzac in " Physiologies du Marriage", "the destiny of a woman and her sole glory are to make beat the hearts of a man… she is a chattel and properly speaking only a subsidiary to man (*The Second Sex*, 111). The above quotation means that a woman has to play an erotic role only. She has to satisfy the man's impulses, that is, she is only a sexual object. Man is her owner. Actually the case is that she is rather a slave than a companion. Her relationship between her and him is that of a master and servant.

Another critic who deals with issues of women especially issues of black women is Paula Giddings in *Where and When I Enter*. She discusses the experiences of black women in their attempt to participate in white women's movements. Here, she aims at illustrating the racial myopia of white women. She lists three disquieting aspects of women's movements for black women. First, she notes that the middle-class women who led the women's movements were the very women who had been the bane of black women's existence. They were the women who had hired as private household workers and failed to pay them fair wages. These were the white women who sustained an eloquent silence in times of greatest stress. Giddings writes that black women are troubled by the white women's movements adopted against men. This concern reflects the fact that black men have never been in position economically to

oppress black women although they may well be capable of other kinds of oppression. She concludes that feminist policy ignores black women's concerns.

As far as Andrew Brimmer is concerned, in " *Prosperity Among Black Women*", he attempts to turn the disadvantage of black women into an advantage. He reports that black women's and men's incomes are close. He concludes that the closeness in black male and female incomes means that black women are more liberated than white women.

In his essay entitled " Women and Work", Andrew Hacker aims at showing the economic status and especially the labour market status of black women. He asserts that black women have stronger representation than white women in professions and management. He finds that white women as well as black women experience advantage in paying service jobs.

On her part, Bell Hooks in *Ain't I A woman*, examines the dual oppression of racism and sexism suffered by black women in America and shows how the largely white, middle-class women's movement has either ignored the black woman or romanticized her as a strong female not in need of liberation, or assumed that her concern was only with racism.

Critics such as Margaret C. Snyder, and Mary Tadesse evaluate the wonderful powers of African women though these powers are under looked. Their work entitled *African Women and Development* makes clear that during the period of colonialism women recognized the reality of the encroaching capitalist economy, they organized themselves to preserve their chances to meet

their responsibilities for the well-being of their families. The colonial officials held firm, regarding these women's efforts to reserve the subsistence crops as reactionary and detrimental to the development of a market economy. But in 1940's and 1950's for example, women in Cameroon, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Uganda resisted the introduction of cash crops such as coffee, sisal and tea to which the most fertile lands were being allocated. Another example is of Kenyan women who protested against unjust labour regulations as early as 1902. Women continued to persist in their economic activities during colonial times, despite the formidable difficulties they faced.

This work differs from the above literature in that it focuses on the suffering of black women in south Africa. It is going to analyse how the south African black woman within racism and sexism is doubly disadvantaged.

In addition to this introduction, the present work is divided into three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter entitled "Existential Situation" shows how the black woman in South Africa suffers from racism together with the Blackman. It shows how in a country of apartheid – discrimination, exploitation and oppression of Blackman by whites also affect black women. This chapter also shows how black women carry a burden of race when black men are subjected to inhuman treatment either in the prison or in the workplace.

The second chapter entitled " The Bounds of Femaleness" brings out the black woman's problems because of her sex that is supposed to be inferior to the

male sex. It illustrates how the black woman in South Africa is exploited both by the White man and the black patriarchal society.

Finally, the third chapter entitled: " The Bounds of motherhood" portrays the hardships that a mother encounters in her daily life. It also focuses on the black woman's suffering as a single mother. In most societies we know about, both past and present, the male parent has been an important person in the life of his wife and children. Typically he has lived with them and made substantial contributions as far as raising them is concerned. So, this chapter shows how economically fatherless children without a financial support of a man face a difficult task in an unfriendly economic environment. Single motherhood presents a difficult problem for the mothers and children involved and for the society at large.

The conclusion is an evaluation of the whole study. It brings out the findings and makes suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EXISTENTIAL SITUATION

As blacks and coloured both men and women suffered under the apartheid system. Both were hit by the repressive laws and institutions. The apartheid system had created a system of economic exploitation in south Africa which was supported by a repressive state machinery and legal system. It was a society where a white settler lived in great wealth and enjoyed privileges, while the black majority had little chance to escape poverty, degradation, and misery into which they were institutionally bound.

The system of oppression which enforces this exploitation controls every aspect of the daily lives of the south African workers and peasants- Where to live, in what type of accommodation , what kind of job, promotion prospects, permission to travel, permission to move outside one's township, farm or reserve, the right to walk on the streets, to live with one's family, to marry the person of one's choice and even to die with respect. Thus, South African people are governed by many restrictive laws and regulations. Jason Lauré and Ettagale give a description to this situation in *South Africa* :

> Princess was born in Cape Town, but it is illegal for her to live there. Her parents came to Cape in 1958, looking for work. Her parents did not have

> land to plow in Transkei. There is no work
> there. There is no food there. That is why
> they came. But those reasons do not suffice
> in the eyes of the law. (83)

Blacks are to develop in their own areas, and specifically in their own homelands. Because there are so many coloured in the Cape, the government names the area as a coloured laboured preference area. One of the government's hopes is to reduce the number of blacks in the Cape. Even if a man is legally working, his wife and children may not come to live with him. They must remain in their homelands.

The colonial economy is therefore founded upon forced labour in the fundamental sense that Black South Africans are systematically denied any means of providing adequately for themselves other than by wage-labour. The message of apartheid regime is grim : work for whites on the terms they dictate or starve. As Ezechiel Mphalele expresses in his work, *Down Second Avenue*

> Yes, it had to be thus always, you are on white
> man's land. You must do his washing, you must
> buy his bread with his money. You must live in his
> houses built by him, he must police your area. (41)

The labour is forced in the sense that for most blacks are unemployed and not registered at a government labour Bureau as a work-seeker. Forced labour is an

efficient mechanism of exploitation in South Africa.

Just as the regime denies peasants any opportunity to become commercial farmers, it blocks the way for workers to become self employed or to become capitalists as well. Blacks are prohibited from obtaining licences to prospect for minerals in the police zone, where most of the largest deposits are located. In the commercial sector, residential segregation in urban areas, imposed on the blacks, prevents them from running shops or businesses outside the isolated locations or townships to which they are restricted. Nowhere in the towns are blacks allowed to own land. Depicting this situation Peter Abraham's in *Tell Freedom* is portraying how grim a lad's life coal be in South Africa :

> We were shoving cool into our sacks when one boy shouted :Trap ! Run ! I turned. Two men, one black another white were nearly on us. I dodged an out stretched arm and shot away, leaving my sack. Heaving feet thundered after me. From somewhere behind I heard a boy screamed in pain. The thundering feet were very close. If they caught me I would go to reformatory and get lashes. I ran as hard as I could. Oh, god ! The fence is so far away. Run, Lee, run ! They lash the skin off your back at the reformatory. (51)

It is prohibited to the blacks to go to white men's residential areas. If they dare to, they are subjected to tough sanctions. Hence, as the older locations in which some blacks have previously owned houses and shops are demolished, shop keepers have come to depend on the patronage of state officials for their rented premises and licences.

Racial discrimination is the first and primary method of labour and exploitation. Whites always occupy a highest social position because of their success in economic domain. In any case, black and coloured workers are only semi-skilled or unskilled. To this day the pattern remains unbroken : Whites command, organize and hold most of the skilled posts, blacks do the productive labour. Whites hold nearly all professional and managerial positions. Whites who are semi-skilled or unskilled are simply there to direct the labour of black workers. The declared ultimate aim of apartheid is to make all remaining permanent workers in white area into migrants, removing them from the few privileges they have.

To impose this harsh regime of forced labour on black south african workers, the south African Government erected a comprehensive and highly repressive framework of labour legislation in the early years of its rule. This legislation prevents workers from leaving their jobs against the wishes of the employers to drive all non-workers, except those with the right of permanent residence, including wives and children out to the reserves. The main instrument of control is the pass laws, that complex web of official permits which black

workers are forced to obtain in order to do virtually anything, wherever they might live or work. Every single permit has to be in order, otherwise workers may be arrested without warning, anywhere, any time and will have to pay a fine, suffer imprisonment or deportation. Thus, Abrahams describes the situation in the following lines :

> When Jim left his Pedi village in the Northern Transvaal, he had to go to the nearest Police station or Native Affairs Department. There he got a Trek Pass. This permitted him to make the journey to Johannesburg. On reaching the city he got an identification Pass and a six-day special Pass. He paid two shillings each month for the identification pass. The six- day special Pass was his protection while he looked for work. He did not go to the Pass office to renew his Six-Day special Pass. He was picked up on eighth day and spent two weeks in jail as a vagrant. That taught him to attend the Pass office regularly. He found his first job in suburb of the city. He got a Monthly Pass. This was regarded as his contracted service. (143)

Each reserve, town or farming area is an island surrounded by a sea of restrictions. Once a man is allowed to live and work in one area, there is little or

nothing he can do to change his situation. If he steps beyond the limits recorded in his pass, he risks arrest by the police, the detectives in plain clothes, the labour inspectors, who search everywhere for transgressors. So, all workers have to have a service contract usually valid and no worker could resign his or her job without the employer's permission. To be found without this basic document or without the employer's endorsement on it when leaving a job exposes workers to heavy fines and imprisonment for disobedience. To illustrate this situation Abrahams asserts that

> Like all house boys, he got part of the week-end off. Like others, he wanted to visit places like vrededorp and Malay camp to drink a little, and get to know the life of the city. But these places were outside the district in which he was registered. To go there without fear of being picked up, he got a Travelling Pass. When he got to know black people of the city and wanted to visit them on his Sunday off, he got a Day special Pass from his employer, made the journey, and got a Location visitor's Pass from the superintendent of the location where his friends lived. His employer had agreed. The local superintendent had contacted the pass office. Except for that one short spell in jail. (143)

As far as working conditions are concerned, violence and humiliation constitute the daily experience of most black workers. Absence from work for whatever reason, even sickness, disobedience, negligence, abusive language, drunkenness, even simply being late- for all of these workers risk not merely being sacked but also being hauled before a magistrate, and sentenced to heavy fines or imprisonment. In practice, most white employers use the law only to reinforce the repressive methods they usually use anyway. Verbal insult and physical violence are the standard ways in which employers or supervisors communicate with the workers under their command. Failure to complete an impossible assignment or even simply misunderstanding since few employers can speak the home language of their workers are frequently pretexts for violent punishment. If a white man kills, he will be excused. For instance he will say that the man he killed is a terrorist or that he is a politician, who used to indulge in politics. The police do not get their information from the dead man's fellow workers, they only ask the killer how he killed him and the reply will be he was not very nice, he spoke rudely to him, so he got annoyed and hit him.

The brutality of labour exploitation is intensified by the baas or master mentality shared by all whites, whatever their position and ultimately rooted in basic dependence on colonial regime. Even those classed as wage employers usually do little more than supervising the work of black workers placed under their command. At every section of the mine there are white and blacks. Especially in manual work the white does nothing except giving orders.

The black is always working hard to finish all the job, including that of the white. Employers and supervisors delight in subjecting their workers to petty humiliation in order to display their power over them.

Conditions of work are bad and often highly dangerous. Most workers still have to buy from their own wages whatever protective clothing they can get. Not surprisingly, industrial injury and occupational disease are the common experience of many black workers. Injuries such as broken limps, burns or the loss of fingers are common. Diseases such as chest pains resulting from breathing dust in the mines to which workers are condemned because of a poor working and living environment and inadequate food, as well as those which are directly related to unregulated exposure to dangerous substances are common. There is very little protective industrial legislation which workers can call on to secure even the most basic rights from the exploiters of their labour. Even where the law does impose restrictions, workers face almost certain aggressions if they try to get them into effect. The refusal of many employers, especially the smaller ones to recognize a regular working day deepens on the exploitation even further. Workers in domestic service, hotels and retail trade as well as on farms, are often expected to work more hours when the work load is heavy, not only without overtime but even without any addition to the basic pay. Abrahams depicts this situation in the following lines :

> My working day at the hotel began at five in the morning and ended after mid-night. Each morning, I got up in the dark, dressed by moonlight and set out. I worked through dark and silent streets... usually, I walked alone through the broad, empty streets of the city while all the world slept. At night after the day's work, I worked through the same empty silent streets. The only difference was that I often encountered policemen at night...I never once walked through the streets of my city in daylight.
>
> (140-141)

Concerning the denial of bargaining rights, this is central to the entire system of labour repression, it is the denial to black workers of any right to determine either collectively or individually their own wages or conditions of work. No Bantu worker may legally seek or take a job on his own-everything must be licensed and endorsed by the government labour bureau. Without a legal job or a permit no worker is entitled to live in the towns, and to this day the colonial police surround and sweep the main urban ghettos three or four times a year and interrogate every single person found inside, fining all deserters and illegal residents and sending them back to the reserves as Jason and Eltagale explain :

> But the basic illegality remained, and periodically the police would come through the camp, looking for those

> without passes. When they come they knock very hard. Bang, bang, band. Then, they open the door. Then , they ask where is your mother, where is your father ? (*South Africa, 86*)

Thus, risks of being victimised for the rest of his working life, even of being banned from wage employment are frequent for a black worker. This system is intended to exercise efficient control over the labour force and to prevent black workers from claiming for better conditions at work. Under these circumstances any direct resistance by black workers whether as individuals or concerted action is a highly risky business. To complain to the colonial authorities about an employer is to invite victimisation and physical mistreatment. To leave the job means automatically breaking the law and undergoing certain punishment if caught. To strike as a group is likewise to be branded as contract breakers and the police are quick to intervene and with a Heavy-handed on the slightest pretext. All strikers risk losing their jobs and their homes and being deported to reserves where they may have no land or relatives.

With regard to social conditions, the complex series of controls on where people can live, together with discrimination in housing, welfare, education, is every bit as ruthless as the labour legislation. Every town has its location, where all blacks, except domestic workers or catering staff, are compelled to reside. Moreover, since most blacks are not allowed to build their own houses, the authorities can deliberately engineer the type of housing in the process of

helping the progress of their apartheid designs. Accommodation is segregated not simply between blacks and whites but between blacks and coloureds for instance coloureds and blacks cannot live together, they cannot get married with each other. In *Tell Freedom*, Abrahams tells us that his sister (Maggie)'s marriage is nearly called off because her fiancé's mother would not wish to meet Abrahams' mother who is darker than her. Here, below is Abrahams' report

> Maggie and Chris Fortune had fixed the date for their marriage and were saving up for their furniture. The day was very near and they had found a house in city and suburban, where only the most select coloureds lived. But Maggie very nearly called off the marriage because Chris Fortune's very fair mother had hesitated about meeting Maggie's very dark mother. (128)

And there is also a segregated accommodation amongst blacks themselves: first by work status, and second by ethnic labels in terms of which every black is identified. Contract workers are forced to live in enclosed compounds, the bigger ones, being little more than fortified concentration camps with controlled entrances. Migrants from outside the town or from one of the reserves must live in separate single quarters. Few leisure's facilities in the white areas of town are open to blacks as Abrahams asserts " all that was finest and best in life was reserved for Europeans only (223)".

Apartheid kept blacks off the sidewalks, in inferior and segregated railway carriages, buses and they had to buy food and drink from the back windows of shops.

Even though the blacks constitute a hard working class in South Africa, the whites' rule almost does nothing to improve their living conditions. There is no child allowance, indeed nothing for mothers beyond the crudest maternity provisions at clinics and hospitals. The old receive a state pension, but it is so small that even though it may be used on small things the person cannot survive on this alone. Together with this total lack of welfare, provision is the pressure of the higher casts of urban living and of the pass laws which together force those condemned by the regime's policy as superfluous appendance- in other words all those not in productive employment are sent back to the reserves.

In the reserves and Bantustans, the people must build their own housing with no materials provided. Where there is wood, this may not prove a great problem but all the wood is quite scarce, blacks are unable to find even dry wood for their cooking. Today many families still live in tiny shanties, although in recent years a few farmers have built concrete huts for their workers. Accommodation for workers is totally in the power of the white farmers. Workers have no sleeping room. Sleeping quarters are in garage and they have to divide it with a piece of material and on the other side is a car. When they build huts, farmers provide no fuel or electricity, so the workers have to burn scrap wood or dung for cooking and lighting. For blacks, dung is a precious

material for all use. Depicting this, Abrahams states that "dung makes fire that cooks the food. Dung is the fire that fights off cold. Dung boils the washing that bring the money that pays for our bread" (21). Moreover, the other usable materials are scrap corrugated- iron and sacking or at best, sundries bricks. Conditions in the reserves are harsh-a stony wilderness with hardly any trees or bushes for shelter and extremes of temperature between a baking hot summer and the bitter cold, dry winds of winter. People imprisoned by the laws of apartheid have no protection at all from this harsh climate and their suffering is great. Contract workers are incarcerated in sordid compounds surrounded by walls and barbed wire. Single workers are sent to bachelor hostels only slightly less severe. A few domestic servants and hotel workers live in servants' quarters at the back of their employers' premises while the big employers, mostly the mines build their own compounds. Those allowed to live with their families are allocated little four-roomed houses in the location, without internal doors and with uninsulated corrugated-iron roofs which turn them into ovens in the summer and iceboxes in winter and at night. Their only sanitation is an outside toilet containing cold water, with a single tab in the yards. There is no electric lighting or heating. And because the government refuses to allow more houses to be built, many are crammed with relatives or friends. Most of the houses do not have less than ten people in the house. There are only two rooms without ceilings, without doors and there is no privacy. The walls are so thin that you

can hear people in the next room talk. Houses are poorly built and there are big cracks in the walls and the municipality does nothing. To this Abrahams says :

> My new home was two rooms that opened into the corner of a yard. The back room was small and dark. It had one small window that opened on to the wall of the adjacent building no more than two feet away. Hardly any light come in through it. (*Tell Freedom*, 76)

White houses are built with long lasting materials. They have curtained windows. Each house has a back and front garden. There is a room between one house and the next. Each has large windows to let in the light of day.

As far as education is concerned, the only services that the occupation regime made any attempt to provide on a national scale are health and education even here, the extent and quality of what is provided is severely limited. The south Africans let nearly all education and health care in the hands of the missionaries, particularly in the peasant areas. Black students-all those of school age are enrolled in schools, but the structure is overwhelmingly poor: Nearly half are in the first two years of primary school, and all but a fraction drops out by the end of primary stage. Black teachers themselves have rarely been given adequate training for their posts. Besides, black children at school with whites, get vulgar remarks of whites. They are being humiliated for being poorer than their fellows whites.

Abrahams describes this in the following lines :

> Hey ! Look at the new one among our hungry lot. He's in our class. Peter Abrahams. Hey ! Peter Abrahams ! like living up with the other cattle for a bit of bread and dirty cocoa ?They spit in the cocoa ! Ha-ha-ha- ha ! (*Tell Freedom, 120*)

This is a mockery. Moreover, when black students go to school, they have to walk in the cold, while white students go in buses. They wear clean uniforms, look very nice, and they do not go to the same school with black children and they cannot do much about it.

Health services are grossly biased towards whites and town dwellers at the expense of blacks and the rural population, especially peasants. Workers cannot rely on first aid or even emergency cover while on the job because of the indifference of whites. Sometimes, it happens that while workers are working and one of them becomes ill. He will not be taken to the hospital because the white man is going to say that he cannot take him to hospital because the others are working. If one of them has become ill, he has become unproductive and the employer is no longer concerned about him. On the ranches few workers get little or no medical attention at all, and contract workers, with no relatives living locally, can be in great danger of simply of being lost because many are not told the identity or address of their employer until they arrive on the farms. The

family of the worker will not know where he is. Even if he happens to die, they will not know that he has died because his employer is not going to trouble himself to find out where the family or the relatives of the worker are.

As far as wage levels are concerned, black workers have a very low standard of living. The south African climate is too harsh to give workers much scope for growing some of their own food. In any case official housing denies land or water for growing vegetables and grain. A handful of people in the towns mainly women manage to augment their wages by operating illegal houses, selling handicrafts or taking in washing. But their services are mostly paid for out of the meagre earnings of their fellow workers, and always the regime's officials and police are on the watch to stamp out any form of livelihood which reduces people's dependence on wage-labour.

Besides, torture is commonly and routinely used on black South African Political Prisoners and detainees. The police's use of torture is not a cruel treatment by isolated individuals but a system. The south African authorities inflict cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment on black political prisoners in order to obtain information from them. Brutal acts of unspeakable sadism are committed on the persons of freedom fighters captured on the battlefields. All suspects are blindfolded and beaten when brought in. The conditions they are kept in are appalling. They are handcuffed to trees at night, some are kept in pits. It is winter and very cold, approaching freezing point at night. Suspects are handcuffed to trees dressed only in loincloths and drenched in cold water.

Mental end physical torture is used to extract information from detainees and this can leave many scars. The most terrible forms of torture are : being suspended by handcuffs and beaten and when bleeding starts, they are told to sit in the hot sun, being kept standing for several days, without sleep. They are also burnings with cigarette ends. Being hung by a chain around the wrist of one arm, with the tips of the toes just reaching the floor for several hours; being punched and beaten on the head and stomach, especially for pregnant women who are accused of making terrorism.

Since the separation between blacks and whites is so great in South Africa, consequently whites are different from blacks, they are feared and so there is hostility of the powerless against the powerful, the poor against the rich, the worker against the employer and ragged against the well-dressed. Black and white children are raised into two different worlds and taught by adult to hate each other. To this Abrahams gives an account of how black children and white ones react when they meet. There is no friendship between them but instead there are quarrels only. When they see each other they begin to fight, to insult each other. Black children are called names of abuse reserved by whites for blacks. Abrahams portrays this hostile attitude thus:

> A clear young voice carried to us : your father
> are dirty black baboons. Run ! Andries called.
> A violent anger suddenly possessed me. I
> stopped and turned. You're a liar ! I screamed

> it. The foremost boy pointed at me : An ugly black baboon ! In a fog of rage I went towards him. Liar ! I shouted. My father was better than your father. I neared them. The bigger boy stepped between me and the one I was after. My father was better than your father! Liar ! The big boy struck me a mighty clout on the side of the face. I staggered, righted myself, and leapt at the boy who had insulted my father. I struck him on the face, hard. A heavy blow on the back of my head nearly stunned me. I grabbed at the boy in front of me. We went down together. (31)

The result of this fight is not good. Besides, black children are always in a state of panic, a situation which creates a feeling of inferiority between black and white children. For black children to fight with white children is a sin because whites are considered as semi-gods since they are superior, they are on the top of everything. And that is the reason why blacks do not dare to insult any white person otherwise there must be tension in black family. A harsh punishment is reserved for anyone who dares to do anything wrong to a white person. If a black child fights with a white child, the whites have to come and threaten the black's family and they make the black child's parents punish him violently.

Because Lee fights back against the injustice of the white boys, he must be corrected by his uncle. He must be made to know that black does not fight white. The boys father pays a visit to see that Uncle Sam does this:

> Uncle Sam went into the other room and returned with a thick leather thong. He wound it once round his hand and advanced on me. The man and the boys leaned against the door, watching. I looked at Aunt Liza's face. Though there was no sign of life or feeling on it, I knew suddenly, instinctively, that she wanted me not to cry. Bitterly, Uncle Sam said : you must never lift your hand to a white person. No matter what happens, you must never lift you hand to a white person... He lifted the trop and brought it down on my back. (33-34)

The black parents have to punish their child in order to satisfy whites since they cannot do anything. They are not master of their fate because it is very much under the control of whites. This is why black children are forced by these circumstances to believe that there is some thing wrong with being black. In addition most of black children in south Africa are not only raised on a racially segregated area but also most of time in poverty and envy everything white and

they wonder why everything which is good is for whites only. The following conversation illustrates this situation

> Bright lights went on in the houses about us.
> I turned to Danny. Those the same as the
> streets, lights ? Yes. Why don't we have
> them in our house? Because we are not
> white. Are they only for white people ?
> Yes...Why are those lights only for white
> people ? And their houses are nice. Jo I'd
> like to live in a nice house. *(Tell Freedom, 84)*

Let us consider another social hardship that so black South Africans have. It is the question of marriage in South Africa is a hard question first of all in the sense that people need to get married but it is very difficult. For instance a man who lives in middle lands cannot get married with a girl who lives in Orlando even though it is Soweto, the girl will not get married because she does not have a permit. It is going to take the man a hell of time to get her papers to qualify her to live with him. Secondly according to the law which originates from apartheid, a mixture of marriage between blacks and whites is impossible. The South African white people want to conserve their race as it was the case in Hitler's period. But the question which can be raised in this is where those coloured who are in South Africa, especially in the Cape Region come from. They come from whites' rape of black women. White men will not only use black women in

the labour force but also they will use them in sexual matters. Intermarriage between whites and blacks is forbidden because it is against the law since to have sexual relations between the two groups is impossible. Thus, anybody who goes beyond this law is sent to jail and sentenced to hard work.. Each group, especially blacks are to make love among themselves but even here it is not easy. In *Down Second Avenue*, Mphalele tells with bitterness the story of a man who had been hanged because he slept with a white woman, he asserts " they hanged a man for doing what a white woman asked him to do in her own bed, and this is what they do to us." (93)

Under apartheid, black men are affected by the prison system. Their women have the responsibility for raising money for defence for lawyers. To this Abrahams states that "her husband had been caught at either diamond or gold-smuggling. All their money had gone on the defence(76)". Consequently their men leave them penniless. Black women also have the responsibility for going to visit their men in jail and feeding them. This fact of going to visit prisoners in jail is not an easy thing in a country of apartheid. It is very difficult for black women to see their men in prison since according to the law, prisoners are not allowed to approach people of the outside world-black women are also not allowed so near the prisoners. They cannot greet them. Abrahams describes the reaction of whites towards the prisoners, he tells us how prisoners are blocked and beaten by whites who control them.

He says that :

> When he saw us, Harry flung down his pickaxe and waved and shouted. An armed white man struck him across the face with the back of his hand. Harry staggered back, regained his balance, then bent forward and retrieved his pick. *(Tell Freedom, 104)*

This situation makes the black women unhappy. They are terribly hurt but they cannot do anything. They cannot abandon their husbands in prison. They have to go on visiting them inspite of the white men's brutalities and aggressions towards the black prisoners.

This Chapter has examined how black women together with their men suffer from apartheid. It has equally analysed how racist system takes all the oppressive measures on the grounds of their race and blacks are denied access to a wide range of facilities available to whites. The system produces a situation in which most of the wealth of South Africa is in the hands of the whites while the overwhelming majority of black South Africans live in poverty. There are no exception every one is involved in this situation of oppression.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BOUNDS OF FEMALENESS

This chapter examines how black South African women suffer because of their gender. It also examines how they find themselves in the worst position of all. This is because a great burden is on top of them-they are exploited by the white person and the black man as well.

In fact, the growth of female poverty under apartheid is much noted. The apartheid rulers tend to disfavour black women in access to land, technology and employment. However, the patriarchal ideology of the colonialists is only partly responsible for worsening black women's economic position. The inherent inequality and poverty which is creating a character of economic and political processes is an equally important factor. While large numbers of black women and men are impoverished by these processes, women tend to suffer more. When private property in land is introduced, for example women often than men lose traditional land rights. It is women's labour that tend to be unpaid and unskilled under the system of occupation. When traditional manufactures decay, it is often female employment and incomes that are affected most, as for example in food processing. Women are left with meagre resources to feed and care for children, the aged, and the infirm when men migrate or are conscripted into forced labour by colonialists.

In the previous section there are two types of effects of apartheid rulers in South Africa. On one hand, it introduces private property, commercial production and export orientation, and gears production in agriculture, industrial services and trade. On the other hand, and as a result, large sections of the population are alienated from adequate or stable resources, income or employment. In particular, the basic needs of food, health, housing become increasingly marginal to the main orientation of the production structures. These two trends have very specific consequences for women. Private property and commercialisation often reduce their access to resources, even more than men.

Now, turning to the sectorial effects of this orientation of the production structure from the perspective of poor, working women, the land titles are solely given to male heads of households. The women become landless and they are likely to be as seasonal, casual and temporary labourers on low wages than their male counterparts. And even the right to work for wages is thus denied to the majority of black South African women. Of those who do manage to slip through the influx control net and secure residential rights, in towns or on farms, most can only retain those rights through dependence on a male worker who himself depends upon the white because most black men are paid wages that are not even sufficient to support themselves. Black women on farms must wait endlessly and anxiously for money to arrive from their husbands to supplement what meagre living they manage to scrape from the soil.When the agricultural mechanization occurred, it worsened women's absolute and relative economic

position. Mechanization of food-processing technologies often drastically reduces women's employment and income. And that is the reason why black women's households are in such urgent needs of income that they must take any employment they can get. They must tolerate the worst pay and conditions of work. For instance in the food industry, the working conditions are appalling and wages are extremely low. When working the black women lack boots or protective clothing, although many of them stand in water. Those who run the tin cutting and living machines are involved in labour that is better paid, but dangerous. Women who lose fingers while working these machines, receive no compensation. This lack of health security is depicted in the conversation below.

> When I think of those white people, I shake all over with rage, Maggie said. It's nearly a year ago now, child. Forget it. What white people ? I asked. Ma worked for them, Maggie said. She was washing and the tin of boiling water fell on her. They made her come home by herself. Why get all worked up, child ? It's all past. You worked for nearly a month and nearly died and what did that woman say ? I can't help it if she's careless enough to get hurt.*(Tell Freedom,48)*

In addition, black women are granted no paid leave for vocation or public holidays and pregnant women are routinely sent home in order to avoid paying them a confinement allowance. One of the workers, Annie Miller describes women's work :

> As soon as all the girls arrive in the morning, they have to see that the conveyer belts and the scales have been properly cleaned. Then, as the tin containers are carried along on the belt, we have to fill them with vegetables and meat. This belt system compels us to work very fast, and recently, although a number of tins that we are producing prepay still remains the same... we have to work like machine. But while a smaller number of us are giving more of our labour, our wages still remain the same.
>
> (*Threads of solidarity, 94)*

In fishing factories, while working, the fish have hard parts that may tear their hands. The fish scales may stick underneath their fingernails. Their fingers smell and become sore. They work hard so that the blood runs from their hands. They have to go to the doctor with their own money to have the nails pulled out.

For black women in the countryside, their most important work is in planting, harvesting, drawing water from distant sources. Women whose households have land on white farms often are expected to work as field hands

and domestic servants. They have also to travel long distances on foot to sell eggs, milk and fowls to Europeans. And these demands on the labour of black women and children increase with the growing commercialization of agriculture. In towns, the fact that black women are home makers imposes extra demands, makes them all the more vulnerable to deportation to the reserves. Even there, they have few legal rights. They can normally secure access to land but their land is so poor to produce enough food. As Colligan Paddy puts it

> You go to till the land because if you don't your children will starve. There is no other work in the Bantustan homelands. The homelands are desperately poor. The soil is to poor. You can never produce enough food.
>
> (*Soweto Remembered, 86*)

Even though black women goes to till the land in order to get food, it remains scare and consequently there must be starvation and even money becomes scare. Black women in the reserves, barred from nearly all types of employment are compelled to provide by their own labour for most of the subsistence for themselves, and their Children. And because few jobs are open to them outside domestic service and those who do find wage-labour have to tolerate the worst pay they will get. In *Tell Freedom* Aunt Betty is anxious because of the low-pay and for this reason she steals clothes and brings them to

Lee. She takes them without asking them. She steals them because she is working for the whites for almost nothing. The following lines illustrate this situation :

> She gave a big brown-paper parcel. I undid it. There were three pairs of shorts, two of grey flannel and one of khaki, a grey flannel jacket, four shirts and a pair of white tennis shoes. Say thank you to Aunt Betty Lee. Thank you, Aunt Betty, I said. Your white people are kind, my mother said. Aunt Betty Snorted. You didn't … my mother began. And why not ? I slave for them for next to nothing. And besides Lina, they'll never miss it. Those brats have more than they need. I took them. That's stealing Betty. If that's stealing then they are stealing my sweat everyday. (49)

Thus, the work that black women are doing for white families is hard work for there is lack of participation in decision-making. They cannot take part in taking decision on their wages and where to work. They are in whites' households to follow orders that are given to them. Although they disagree with whites about the wages and conditions, they are not allowed to go somewhere else to look for other jobs. They are like prisoners and they cannot do anything to change their conditions. They are only cynically exploited since whites employ them at the very end of their strength. They have to be more attentive

and docile while at work in order to get the necessaries of life for the survival of their families, as one employer categorically states.

> We prefer women for some work. They are do just the same work for instance when plucking tobacco, or reaping mealies, it is immaterial whether the hands employed belong to a child or to a woman. It is not hard labour. We want men only to take out the stumps of trees. For other work we use machinery. (*Threads of Solidarity,90*)

During instability, anger and frustration the bodies of women become a particular kind of battlefield. In the South African context, the female activists and female bystander alike, are confronted by the apartheid Security Forces, or at times realize that their bodies have become the primary target - the body becomes the site of torture and severe trauma. The consequences of targeting the female body becomes abundantly clear in the testimonies of the black women. An important feature of the women's testimonies is that the female activists testify that they are constantly subjected to a depreciation of their political role within the liberation movements, and extra efforts of by oppressors to obliterate any trace of bravery, independence or feminism are made. Their bodies are sexually targeted in order to turn their role from activist's into sluts. The sexual violence is used to strip away their dignity and to undermine the women's sense

of self. Women have to ask for soap and sanitary towels, to strip in front of policemen who make remarks about their bodies, to star-jumb naked breasts, fallopian tubes are flooded with water until they burst, rats are pushed into vaginas. White policemen target Ntambizanele Elsie's breasts :

> They closed the doors, the windows and the blinds. Kruger took off my jersey and my shirt and pulled me up to the desk. One of them took off my bra. They forced me to bend over the open drawer so that one of my breasts would hang in the drawer. They then slammed the drawer shut so that my breast was squashed. They did this three times to each of my breasts. Their actions caused me a lot of pain and my whole body became weak. They also pulled handfuls of hair out of my head. They then untied my hands and left me in the office. I un bound my eyes and my mouth and noticed that my nipple had split and a watery sticky substance was flowing out. I took the cloth and when I went to the toilet I found a plastic packet and put the hair and cloth inside it. I still have this packet in my possession. *(Victims, Perpetrators or Actors, 203).*

But the most humiliating part of detention and torture under apartheid government is the way that the female activist's role is systematically denigrated into prostitution. First she is weighed according to someone else's concepts of womanhood. She is in custody because she is not the right woman or because she is fat and ugly. Or otherwise, because she does not have any man who keeps her ashier own or she is single and she is looking for a man. Whatever she is as an activist or a military is reduced to unpaid prostitution, which for whites give license for further sexual abuse. Women in jail are made to stand the whole day with blood flowing down and drying on their legs and they do not understand if whites gain strength from looking at their blood. They are also asked to drink their blood.

Raped women know that if they talk about it now publicly, they will again lose something- privacy, respect maybe. For instance, if you know that a particular minister is a rapist - what goes through your mind when you see her on television. Another thing is that some of the rapists hold high political office today. So if you speak out you undermine not only the new government you fought for, but also you destroy your own possibilities of a future. There is also a culture of not discussing these things with your own family-words like vagina or penis may not be mentioned in front of grown-ups in several indigenous South African cultures.

Thandi Shezi puts it this way :

> When they raped me, I was already torn and injured by electric chocks. I hurt deep inside. I could tell nobody. My mother is sitting here-she is hearing it for the first time. I' m suffering from a womb that feels if it's jumping. I'm frigid. I' m cold. When I get involved with a man I get scared. I didn't tell a single soul about it. I don't want them to pity me. I don't want to call me names.*(Victims, Perpetrators or Actors 208)*

These figures show two problems in South African society : first, that women find it difficult to talk about their personal experiences, of things being done to them because of what they are. They are someone's mother, wife or child. So, women regard suffering worth speaking publicly only when the violation is committed against a member of the family. Second and more depressing, is that men also prefer to go public on violations done to themselves or to other men, but seldom on the violation of the rights of a woman. It is difficult to find a voice on her own behalf. In an effort not to contaminate relationships with personal grief or suffering, women also seem unable to talk even among themselves about what they experience. The violation of the body, and therefore of the self, gets locked into silence. So, it is the woman herself who is aware of the inner suffering. The question of silence raises concerns

about actual and potential risks to their future security. These are particularly critical points to consider for the question of silence ultimately challenges many persons to consider whether they are dealing with complicity or merely women's uncertainties about the reception they will receive. Should they seek help from social services ? In this regard the shame felt by the women makes them reluctant to seek help from anyone. Some are especially reluctant to involve social services because of their fear of losing their value. Some others clearly feel that they have to weigh up not only how to seek help, but also to be selective about whom they approach, because of fear of further stigmatisation and a negative reaction. Foremast, in the minds of a number of the women are that they may experience a negative result as a consequence of accessing formal helping services.

Thus, sexual abuse is a shattering and acutely painful experience, first and foremost for the person involved. And it causes pain and destruction to all family members, and family functioning is affected in the most profound way. Clearly sexual abuse is the very heart of family relation ships and more powerfully, norms and beliefs are destabilised. The sexual abuse is especially painful and disruptive particularly because it evokes powerful and uncomfortable feelings and sets into action. Undoubtedly, with the act of sexual abuse the emotional impact on the women is to fuel an intense rage and anger that sometimes manifests itself in a very self-destructive way. Indeed, in their struggles to deal with their own conflicting emotions some women internalise or

displace their anger on themselves. This is painful illustrated by this woman's reflections :

> The anger is still around so I'm very dismissive of people because it is difficult to trust. I know I'm over-eating and smoking too much as a way of dealing with my feelings. I'm feeling a lot of pain. *(Lived Experience,42)*

When people are traumatised, to speak about painful experiences they can internalise their anger. Almost invariably, a number of women express anger at themselves. They feel as if they are swallowing their anger. They are afraid to trust as one women remarks :

> I am either feeling very angry or withdrawn. I don't know whom to trust anymore. I was even afraid to acknowledge the abuse to myself so it feels easier to shut myself off from everyone. I'm more fearful and I feel as if I have to become a different person. *(Lived Experience 43).*

In the face of various obstacles and debilitating contradictions, perhaps not surprisingly some women emotional responses are not exempt from ambivalence. Even though the women have a lot of anger towards the whites, the fact remains that they continue to have mixed feelings towards them. And the fact that the women have confused emotions contributes to their ambivalent feelings that serves to exacerbate the women's feelings of guilt and being torn in

several directions. The women clearly need space to work through her ambivalent feelings to understand the conflict in her emotional responses to the abuse. Accordingly, ambivalence also constrains some women from accessing appropriate help and support. The ambivalence that configures women's emotional responses derives essentially from the intersecting effects of race and gender oppression in operation in their lives. Most specifically, race and gender intersect to create powerful and conflicting feelings. Here, a key issue for the women is how they cope with the painful reality of sexual abuse and make sense of their relationship with their family. They feel a sense of betrayal. Here we can see how the women seem to be struggling intensely with painful contradictions.

Women's productive labour is alienated by denying the benefit of women's work to the enemy. This can be accomplished by amputating them. Mutilations and amputations, particularly of arms, hands, legs and other parts of the body are widespread. Soldiers use knives, axes, and machetes to maim thousands of women, children and elderly people. Women's productive as well as reproductive labour is alienated in apartheid. There are two aspects of reproductive labour to consider : rape to impregnate, making women bear children for the enemy community, and rape to prevent from becoming mothers in their own community, by making them unacceptable to their community or by injuring them physically that they are unable to bear children. The inability to bear sons jeopardizes a woman's land rights under customary law in many societies. Besides the child born from a rape pregnancy belongs neither to the

black community nor to the white community. He does not belong to the white because any child born from a black woman is systematically called a black, either when his father is a white or when his father is a black. When his father is a white, the child is a coloured. And a white cannot dare to recognize a child born from a black woman. On the other hand, the child does not belong to the black community because he is considered as a bastard and this is the result of betrayal. The woman who gets a bastard is betraying the black South African custom, and in this case she has no value. She must be traumatized by her husband by beating her or by ill treating her otherwise, since he does not have to be angry with the white man who is his master but he has to be angry with his wife. And the woman is not only traumatized by her husband but also by the whole community. In the lines below Peter Abrahams says something related to sexual relations between whites and blacks :

> My mother was a member of the cape coloured community. Coloured is the South African word for the half-cast community that was a by product of the early contact between black and white. In time the coloureds emerged as a distinctive community. My father came from Ethiopia. He was the son of land-owners and slave-owners. *(Tell Freedom, 10)*

Moreover, the raped woman gets a feeling of frustration and of guilt for she is despised by her own and the whole society as well. She has no proper love towards her child but the child represents the rape itself and the woman always has night mares about the situation.

In terms of the repressive law imposed by the apartheid, marriage robs her of limited personal and property rights she possesses. There is not one area of her life which the black woman can call her own-discrimination by sex and race combine in a system of total oppression. Her life is defined by her dependent role within the family. Her wealth and status are defined by that of the men to whom she is related- she has to depend upon her husband who himself depend upon the white. Although the woman might be the beneficiary of a great deal of property her labour has to be vital to family enterprise. In other case her career is most likely to be shaped not by her own achievements but by her relations to men and by the changing of her family. These are circumstances over which she has no control. This is her own marriage. It is rarely made without the advice and consent of parents, relations and friends. Acceptance of a proposal is the most significant decision to which she would ever contribute. However, autonomy- the ability to shape her own destiny usually remains beyond a woman's reach. She has no control over the family status or property. The girl given in marriage by her parents. Boys get married, they take a wife. They look in marriage for enlargement, a confirmation of their existence but not the right to

exist. It is a charge they assume voluntarily. In marrying, the woman is the subordinate of man. He is the economic head of the joint enterprise that is why he has to spend his income as he has the opportunity to be tyrannical. Sometimes he acts violently towards her. The following lines depict how a man uses his money as he wants :

> The money is spent on drinking, not on us or not on the children. We share the work, or do more of it, but he takes all the money telling us it is his- that he earned it. *(Power and class 207)*

Here, a woman is complaining because her husband is wasting the money without taking into account the well-being of the family. The husband wants to show that a woman has nothing to say about the family management. She has to depends on him and has to wait for what he is going to give as money. So, the woman is thought of being outside the economy. The husband represents the enterprise – marriage in the view of society. Hence, her wife takes his name, she belongs to his religion, his class, she joins his family. She gives him her person, virginity and rigorous fidelity is required.

Concerning virginity, the virgin must overcome many inhibitions and difficulties if she is to accomplish her sexual destiny. She endures injuries in intercourse. In certain cases, she encounters a clumsy or brutal husband and her defloration is still a kind of rape. This may lead to permanent frigidity.

The attempt to remove it all into one night is stupid and barbarous. The woman is frightened because of the strange operation she must undergo and is sacred, because religion, society, family and friends have handed over to her husband as if to a master ; and also because the act seems to her to involve her whole future. Marriage is regarded as a definitive step taken once for all. The man is revealed to her as on unknown, but one who is of great importance since he is to be her lifelong companion. So, women are tortured by their men in intercourses. Thus, kabonye in *The Collector of Treasures* complains saying : "Our men do not think that we need tenderness and care. You know, my husband used to kick me between the legs when he wanted that. I once aborted with a child due to this treatment. (89)".

Since the husband is the productive worker he is the one who goes beyond family interest to that of society, opening up a future for himself through co-operation in the building of the collective future. The woman is doomed to the continuation of species and the home. The man in his occupation and his political life he encounters change and progress. He senses his extension through time and space and when he is tired, he gets himself a home, where his wife takes care of his furnishings and children. What is evident from all this is that the woman is confined to traditional roles-domestic work. She manages a household where she is likely to work as a wife and the work is of repetitive tasks which though vary are continual : washing, ironing, cooking etc. she spends her days carrying out an endless sequence of responsibilities, it is most

perpetual. Her daughters are in training for the same role. Depicting this situation Abrahams tries to show that a woman is doomed to repetition and routine. This is the case of Aunt Liza who is always in water washing whites' clothes brought by her husband (Uncle Sam) home. Hence, the passage below illustrates the Aunt Liza's menial chores :

> It was washing day for Aunt Liza. I was to discover that everyday was washing day for Aunt Liza. And nearly all afternoons and nights were given up to ironing. Uncle Sam brought home a huge bundle of dirty laundry each morning. Then I discovered it was she Laundry of the white people for whom Uncle Sam Worked.
>
> *(Tell Freedom,9)*

This means that even though the black woman is not working for whites, she is indirectly working for them because of her husband who works for them. He brings the clothes home since he believes that the household chores are solely for women and for this reason he cannot volunteer to help at all. So, marriage dooms the woman to repetition and routine.

Marriage is forced much more tyrannically upon the young girl than upon the young man. The unmarried woman is a parasite, she remains a servant of her father and of her brother as well. Marriage enslaves her to a man, but it makes

her a mistress of a home. Consequently the girl desires to get married. While desiring it however she fears. Frequently what makes it unbearable is the idea of being handed over to a strange male. Thus, most girls decide to marry because it is the thing to do, because of pressure put on them, because it is the only sensible solution ; because they want a normal existence as a wife and mother.

As far as socialization processes are concerned, female attributes are disparaged consistently and pervasively, this is evidenced by the fact that very few black girls are sent to school. They do not have any advantage of a few years in schooling. Wherever the economic resources to train all the children in a family are limited, sometimes even when there are not more boys than girls, boys are sent to school. This undue and limiting emphasis on their future is eminently manifested in the differential reinforcement of self-fulfilment and achievement. For instance, when the children return from school the girl is often assigned household chores. These comprise in washing plates, cooking, ironing, looking after the younger children, running errands around the house, serving the food and shopping. All this is intended to train her as an effective wife and mother but leaves her little or no time to attend academic interests or even enjoy play outside the home. According to Simone de Beauvoir

> Parents still raise their daughter with view to marriage rather than to furthering her personal development, she sees many advantages in it that she herself wishes for it

> that she is often less specially trained, less solidly grounded than her brothers she is less deeply involved in her profession. In this way she dooms herself to remain in its lower level, to be inferior.
>
> *(Second Sex 136-137)*

This means that girls take their situation for granted. As their parents are more interested in marriage than in studies, their daughters accept that situation without reaction. It means that they agree with their decision. It seems that they are not aware of any advantage of schooling. And even though they are sent to school, they are the are the first to leave because their parents need help at home, in the fields, or in the houses of white settlers. *In Tell Freedom*, Aunt Mattie asks Maggie to leave school in order to go to work for whites. But Maggie becomes angry with her because she does not want to go to work for them. Maybe she knows how they exploit them. But her mother agrees with Mattie's proposal and tells Maggie to be at Mattie's side. This is depicted in the conversation below :

> Suddenly, Maggie's eyes brimmed with tears. Aunt Mattie says I must leave school. I did want to become a teacher and make a home for you, Ma. You must see Mattie's side, my child…

> Maggie wiped her eyes. Her voice was tinged with bitterness. Now I must go and work for the whites, clear their dirt and look after their children just like you and all others. (49)

Maggie is not among those girls who take their situation for granted. She reacts to this decision taken by her mother and Aunt Mattie. She makes an exception. Clearly, she knows the advantages of studies, she wants to become someone who will be the most important in the family. She knows that to become a teacher is very useful because teaching is a better paid job for blacks. But, she must accept because her mother is the only one to decide what to do for her daughter. She is a girl, she has to help at home. The boy, of course, is excused from household chores. Consequently, he has ample time to attend intellectual pursuits, interact with his peers and face diverse challenges. In the long run, he acquires the cherished values of leadership, confidence, assertiveness and achievement. In other words, he is allowed in tune with his total self and only, marginally does he attend to family role expectations. On the other hand, the girl is encouraged to depend for her own self-fulfilment on her own family, husband and children if she is a wife and mother. She in not expected to be competitive and assertive because this might put some funny ideas into her head. It seems that only when the woman succumbs to her feminine role is she perceived as fulfilling herself in the right sense of the word. And all these restrictions are for all women whether educated or not, because

even for the educated women, whose aspirations and awareness are raised whatever demand their newly acquired status make on them, society persists in the expectation that it gives them traditional role outside the family. The double message is go ahead provided that you do all the cooking, look after the children and carry out all your traditional duties wholeheartedly.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BOUNDS OF MOTHERHOOD

The opening chapter outlines the problem that Black South African Women encounter as females; and this includes married women, single mothers, widows and spinsters.

An appropriate starting-point is a review of the traditional roles played by the South African black mother. Essentially, she is cast in two major roles that of a wife and especially if she has children; that of a mother. This means that the primary focus of her concern is on marriage, her matrimonial home and children. As a mother, she is the primary custodian of the cherished values of her society, principally through the life-preserving activities of procreation which means "having as many children as she possibly can". The Black South African women lives up to this cultural expectation by having an average of ten to twelve children. For most, however, high infant mortality is noticed. Many of these women die at delivery or soon after at period because of inadequate and poor medical services. Besides, if one woman is unfortunate or unequal to the task, then another is easily brought in to carry on from where the first one had failed and died. And so, all women are destined by society to carry on this important limiting role. And the problem of barrenness is a problem that affect

the married couple as much as it affects their neighbors and relatives. As Flora Nwapa puts it:

> They did not see the reason why Adizwa should not marry another woman since, according to them, Efuru was a man since she could not produce. (*Efuru* , *24*)

This quotation expresses the gossip from Efuru's neighbors. She does not conceive after a year of her marriage. Her neighbors do not understand why Adizwa does not get married to another woman since in most African societies especially in South African society, when a woman does not give birth to a child, her husband is expected to marry another wife, who may give him children. And so, all women are destined by society to carry on this important limiting role.

The woman is expected to play the roles of mother, housewife and companion in this order. The father of course, is the bread-winner first and his domestic interests come last. He is seen as having a duty to support the wife. The wife is seen as having a duty to keep the house. The connection between the husband's financial support and the wife's housework is further obscured by the fact that the standard of living of the wife seems to be inversely related to the amount of housework she does. Those who do not do the housework have the

highest standard of living. Many of those who do the housework have the lowest standard of living. The monetary contributions of the husband are in most situations not connected to the performance of the housework by the wife. After all, if she stops doing the housework the marriage will probably end. So, there is in reality an exchange of the wife's housework for the husband's continuance in the marriage and for continuing to supply her with room and other benefits.

As a mother, the south African black woman's primary role is procreation-the making of babies, babies and more babies until she exhausts all the babies in her womb. For, in fact, through conditioning she often forgets, how and when to stop. Society does not only expect her to have as many babies as reside in her womb. She expected clearly and ambiguously to have as many male children as possible. In other words, having male children becomes the signal achievement through which she can raise her head high and feel a real sense of success and fulfillment. She is responsible for the sex of the offspring. Moreover, she is to blame if they turn out to be girls. In this case, for mothers who by conditioning from birth have low self-esteem, will unwillingly transmit the same discriminatory attitude to their own children. In other words, they feel immensely fulfilled when they have male children and they are disappointed when female offspring arrive. What is evident from all this is that the South African society prescribes to the black woman the narrow role of helpmate and

mother. In other words, her fulfillment as a human being is measured by the number of children especially males, she bears.

The mother who does the work for a whole family, husband and three or more children has a titanic job under present conditions. If she is fortunate enough to be abnormally strong, she will manage to keep up with it, as long as her daily routine is not checked by some unusual misfortune. But if the ordinary round is harder than her body is strong, her health must surely suffer with the result that she will find the course more and more difficult to hold, the harder it will become a circle of peculiar and tragic viciousness. This can be seen in Aunt Liza's tiredness as in the following lines:

> I reached home near sunset. Aunt Liza was still at her wash-tab. She straightened her back painfully. I dumped the sacks near the fire. Though the day was not hot, sweat dripped from her face. Her eyes were bloodshot. The top of her dress clung damply to her body and was wet under her arms. I noticed the thickness of her arms, and her big hands that were pitted with being in water the whole day, white as a sheet and swollen to twice their seize. A tired smile softened her face. *(Tell Freedom, 22)*

For the majority of women under review, the ordinary routine seems to be as follows : most of them get up early in the morning. If their husband and sons are miners, they may have to get up at four-possibly earlier, to make breakfast for those members of the family. The same woman who does this has got a young child or even a baby who wakes up early; and sleeping in the same room will in no case give his mother much peace after six in the morning. If there is a suckling baby as well-and it must be remembered that the woman seven or eight children before the age of thirty five has never been without a tiny baby or a very young child , she will have to nurse him at least as late as ten in the night. There are many complaints of children who for some reasons or other disturb the night's rest. Sleeplessness is not often spoken because it is considered as a trouble, but is quite clear that a good night's rest in a ventilated room and in a comfortable, well-covered bed, is practically unknown to these mothers. As Abrahams says:

> A thin, dark woman with long black hair sat propped in an old bed in the far corner of the room. The bed was covered with pieces of rags. In her arms, the woman held a tiny baby, rocking it gently. The woman's black, melancholy eyes were huge in her small, drawn

Moreover, a woman can be accustomed to little food because it is scarce.

Once she is up, there is no rest after dinner. She is on her legs the whole time. She has to get her husband off to work, the children washed, dressed and sent to school-if they have got the chance to go there. If she has a large family or even the average family of this whole group four or five children, she is surely very poor and therefore lives in a very bad house, or house extremely inadequate to fit for her needs. To this situation, Lee describes how an unsuitable place prevents him from (doing) washing himself easily. He asserts that

> I got the soap and towel and went down the stairs. The stairs were steep, narrow and short. In places a stair was broken and had been covered with a thin plank that sagged as my weight came down on it. Once I nearly slipped. I grabbed the banister. It moved outward, dangerously. At the bottom of the stairs I turned left into a little dark passage. I fumbled in the dark till I found a door … The yard was tiny: no more than six yards wide, and just as long. And in it, taking up half the space, was a high pile of junk: twisted by cycle wheels, old tyres….rags and bones; much other rubbish beyond

recognition … I tucked the towel into my shirt

collar and washed. Going back I bumped

into an old Indian in the dark passage.

(Tell Freedom, 44-45)

This quotation gives an idea that the mother is doing her household chores in a such inadequate place. Her washing up will not only be heavy, but also will have to be done under bad conditions. She will have to go up and down to get her water and again to empty it away. When she wants to prepare food, she has to heat it on the open fire, and she has to look after the baby at the same time. When this is done, she must clean the house. If she has the average family, the rooms are very full of beds and this will make her cleaning much more difficult than if she has twice the number of rooms with half the amount of furniture in each. She lacks the utensils too; and lacking any means to get hot water except by the pot on the fire, she will be as careful as possible not to waste a drop. The school-children will be back for their dinner soon after twelve. So, she must begin her cooking in good time. Great difficulties confront her here, she has got no more than one pot and so even if she may be fortunate in having some proper sort of cooking store, it is impossible to cook or dinner as it should be cooked, slowly and with vegetables separately. She has nowhere to store food, or if there is store room, it is inevitably in the only living room and probably next to the fire place. As Lee comments:

> Our things were piled in a corner near my mother's bed, which the old man had set up and made. Maggie went to the window tore off the paper, and opened it.*(Tell Freedom, 56)*

Conditions are so bad in this respect that she must go out in the middle of her work to look for what to prepare for dinner. The baby like herself is locked into the four walls of the kitchen during the whole day. Dinner may last from twelve till three because her husband or child at work have quite different hours to come home. Very often she does not sit down herself to meals. The serving of five or six or other people demands so much jumping up and down that she finds it easier to take her meals standing. If she is nursing a baby, she will sit down for that, and this way gets more rest. Sometimes the heat and the stuffiness of the kitchen in which she has spent almost all her morning takes her off her food, and she does not feel inclined to eat at all, or only a bite when the others have already finished and gone away.

Then comes the same process of washing up, only a little more difficult because dinner is a greater meal than breakfast. Most of time, the children do not give her the opportunity for leisure, for there is sewing, mending and knitting to be done for them, and besides there is always the shopping to be done. So, unless there is necessity to go out she would rather on most days stay indoors. And she cannot have any clothes to go out in-clothes are a great difficult or practically an impossibility. Then, comes tea, first her children and then her husband's. Thus, the mother's work gives her no autonomy, it is not directly

useful to society, it does not open out on the future, it produces nothing. As a mother, she experiences the loss of some very basic freedoms-the freedom to leave the house, the freedom to go to bed at night.

Another particular form of oppression suffered by women especially mothers in South Africa, is the system of migrant labour. The fact that the system of migrant labour effectively destroys families is widely recognised. In the migrant labour, mothers have to look after children alone. In this way, they have no chance to be with their husbands and enjoy basic human rights, they have no chance for anything else. All this means that under migrant labour, the mothers are condemned to raise children virtually single-handed with only little help from elderly or sick relatives. They suffer long, wasting years of loneliness as their husbands appear rarely only to be driven by hardship to depart on contract works once more after a few weeks. It is very hard to be separated from the husband every two years. This causes many problems among families, this may lead to separation in that you may find a woman who can be tempted to get pregnant from another man or the man can find another woman.

Besides mothers have to suffer from their husband's death caused by the wars and other brutalities that take place in the course of the apartheid system. Consequently, The mothers become widows and have to raise their children alone. And raising children in any society can be a nightmare especially under the apartheid where the economic security, is hardly attained. For the vast

majority it is never achieved at all. Most South African black families, live below the officially established poverty datum line, itself inadequate for sustaining living. Salealo Maredi describes a family he knows where the mother tries to support the family of five children by taking jobs here and there. They rent out one of their two tiny rooms to Salaelo's cousin. " I didn't believe my eyes when I saw those kids. I said to myself, what is the use of bringing children into the world, into this misery" (*Soweto Remembered, 86*).

To show of these children's misery to Salaelo, his cousin brings food for the children. Whenever the two men eat, they have to leave some scraps of eggs and a slice of bread on the stove. Afterwards, they watch the children's response from behind the curtain of the cousin's room. The starving children jump from under the table where they slept on on the cement floor covered by a torn blanket. They fight for the bread until there are only crumbs.

It is no wonder that many single mothers require welfare services but as Black mothers, they cannot get any help from these welfare services. As housewives, they must leave their children at home during the day because there are no centers to look after them. They have to get out and look for jobs and if they get it, then they have to start early. They have to work for the white housewives. They have to leave their children at home. They come home after work, find their houses dirt; they have to clean the children. They have stayed hungry the whole day. When they come home they do not know whether their children have eaten. Most of the times the children go to the dust bins to look for

food. So, single black mothers often face intense pressures, they must eat; must clothe their children and themselves and they have a child to care for. Consequently, single mothers have demands on their time that are difficult to meet. If a single mother works full time, her free time is not really sufficient to accomplish the housekeeping and the personal chores parents have to do. Employed single mothers have relatively no rest and there is an impossibility of leisure and they lack opportunities of relief from the rigors of the jobs, house keeping and child care. Even when the single mother earns a wage that can be above the average for the black male workers, she generally cannot use her income to buy services that would save her own time and allow her more attention to her job. One woman remarks that" it's hard when you come from a schedule where you work hours, you take fantastic strips and you order fifty-dollar bottles of wine" (*Being all things, 110*). Most of her tasks cannot be fulfilled, such as managing the household because she has got no time and she comes back home very late and she is also very tired since she has walked long distance and she had done hard work.

The single mother's income is not sufficient for her needs such as renting a big and good house that will fit her and her children. Her children are then separated from her. They are sent to relatives or other persons who accept to support them. All this is due to the absence of bread-winner. The children face many problems here. They are not comfortable at all, they are first of all bored by the unfamiliar area in which they are going to live.

Lee describes the situation as follows:

> I woke in a strange place. Fear took hold of me. I longed the familiar, for my mother and for the home I knew. For days, till, I grew used to the people with whom I lived and familiar with the place, I was miserable and painfully homesick.*(Tell Freedom,15)*

The above quotation means that it is painful for a child to be separated from his parents, relatives and his familiar place as well. And to be sent to another place becomes a nightmare for the child in that it will be a major problem for him to adapt himself to the new environment in which he is going to live. He will find other people, he will also find new things and he will have to change everything.

Second, the children separated from their mothers are frustrated by the way in which they are treated by the people who welcome them. Lee describes the way in which treated by the woman he calls Aunt Liza, since she is not his mother, she gives him hard work. She does not take into account his young age. For instance, she sends him to go to look for dung far away and it's quite understandable that it is a tiresome way but he tells us that he forgets his tiredness when he remembers that Aunt Liza is going to hit him when he lingers to bring dung. When he remembers her very tough arms, he is very frightened

for this he asserts that: " I had noticed Aunt Liza's arms, but thinking of them, they become huge clubs swinging at me. I shot across the veldt after Andries forgetful of my tiredness. (*Tell Freedom, 20*)".

The woman also sends him to fetch water in an unfamiliar area where in order to get water like other women and children, he must work the well. But he, himself does not know how to do it. The well is up the street. He takes the pails and marches out of the gate. Women and children are already there. He is the stranger and everyone turns to look at him. Fear takes him and he begins to look steadily at the ground. He describes how he gets an accident from the well

A little boy, no bigger than myself, arrived after me. At last, all the others had their water and went and only the boy and I were left. It was my turn but I did not know how to work the well. I looked at the boy. You go first, I said. He started towards the handle then changed his mind. No it is your turn. I had hoped to watch from him. The bucket stood on the edge of the well. It was weighted with an iron bar. I took hold of the bundle and began to unwind the rope. The bucket, the boy said. It was still on the mouth of the well. A long strand of the rope dangled down into the darkness of the well. I let go of the handle, leaned forward, and pushed the bucket in. As I straightened up, the rope jacked taut, the handle swung in a down-ward arc. It struck me on the mouth, then on the

upper part of the chest. I fell on my back. My jaw was paralysed. I swallowed blood. (*Tell Freedom, 17*).

Whether this child may get an accident or not no one cares. And even Aunt Liza does not care about it at all. Instead of being sympathetic she becomes angry with him by stalking up to the well, ranging at the top of her voice.

> The first thing you'll learn here is that time's not to be wasted. I'll take the skin off your damn back if you play around when I send you for something! When'll I finish all that damn washing! You'll have to learn or I'll damn kill you! (18)

She does not ask what happened to the child but she thinks that he was playing. Consequently, she is insulting him whereas his body hurts very much. The child has not got anyone to take care of him this is because he is not with his mother who can take care of him. This is a frustration for him.

In addition, the single mother's economic deprivation pushes the children to do job like carrying baskets and bags for white women. These children are market carries. But no one can do such a job without a permit.

The children are confused if they have got no permit and they are not able to afford it because, they are in an extreme poverty. They have to do the job hiding themselves because at any moment they may be caught either by the police or by their fellows blacks who own permits. If they are caught by the police, they are put in jail. And on the other hand, if they are caught by those

market carriers who own permits they are beaten for they are in their territory. So, the children who have not got permits, are always in an ambiguous situation. In the passage below Lee is looking for an opportunity to work

Carry your bags, missus …..
The old woman frowned
at her marketing list and
shook her head. I shot away
to another likely customer.
Carry your bags, missus….
Three other boys jostled
with me for the job. A market
policemen approached down
the line of vegetables stalls.
We none of us had permits
to operate as market carriers.
We could not afford the fee.
If the boys with permits caught
us, they gave us a beating. (133)

Normally this kind job is for adults especially men because the bags that the children carry may be heavy so that the children cannot be able to carry them but they are obliged to do it in order get money. Most do not always get the money they want in the sense that there are some white women who do not pay

them. The women are physically destroying the children since they do not take into consideration of their age. Moreover, these children are accused of theft. The following lines illustrate this situation :

> For three months, after giving up all hope of a messenger's job, I had carried baskets and bags for mean white women for coppers they gave grudgingly. In that time, I had been accused of theft, I had been called all pet names of abuse reserved by whites for blacks, I had carried heavy loads to the tram stop and women had conveniently forgotten to pay me. (*Tell, 138*)

Concerning the children brought up by a single mother, there is a concern that they will be prone to higher rates of delinquency and poor health. Lee, Fatty, Dinny and Lippy made a gang, they organize themselves so that they have to go to steal to the Indian stalls. The lines below depict a case of delinquency in this way:

> The gang met that night and went stealing. Where do we steal? Lippy asked. Twenty fourth street, I said. Come on! We went down, looking at the stalls. Saw one with an old Indian in attendance That seemed the easiest. And it was well stocked. That's it. I said. (73)

However, the poverty that goes beyond with such a status can blight children's health, attitudes and mental performance. In addition, they are harmed by living only with their mothers.

Black women especially young women and widows prefer to move to the cities because of the dislocation of rural area. They are seeking to escape arranged marriages and domineering mothers-in –law. The widow remarries to a deceased husband's brother. Widows are at a disadvantage in their families. It must be remembered that the black mother's economy depends on wage-earnings or a necessary supplement to agriculture, the loss of the husband's earnings worsens the widow's situation economically. The luckiest is an elderly or old widow who can carry on the role of her late husband, with her adult son to contribute as a wage-earner. Both economic and social problems face the widow of a man who had neither a homestead nor is heir to a homestead. Her status is anomalous in itself. The blacks have no institutionalised levirate and seem never to have one. The widow may have love affairs with other men but conduct them discreetly to respect the husband's relatives. This sexual succession does not seem to be comfortable for the widow. Sometimes a young widow with a growing son makes a special place because she does not like to take her boy away to another place where he has no inheritance. But many widows who are still young choose to go back to their own parents, but the widow's presence may soon become an irritant similar to that of a mature unmarried daughter with status of rivalries vis-à-vis the family.

There is another added complication with regard to taking lovers. The Christian expectation that a widow should remain chaste; that is short of remarriage. It runs directly counter to the society's expectation that she should have regular and authorized lovers. This dash of two moralities has never been resolved. Widows in the country do, in many cases, take lovers but with extra burden of shame and secrecy. A woman in the country decides to move to East London because she thinks that in the town it will be easy for her to support herself. And she wishes to come to East London at least a short time she asserts:

> My husband's death ended my life at
> his homestead. I did not like
> returning to my
> own people's place, for both my father and
> my brother work in Johannesburg. When my
> young child was weaned I left both children
> with my mother's sister and came as a
> domestic servant. After my husband's death I
> first tried staying on at his place with his elder
> brother and family. The wife of his elder
> brother bullied, and used to order me about
> as if she were a mother-in-law instead of
> only a sister-in-law. Here, in East London,

> I can work and support myself and my little son. I snuggled from 1953 to 1957 to continue life at my late husband's homestead. Since I had nobody to help me it was extremely difficult. In the end I left my three children with my own brother and came here.
>
> (*Townsmen or Tribesmen, 242*)

In *Tell Freedom*, Granny Petersen is praying for a woman who had left her son and two young girls and gone off with another man to the pleasures of the city. " you know what to do with such as her, o Lord, don't you. You will punish her and show her that sin does not pay (95)".

To be a widow in the country is to be made responsible for all the misfortunes of the neighborhood. A widow is always being suspected. Similar to the disabilities of being a widow in the country are those of being a divorced wife. What is commoner among a wife who deserts without formal divorce. Such women can go back to their parental homes where they are allowed to take lovers, but going to town offers more hopeful prospects for independence. But unfortunately, the government's policy is to provide single quarters for male workers from the homelands in the urban areas, but not for women. The apartheid system recognizes and exploits the fact that women are home-makers

whether or not they are also workers. By systematically denying them the right to settle in towns.

Concerning unmarried mothers, they decide to go to town since they are covered by shame and disgrace because of the pregnancy they have got without husbands. Maybe, they are seduced by men who are married and they cannot marry them. The unmarried mother stays at home until the child is weaned. Her chances of getting married are very small. Indeed, as she is now an unmarried mother she can no longer mix with the girls of her own age, which makes her very unhappy. All these reasons push an unmarried mother away from home. She feels that she must go to town. Above all, there is anger of father, brothers and friends generally in that maternity is respectable only for a married woman. The unmarried mother remains an offence to public opinion, and her child is a severe handicap for her life.

The mother in general and the single mother in particular has got a great burden in this system of apartheid. This system of oppression works together with the black custom to oppress the black woman. The mother faces many problems when she has to do the household chores alone for the whole family. And for the single mother, the situation becomes worse because she and her children are to live above the poverty line. There is a chain of problems they have to endure.

CONCLUSION

This work set out to prove the hypothesis that the South African black woman finds herself at the bottom of the prevailing social injustice and denigration. All along the discussion it was shown that beside the denigration and subjugation suffered by the black community as a whole, black women are maginalised as a female group.

The discussion focused on portraying the black woman's life during the system of apartheid by which whites effectively and systematically enacted their prejudices and their ideas concerning the inferiority of blacks into law. This resulted in a system of segregation which denies the blacks' rights, guarantees them inferior schools, denies them equal protection under the laws, deprives them of equal employment opportunities, excludes them from public places like hotels, places of amusement and most hospitals, and segregates them on trains, buses and street cars. On the other hand, the system does not exclude them from paying taxes or from defending their country in times of war. On the larger canvas from which Peter Abraham's life is drawn, the villain is to be recognized as a society which reduces men to impotence, women to lives of boredom, and children to victimization by their fathers' lust and impotence.

Furthermore, belonging to the two groups, the first being that of the black community as a whole and the second one being that of female protagonists who are treated as inferior both by the white and black communities, black women in

South Africa are doubly invisible. They are subjected to devised restrictions against blacks and to those against women. And black women suffer not only because they have to raise their children alone, but also because in no area of life have they ever been permitted to attain higher levels of status as white women. Moreover, black women have profoundly to see the world through the males' eyes, that is , seeing women cast only in the subordinate and inferior positions throughout history, seldom, if ever, learning about women's achievements. Therefore, black girls are conditioned to limit their own life, goals and therefore cannot develop self-esteem. In infancy, childhood and youth lay the sources of many of the most intimate personal feelings, and the needs and desires of the adult. In fact, childhood is the matrix within which the sense of self and the shaping consciousness and convictions are formed, not only because parents set about to inculcate into their children particular modes of behaviour values and beliefs that they respect, but also because the accumulation of personal experiences in the earliest years of life have an enduring influence upon the resulting attitudes and temperaments of people in adulthood.

Our intention was not only that of portraying the hardships experienced by women in patriarchal communities, but also that of contributing to change what these communities hold as universal truth about hierarchical relationships between men and women. In this regard, this work is about survival, of a denigrated group of females who are doubly victimized. In this sense, the work is revolutionary. The researcher expresses the strong will not to be defeated. He

expresses the idea that one of the first things that people must internalise deep in their blood and bones is the understanding that although they may encounter many defeats, they must not be defeated. If life teaches us anything it may be that it is necessary to suffer some defeats. It is therefore necessary, to be tough enough to endure pain, to seek a way of coming out of one's sufferings instead of being discouraged or surrender. Most of all, one must never cease in the battle for life. Peter Abraham's shows us that one must learn to submit oneself, so as to resist tomorrow. Whites make clear that they are masters of the world, as the earth and all its wealth belong to them. They speak the language of physical strength, the language of force. And he, himself submits to their superior strength but according to him "submission can be a subtle thing. A man can submit today in order to resist tomorrow (*Tell freedom, 224*)".

Hence, this study is an appeal addressed to contemporary black communities to review their conception of gender relationships. Women are particularly invited to stand up and fight for their rights. They have to bear in mind that passivity vis-à-vis this issue will keep them under the weight of patriarchal egocentric treatment.

The work is amongst other contributions for the making of a new society wherein males and females will be governed by equal rights, and fulfilling their respective duties with pride.

Contemporary generations of literary scholars are invited to participate in this course by correcting wrong assumptions set up by early thinkers who favoured males in placing them above females. Their contribution to demystify this wrong belief will help women to emerge and participate actively in the building of a new society where everybody feels protected and recognized by other members of the society. Future research should dig deep into the matter for exhaustive achievements of black woman's rights in previously subjugated nations, and in the world as a whole Modern governments are appealed to help in sensitising women to massively attend school, learn about their rights as human beings, and denounce hardships inflicted to them by egocentric patriarchal society.

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