

THE PARADOX OF POWER IN YVONNE VERA'S NOVELS

BY

MURUNDU ROSEMARY OKAYO

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN LITERATURE, DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE,
LINGUISTICS, FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND FILM STUDIES**

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

MOI UNIVERSITY

2021

DECLARATION

Declaration by the Candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without prior written permission of the author and/or Moi University.

Murundu Rosemary Okayo SASS/DPHIL/LIT/08/11	Date
--	-------------

Declaration by Supervisors

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Prof. Peter Simatei Department of Literature, Linguistics, Foreign Languages and Film Studies School of Arts and Social Sciences Moi University Eldoret, Kenya	Date
--	-------------

Prof. Hellen R.L. Shigali Department of Literature, Linguistics, Foreign Languages and Film Studies School of Arts and Social Sciences Moi University Eldoret, Kenya	Date
--	-------------

DEDICATION

To the memory of my loving late parents, Alex and Philomena, my precious family and finally, all men and women who are struggling to find their rightful spaces in life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Undertaking academic research of this level and magnitude is an onerous task that requires selfless support in various ways. I, therefore, acknowledge the following for their invaluable support:

Prof. Peter Simatei and Prof. Hellen R.L. Shigali for their invaluable support, advice and direction. It is with their encouragement, criticism, patience and material support that this work has come to be.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Professors Peter Amuka, Christopher Joseph Odhiambo, Tom Michael Mboya, Doctors Rose Opondo, Samuel Ndogo, Evans Mugarizi, Basil Joseph Okongo, Robert Oduori, Caroline Sambai, and all lecturers including Tobias Otieno and Collins Mumbo.

A special mention goes to Dr. Rose Akinyi Opondo and Dr. Charles Kebaya for always being there for me whenever I needed audience and encouragement.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my husband and children, brother Callistus, my late parents, relatives and friends for their understanding, support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The traumatic atmosphere characterized by power manipulations and its destructive aftermath that runs through the selected five novels; *Nehanda*, *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue*, *Butterfly Burning*, and *The Stone Virgins*, has prompted this study to address the narrative complexities of trauma, desperation, bitterness, and painful circumstances through which power discourse unfolds to expose the predicament of both men and women in colonial Zimbabwe. Vera's deployment of such strategies depicts oppressed people who will do anything to reverse their circumstances in order to realize their freedom and independence. The study investigates the extent of the impact of power as exerted through the subversive narratives employed by Vera's characters in their attempts to reverse their oppressive situations. It seeks to find out the possibilities of an integrative effect of power appropriation on the character's actions. The study is premised on the assumption that power is appropriated and exercised in order to liberate and achieve goals. The study is guided by various strands of the feminism perspectives whose key tenet states that 'all people, women, and men are politically, socially and economically equal' and they should be validated as individuals and not groups (Bressler, 2007:182). This tenet is crucial in the understanding of the discourse that motivates the deployment of the subversive narratives as strategies of resisting oppression and of self-empowerment. The study also relies on Michel Foucault's perspectives on power to understand its role, use, and impact. It employs a qualitative research methodology that enables the identification of the character's subversive actions, motivations, and impact. It establishes that the discourse of power in Vera's novels centers primarily on the problematic issues of oppression, domination, and subordination by both colonial and patriarchy to represent the historical suffering of the people of Zimbabwe. This stance provides the reader with important background information and context for an appropriate understanding of the texts. The deployment of the colonial narratives, especially on the men, serves to explain the predicament of the women as they suffer both the colonial projected oppression as well as that of patriarchy. The chapters include an introduction that provides an anchor to the study, chapter two: the female body as the site of power manipulations, which explores the politics of sex and race against the backdrop of colonial evils and patriarchal domination. Chapter three: the subversive narratives as strategies of resistance that interrogates the deviant social acts as exuded by Vera's female characters in their quest for freedom. Chapter four: colonial subjugated male which focuses on Vera's male characters whose frustration is the cause of the double suffering of female characters, while the fifth chapter discusses the nature of power as a paradox. Chapter six provides the conclusion, findings and recommendations. The study concludes that an appropriation of power and its manipulation through deviant social acts as strategies for self-empowerment is counterproductive and, therefore, should not suffice as a transformative possibility for the re-enactment of a lived life. It validates the study's question as to whether there is an integrative effect of power appropriation on the character's actions. This research contributes to the author's concern with the subversive narratives as strategies of resistance and the subsequent empowerment by establishing that they only give short-lived self-gratification as a prelude to self-destruction which is a contradiction to conventional expectation, what this study refers to as *The paradox of power*. The research has also pointed to a new trajectory in the understanding of power narratives. It concludes that Vera traces the genesis of power manipulations to the characters' dehumanizing circumstances and their quest for freedom and relevance.

OPERATIONAL TERMS

Paradox

Paradox is derived from a Greek word “paradoxon” which means contrary to expectations, existing beliefs or perceived opinion. It is a statement that appears to be self-contradictory but which includes some latent truths. Sometimes scholars use the paradox concept to illustrate an opinion that is contrary to the expected traditional ideas to make their readers think innovatively. In literature, the word paradox is defined as an anomalous juxtaposition of incongruous ideas for the sake of striking exposition or unexpected insight. In this research, the word has been used to explain and illustrate the elusive nature of the concept of power. The intention is to give an unexpected insight into an alternative understanding of the concept of power. Contrary to the traditional perception in the understanding of power; as control over, or as Robert Greene (1998) defines it in his book, *The 48 Laws of power*, as the measure of the degree of control you have over circumstances in your life and the actions of the people around you, this research, through a critical reading of Yvonne Vera’s fiction gives an alternative understanding of power as a paradox.

Power

The term power has been defined in various ways by different scholars. An example is Robert Greene’s definition as, “the measure of the degree of control you have over circumstances in your life and the actions of the people around you” (Greene, 1998:1).

In his book *The Prince* (1500), Niccolo Machiavelli defines power as involving force. He says, “It was better to be widely feared than to be greatly loved; a loved ruler retains Authority by obligation while a feared leader rules by fear of punishment. That any means can be used to maintain political power and that the end justifies the means.

Marx Weber (1938) in his book, *Sociology of Religion*, defines power as, a basic force in social relationships or the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realizing them.

Dacher Keltner (2003) in his journal, *Power, Approach, and Inhibition*, defines power as, “capacity to make a difference in the world, particularly by stirring others in other social networks” (p.23)

In the above definitions, just to mention a few, the word power denotes some form of force in its exercising for the realization of achievements. This research has interrogated how power is exercised in Vera’s fiction to identify the manner of its exercising and to what extent the achievements are realized if any. This is informed by the fact that in Vera’s fiction, both the male and female characters are involved in power struggle through various strategies in order to better their lives.

Narrative space

The phrase is used in this research to define a site on which events are enacted. In the context of Vera’s novels, the narrative space refers to both the body of a character on which an event is enacted and the environment in which they take place. This concept constitutes a significant part of this research based on Vera’s fiction.

Subversive narrative

In this research, the phrase is used to refer to the deviant social acts of Vera’s characters that are contrary to the conventionally accepted norms in the African society, such as coercion, rejection, incestuous rape, body mutilation, exploitation of labour, murder, unjust forceful eviction among others that are enacted by her characters to navigate their desired goals, freedom and significance, and which form the narrative structures of her five novels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
OPERATIONAL TERMS.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.1.1 Introduction	1
1.1.2 Types of social power in the society	7
1.1.8 Power in Society.....	12
1.2 Statement of the problem	26
1.3 Objectives of the study	27
1.4 Research questions	27
1.5 Significance of the study	28
1.6 Scope of the study	30
1.7 Review of Related Literature	31
1.8 Theoretical Framework	54
1.9 Research Methodology.....	73
1.9.1 Identification of relevant information	74
1.9.2 Analysis Procedure.....	75
1.9.3 Chapter Divisions	76
1.9.4 Conclusion.....	77
CHAPTER TWO	79
THE FEMALE BODY AS SITE OF POWER MANIPULATIONS	79
2.1 Introduction	79
2.2 The subjectification of the female body.....	80
2.3 The Ills of Motherhood and patriarchy	99
2.4 The female body as a site of colonization.....	104
2.5 Conclusion.....	112
CHAPTER THREE	114
SUBVERSIVE NARRATIVES AS STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE.....	114
3.1 Introduction	114

3.2 Power to destroy or empower; a case of Vera's female characters.....	117
3.3 Loneliness, Torture and Murder	138
3.4 Sex as a strategy of self-assertion	145
3.5 Conclusion.....	147
CHAPTER FOUR.....	149
COLONIAL SUBJUGATION AND APPROPRIATION OF POWER.....	149
4.1 Introduction	149
4.2 The Narrative Interspersion of the Traditional and Colonial Power Systems..	154
4.3 Desperation for self-worth and Relevance	161
4.4 Self-Exorcism and Patriarchal Relevance	174
4.5 Colonial Power and Male Instrumentalisation	179
4.6 Conclusion.....	185
CHAPTER 5 FIVE	186
POWER AS A PARADOX	186
5.1 Introduction	186
5.2 The Challenge of Traditional Power Centers	192
5.3 Power Struggle for Self Vindication	205
5.4 The Power of Self Determination.....	213
5.5 Momentary Survival.....	221
5.6 Conclusion.....	238
CHAPTER SIX	245
6.1 CONCLUSION: THE POWER GAME COMPLEXITIES	245
6.2 Research Outcomes	249
6.2.1 Objective One: The female body as the site of power manipulation.....	249
6.2.2 Objective Two: Subversive Narratives as Strategies of Resistance	253
6.2.3 Objective Three: Colonial Subjugation and power appropriation.....	257
6.2.4 Objective Four: Paradox Nature of power.....	258
6.3 Suggestions for Further Research	261
REFERENCES.....	262

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 Introduction

The existence of power discourse in Yvonne Vera's novels creates significant connectivity between Vera's world of fiction and the physical world of the living. This statement is underscored by the fact that power in whichever form is perceived in society as precious and useful in regulating social relationships. To this extent, power is revered and idolized by those deemed to be powerful and coveted by those considered deprived of it. This line of thought is exemplified by the events and happenings in colonial Zimbabwe, as demonstrated in Vera's fictional writings. Vera's work stands out as a peculiar fiction whose structure reposes on the complex power play between colonial masters and the natives on the one hand and the men and women on the other. Pushed by oppressive conditions born of untold hardships and sufferings, Vera's characters have resorted to power appropriations and manipulations through deviant social acts to disembark those spaces. Michel Foucault validates this stance in his work, *Subject and Power*, where he defines the term power as designating relationships between partners (p.786). Foucault's definition is informed by the fact that power only exists when it is exercised, where a person exercises it through action over another or against another. By choosing to use power discourse in her fiction to explain the relationship between her characters and the oppressive circumstances they live in due to the imbalance of power occasioned either by the patriarchy or colonial system, Vera is not only appreciating the usefulness of power, but she is also contending that power can also destroy. The presence of power

appropriation and its manipulation through deviant social acts in her selected novels under study depicts men and women whose desperation to vacate their oppressive predicaments is so dire that they will use any form of power strategy to realize their goals. However, Vera points out that the very strategies that her characters deployed do not seem to have served their interests. This is what this study refers to as *The paradox of power*.

This chapter lays the foundation upon which this thesis is anchored as the study seeks to understand the significance of power and its paradoxical nature in Yvonne Vera's fiction. The chapter initially highlights the fundamentals that pave the way to the thrust of the study's ultimate goals: the nature and meaning of power as a paradox. The chapter also outlines the important pillars that hold up the structure of the study. They include the background of the study, the research problem, the objectives that the study seeks to achieve and their guiding questions, the significance and the scope of the study, a section on a review of the related literature with gaps to fill, the conceptual framework that guides the analysis and the methodology that indicates the identification of the appropriate discourse and their manner of analysis.

The concept of power in Yvonne Vera's fiction resonates with the patriarchal and colonial power struggles as portrayed in the colonized states in the African society, especially at the post-colonial period. Writing at such a time in history, Vera depicts oppressive circumstances of both men and women against the background of colonial invasion of the African continent. Fear, desperation, and a state of helplessness engulfed the people causing them to adopt different modes of self-assertion as strategies of attaining power for patriarchal relevance, freedom, and independence. Bertrand Russell as quoted in Keltner (2003) recognizes power as a fundamental concept that governs social life. His argument is that power is the basic force that

drives social relationships. He suggests that individuals, whether or not in authority, are involved in daily life struggles for some form of power that would relieve them from challenges in life. Prompted either by the desire to retain patriarchal status quo that celebrates the male gender or the desire to resist oppression and attain self-independence, Vera's characters have resorted to power appropriation and manipulations through actions that seem to subvert the societal norms which this study reads as subversive narratives. The narratives form part of the thematic structure of the novels and their artistic elements. The rich language and style used in the novels draw the reader to the complex world of power. The power manipulation constructions in Vera's five novels under study expose a cruel oppressive world where both men and women navigate their lives to perceived freedom through subversive actions of power. The presence of these painful, traumatizing instances prompted the study to investigate the significance of the subversive power strategies in Yvonne Vera's fiction. It interrogates the impact of power as exerted through the subversive power narratives employed by Vera's characters in their attempts to reverse their oppressive, painful circumstances. The study intends to contribute to the author's concern with the subversive narratives as power strategies of resistance and liberation. The study attempts to understand the significance of power and to explore the power narratives that characterize gender relations in the same novels.

This research is premised on the assumption that individuals deemed powerful by the society largely appropriate power and use it to maintain their current status quo (Greene, 1998). They do this through power abuse and manipulations that manifest themselves in the form of coercion, exploitation, threats, punishments, and violence. Dacher Keltner (2003), who claims that our cultures' traditional understanding of power is influenced by the misunderstanding of how human nature shapes the power

dynamics, foregrounds this position. Keltner's argument is that, "The patriarchal authority is predicated on force, ruthlessness, and strategic coercion, shaped by Niccolo Machiavelli's book, *The Prince* (1532), (p. 267).

The argument propounded by Keltner is that Machiavelli unscrupulously intensified his political convenience to the disadvantage of social morality in order to ensure the utility of his government's oppressive policies. This approach became unpopular with the mass and continually sparked off resistance. They projected 'voices' of dissent and resistance through various methods in order to liberate themselves and exercise their basic human rights. It is within this framework that this research locates its problem and generates a significant number of novel hypotheses about other possibilities in the readings of power appropriations.

The interrogation is done through an exploration of gender relations and strategies of resistance adopted by Vera's characters. This chapter lays the foundation upon which this thesis is constructed. As the study seeks to understand the power concept in Vera's five novels, the chapter highlights the understanding of different types of power in the society in order to anchor the study's ultimate goal: the nature, use and meaning of power in Vera's fiction. The chapter also outlines links that put together the structure of the study, which include; a research problem, the objectives that the study seeks to achieve, review of related literature, the theoretical structure that guides the analysis and the methodology that indicates the relevant tools and techniques used to collect the appropriate data to be analyzed.

In their discussion on power and society, Lasswell and Kaplan (1950), the term power is understood not only to give high standing in the society but also to corrupt, dominate and torture. This pervasive nature of power makes it rather difficult to say

with specification what the term “power” signifies. The scenario has provoked a plethora of definitions of the term “power” from several scholars who have tended to define it according to the context in which it is used. Max weber (1975), in the context of social sciences, for instance, define power as “the ability to control others, events or resources to make happen what, in spite of obstacles, one wants to happen, resistance or opposition” (p.186). Webber’s postulations are reflective of the actions of Vera’s characters in their power struggle. In her fiction, Vera presents patriarchal ideologies that give the male gender absolute control of the female gender. In Vera’s *Butterfly Burning*, for example, Fumbatha’s control over Phephelaphi is such that she is not even allowed to apply for the nursing training.

The idea of Phephelaphi doing something that can liberate her from his confinement and control does not go well with Fumbatha. His argument is that Phephelaphi is well provided for by him. For him, all Phephelaphi requires is some form of shelter, food and a man like him to fulfill the requirements. In her representation of female characters, Vera argues that these characters require much more and she encourages moves such as that of Phephalaphi. Phephelaphi, through her subsequent actions, has demonstrated that women in her kind of circumstances can exercise any form of power “to get” what they want.

Underpinning his thoughts on social and political environments such as those discussed by Vera, Machiavelli (1532) argues that Power is about force, fraud, ruthlessness and strategic violence. Machiavelli’s argument seems to be in agreement with Weber’s notion on power. Both writers share the view that power exercising utilizes some form of force to achieve desired results. In their implications, the force can be applied through any mode of action that is necessary to break the resistance.

The foregoing arguments reflect the colonial treatment of the people of Zimbabwe at the period captured by Vera in her writing.

The force and ruthlessness employed by the colonial troops enabled them to not only capture and kill the leaders of the resisting people of Zimbabwe like Kaguthi and Nehanda, but also seize their socio-economic and political resources as well as exploit their labour. Robert Greene's (1998) observation that "power is a measure of the degree one has over circumstances in their lives and the actions of the people around them" contextualizes the impact of the convergence of power exercised by both colonialism and patriarchy. Greene's idea still attests to the fact that power exercising involves a certain amount of force and that that force determines the felt influence and outcomes.

The common factor in all the above definitions of power is that power entails force, control and influence over others. It portrays the perception of absolute authority and a strong desire to accomplish. These notions of power exemplify the actions of Vera's characters in her five novels. In her representation, Vera portrays a society riddled with an imbalance of power and its attendant ills. For instance, those with absolute authority over others use all manner of power modes to maintain the status quo while those under them also use whatever power action available to them to put up resistance to achieve their desired goals.

The above discussions on the 'true' signification of power lead this study to view power in the light of Keltner's definition of power. In his journal, *Approach and Inhibition*, he says that "Power is the capacity to alter other states by providing or withholding resources and administering punishments" (p, 267). The implied understanding in this definition is that power, like a drug that alters and controls the

systematic workings of a human body, alters and controls human behaviour and its attendant actions.

To this extent, individuals and groups who possess power can manipulate it to force out service from those considered powerless. This perception portrays power as absolute and corruptive. This is the kind of perception held by Niccolo Machiavelli (1532) and Robert Greene (1998) on power. For the two critics, attaining and retaining power requires force, deception, manipulation and coercion (p.267).

This perception of power has provoked general thinking of power as involving extraordinary acts of coercive force. It manifests itself through sites such as disciplined forces where decisive moves on battlefields are made, business rivalry among businessmen and many others in various sectors of life for both personal and group benefits. For a better understanding of the workings of power in society and the subsequent discussion of the same in Vera's texts, the study examines various types of power in society. These types of power are reflective of the kinds of power that Vera discusses in her hypothetical society and therefore initiates a relevant discourse on which the research is anchored.

1.1.2 Types of social power in the society

In society, individuals are usually considered either more or less powerful, depending on their power sources. The level of the value of the source of power influences the behavioural traits of individuals and impacts their actions, for example, A.P.Fiske (1992), Vasquez, Keltner, Ebenbach and Banaszynski, in Keltner, 2003:266), claim that the exercise of power is most evident in cultural values, morals, and attitudes within personal relations. Weber (1947) reinforces this line of thought when he

insinuates that authority, sometimes referred to as legitimate or positional power, is considered formal and is drawn from institutional roles like those played by patriarchy in patriarchal systems, imperialists, and other formal institutions.

Since authority is just one of the many forms of power, it is possible to have power in the absence of formal groups or institutions. Weber goes on to argue that power that is informed by the element of dominance is the power that is less sensitive to its means of acquisition, power where the end justifies the means. This kind of power is viewed by social psychologists John R.P French and Bertram Raven(1959), as falling under one of the following bases of power; coercion, expertise, reverent, authority and reward.

1.1.3 Coercion

According to the above scholars, entails what entails what?? the application of negative influences like the ability to demote or withhold rewards to elicit obedience and submission. These kinds of power, they argue, tend to elicit resentment and resistance from those who experience it. This study finds this kind of power relevant in the reading of instances of power exercising in Vera's fiction. Soldiers like Sibaso in Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, for instance, obediently and submissively fight the white man's battle against their own countrymen.

1.1.4 Expert power

In the thinking of French and Raven, expert power is power driven from an individual's skills and expertise. If effectively utilized, it earns those who possess it trust and respect, from those they serve. In their view, this kind of power is mainly operational within institutions and exercised by trained individuals. This is the kind of

power offered in training institutions like the nursing institution discussed in Vera's *Butterfly Burning*. Driven by a need to better her life, Phephelaphi defied Fumbatha's suggestions against the training and submitted her application for nursing training.

1.1.5 Reverent power

This type of power is closely linked to expert power. It is based on charisma and interpersonal skills due to specific personal traits, which earn individuals some form of admiration and create for them opportunities for interpersonal influence. According to these psychologists, evidence of this kind of power is usually found in nationalism and patriotism of visible personalities like sportsmen and women, those who excel in professions and occupations. Combined with other sources of power, it can give an individual great success if sensibly handled. This type of power is useful for this study in the discussion of various types of power represented in Vera's fiction.

1.1.6 Reward power

It is argued that reward power depends on the ability of the one who wields it to give incentives of appreciation to those who perform tasks as per the expectations. This kind of power is claimed to be less effective because it neither ensures complete control over the incentives given nor complete control over the people receiving the rewards. This form of power is more susceptible to abuse and manipulations than the others.

1.1.7 Authority

This type of power is also referred to as **legitimate power**. It is delegated to position holders within an organization. It is accompanied by various attributes that define the

kind of power one carries. This is also the kind of power that is used by the administration of dominant nations that are unsettled and on the move for more power. Such is evidenced in Vera's *Nehanda* where the queen of Britain sends out her agents to Zimbabwe to acquire her as her colony as a means of spreading out her power of domination. Mr. Browning, who is the queen's representative, administers the natives with the queen's delegated authority.

Given the above understanding of the various types of power, this study argues that the outcome of their appropriations remains uncertain due to individual character traits of those charged with the responsibilities and the environment in which they operate. The uncertainty of the outcome of power appropriation is explained by the fact that individual characters will react differently in a given situation owing to their character traits or personalities.

In his *poetics*, Aristotle initiated a discussion on the significance of character traits in literary art. His concept on the goodness of character points to human excellence or, as he claims in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is an excellence of the soul, moral virtue or simply a moral virtue (Aristotle, 349BC). This study appreciates Aristotle's perception as it gives an insight into the goodness of a character, which the study appropriates to claim that an individual's personality as well as the environment of operation, influences the impact of the power that they exercise. The study presupposes that character traits or personality based on the disposition of a character's mind and what they believe determines how they act. This position is demonstrated through Vera's individual characters. For instance, in *The Stone Virgins*, Sibaso's military training instrumentalised him to believe that his power

supremacy is validated through his deviant social acts; a fact that leaves him devastated when the opposite becomes the reality.

French and Raven's views strengthen this trajectory of thought as they acknowledge the complex nature of power and the fact that it can be exercised from various sources based on intentions and understandings (Barstow, 2008: 56). Other scholars like Rizzolatti (1996) also contribute to this line of thought on the power debate by arguing that "we are exquisitely social creatures and our survival depends on understanding the actions, intentions and emotions of other's" (p. 54).

These scholars argue that lives people live are informed by the nature of their interactions or how they relate with one another regardless of the type of power they wield. In his contribution to the debate of power, George Lakoff (2006) gives more insights when he suggests that many people, when asked about their understanding of power, usually respond through such reactions as; tightening up, turning away, shrinking or puffing up, getting ready to fight, angry, feeling manipulated, forced, aggressive, betrayed, disrespected or humiliated (p.55). He claims that this idea of power is what is generally transmitted culturally, experientially and systematically through two categories of people; powerful and powerless based on whether they have "force" and authority.

This type of power is the opposite of the concept of power as experienced by those who view themselves as less powerful. According to Kipnis's (1976) perspective, low power individuals attend to others more carefully to navigate more threatening social environments, whereas others attend to high power individuals more carefully (p. 267).

The notion in the foregoing debate is that power is not a preserve of any group or persons. The difference is in the source and manner of application of the possessed power. This understanding of power resonates with Michel Foucault's (1998) idea of power. He argues that power is everywhere because it comes from all over and that it is diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and regimes of truth (p.63). For him, we all possess some form of power based on the accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and "truth". He argues that since truth is subjective, individuals tend to wield power according to their truths. For instance, an individual may exercise the power of coercion, reverent, expert, reward or authority through whichever action they deem appropriate. He claims that it is the power that makes us what we are, and that the power we possess operates at different levels.

The implication here is that those individuals or groups of people who are bequeathed with authority, either by society or institutions, consider themselves powerful because they are able to exercise their power be it social, economic or political over those not given power or the "powerless". For Foucault, the so-called 'powerless' by society also possess some form of power, which he refers to in his genealogical works as the power of the body. In his perception, this kind of power, which is exercised at the lowest level of societal structures, is usually the source of revolutions. Through power relationship struggles, it destabilizes the authoritative power bases.

1.1.8 Power in Society

The paradox of power is anchored on power in society. Society harnesses various energies and transforms it into a power source. A society like the hypothetical society that Vera writes about harnesses power of its members. It, therefore, becomes the source of human power. In the thinking of Janani Harish (2014), people who are the

members of every society transform their energy into social power by increasing rich, frequency and complexity of human relationships and that as they seek to accomplish goals to fulfill their various needs and aspirations, they do so within the societal, physical structure such as the home, family, institution or workplace which link them with one another. In Zimbabwe, at the time that Vera writes about, people exercised their powers as dictated by their socio-economic and political positions. Fumbatha in butterfly burning is a labourer in the white man's construction company. Though his labour is exploited and hardly gets enough pay for work done he tries to exercise the power of coercion and dominance over women like Phephelaphi.

Exploring the notion of power in *Power Paradox*, Keltner claims that the society's cultural understanding of power has been influenced by misunderstandings on how human nature dictates power operations. He argues that the patriarchal authority is hinged on the Machiavellian power principles. He claims that the narratives and strategies employed by patriarchy to achieve and maintain power are the very ones that bring about their loss of power. He observes that "achieving power unreliably turns people nasty, that the seductions of power turn people against their very skills that initially enabled them to gain power"(p.36).

Keltner's thoughts highlight the fact that the majority of those in authority become insensitive to people's needs so that they manipulate the instruments of power at their disposal to retain power as they punish the people they serve. This is demonstrated by various characters in Vera's fiction. In the novel *Nehanda* for instance, the colonial administration under Mr. Browning shows very little concern about the plight of the natives of the land. The traditional man has lost his authority to the white man and he can no longer even sustain family power as the head of his household. Moses

Mashoko, for instance, has abdicated his traditional male responsibilities and circumstantially forced to take up domestic work in the white man's house to save his cattle from being taken away.

Keltner further observes that this kind of power does more harm than service to humanity. This study finds the views of Keltner crucial to the understanding of the hypothetical society that Yvonne Vera writes about. Leaning on Keltner's view, this study interrogates what the quest for power entails, how it affects individuals and how it shapes the structures of life in the society.

Foucault (1982) claims that the term power designates relationships because power is exercised through relationships where it is put into action as power over or of bodies because for him, power that is not exercised is invisible and cannot be claimed. Though he discusses the exercise of power on three separate domains, that is, power relations, relationship in communication and objective capacities, this research collapses the three domains into one (relationship), and only applies it in context. In relationships, the nature of power that dominates manifests itself through constraint, inequality, and the action of men upon other men.

Such actions are especially visible at the institutional level because they make actions upon other actions possible. It is these actions that foreground power relations in a society, in terms of the people's historical information, source of their strength or fragility, and the conditions, which should be transformed or done away with. Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, for instance, presents a nursing institution whose rules suffocate Phephelaphi and leads her to her untimely death a young girl whose dream is to become the first trained black nurse. At the level of the institution, there are forms of institutionalization that include traditional dispositions, legal structures, the family

and customs. The state, with its own complex systems, owns most of the major entities including the land, the state machinery of surveillance, the principle of rules and regulations, and the distribution of major power relations in given social setups. Within the institutions, systems are created to regulate the exercising of power. For instance, differentiation systems may be put in place to permit individual actions upon the actions of others, social and economic differences, in the utility of available resources and any changes necessary in the process of production including cultural differences among others. Every power relationship allows the operation of differentiations, which at the same time affect its conditions and outcomes.

For the above systems to be operationalized and to realize the set objectives, the involvement of both men and women is a major requirement. Amplifying the significance of the gender presence in societal operations of power, Diana Koester (2015), in "*Gender and Power*," claims that gender relations are power relations. She qualifies this statement by equating the term "woman" with "powerlessness", quiet, obedient and accommodating. In contrast, she says that a "real man" is all powerful, in control, outspoken and able to impose his will on others, especially in relation to woman. Koester posits that gender roles are responsible for the widespread power inequalities that they are based on. For her, the power dynamics are mainly played in the institutional spaces, where the voice of a woman is neither heard publicly nor given access to decision-making. Koester gives an example of the family as space where power and politics play out. She says; "Power dynamics in families and households interact with those in 'public' sphere in shaping development outcome. She refers to Sri Lanka as a case study of a country with increased female employment and access to resources which challenged power relations between men and women in households and which led to frequent conflicts in families.

The outcome of this scenario, according to her, was a resurgence of social control over women by the men who even went further to threaten non-governmental organizations, which had decided to employ the women. The hostility was extended to politics, where only women who were related to male politicians from powerful families were allowed to get parliamentary seats (p. 23).

Empirically perceived, gender shapes the exercising of power in all spheres of society. Most political and economic institutions the world over were historically dominated by men who perceived themselves as powerful. These men enacted governance laws tailored in accordance with their experiences. They idealized ‘masculine’ forms of behaviour, which heralded men’s power over women.

These traditional patriarchal institutions tended to favor men’s power over women on the one hand and the power of the most ‘masculine’ men over everyone. This culture of male dominance locked out women from accessing the resources that they needed in their daily lives. The power suffocation experienced by the women culminated to their subjugation and loss of voice. Fonchingong (2006), describes this oppressive scenario thus:

Women in Africa are largely regarded as ‘second class’ human beings who can only be seen and not heard, or are simply a pair of eyes behind the veil as in the case in the Islamic world. Their lives revolve solely around procreation, motherhood, merging into the man’s world without protesting, and “brainwashed into accepting their slavish status (p. 136).

While this argument may not entirely be true, because in Africa, including the Islamic world, many women now share public spaces with men, it carries a great measure of truth because a majority of women are still caught in a similar predicament. The forgoing argument is reflective of the conditions in which women in Vera’s fiction live. A woman like Runyararo in *Under the Tongue*, for instance, laments about her

husband's betrayal of her silence when he repeatedly rapes their only daughter, Zhizha. Postulating his argument on a similar subject, Acholonu (1988) claims that the African woman is "trapped in the claws of the taboos and the restrictions that only help to propel male chauvinism". Implied in this argument is that women in Africa are powerlessly trapped in patriarchal ideologies that largely favour men. This stance contravenes Michel Foucault's idea of power which contends that power exists in diffusion and can be exercised by all people irrespective of their gender, socio-economic or political orientations (p.197).

Though this study deviates to some extent from Fonchingong and Acholonu's perspectives due to the fact that many women have since moved to public spaces, it reiterates that, though at varying levels, the oppression and suppression of women is an ongoing practice not just in Africa. In many communities of the world, especially those in patriarchal arrangements, women have had to grapple with various forms of oppression in the last centuries and which is yet to be eliminated. Katrack (1987) reinforces this line of thought by pointing out what she perceives to be the genesis of women's oppression. Her explanation that, "as a female child grows from childhood to womanhood, she is controlled and owned by her father, her husband, then her sons", thereby ensuring the continuation of the subjugation of women in the patriarchal society" (p.163).

According to these views, the suffering of women is culturally sanctioned. The women are initiated into it at birth so that they internalize it as they grow up. The women, therefore, experience immense suffering and frustration, which is torturous not only to their physical body but also to their psyche domains. This is the kind of scenario witnessed by Vera as a child. Vera claims that the women's suffering was

worsened by the absence of men as they fought the white man's war. The magnitude of the women's suffering was so great that it made them neurotic and desperate. Vera, in her novels, denounces this unbalanced power usage through her female characters. As a way of putting an end to their suffering, the women gained courage and summoned their bodily power to put up resistance through actions that paradoxically hurt them in the process.

These kinds of narratives are not exclusive to women because ironically, the very men who subject them to these untold sufferings also suffer as they endeavor to fulfill the traditional demands of patriarchy. The power game that characterizes relationships in patriarchy is so elusive that neither men nor women can concretize its claim because the same narratives they use to appropriate power to liberate them are the same ones that destroy them. This is a clear depiction of the contradictions that characterizes the power game in a patriarchal society. It is this contradiction, the paradox of power, that is the focus of this study.

It is against this background of the paradox of power that this study explores and interrogates the representation of power by Yvonne Vera in her five novels. Understanding the centrality of power to all spheres of life, Vera presents characters that are deeply involved in societal power play and whose dramatic realities are the embodiments of people in real life. The importance of the power quest to the patriarchal society has prompted both male and female writers from various disciplines and different continents to research it. The focus has been to demystify the nature and the functionality of power through various reading possibilities.

In Africa, the literary tradition, architected by personalities such as Ngugi wa Thiongo, John Ruganda, Chinua Achebe, Oginga Odinga, among others, have seen

authors write in accordance to their thematic inspirations on the power question. Most of the men writers like Ngugi wa Thiongo, John Ruganda, and Oginga Odinga, among others, have tended to focus on the destabilization of patriarchal power by the colonial administration and the reconstruction of the past. Women like Vera, on the other hand, have been mainly concerned with the space of the woman in society. This claim finds its credence in the reviewed texts and the novels under study in this research.

In Vera's five novels that are studied in this research, that is, *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1997), *Butterfly Burning* (2000) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002), the tribulations of women occasioned by power problems in gender relationships are amplified through character representation. The traumatized minds of these characters have become complex literary spaces where a desire for domination on the one hand, and liberation on the other, have pushed through to the physical world where they are actualized through actions that aim to create some sense from the complex scenarios of power play. The question of power, its appropriation and resistance are common themes that run across all the novels. The novels are reflective of denounced imbalances of excessive power forms meted upon those deemed as less powerful. Vera's choice of themes was perhaps influenced by her childhood experience. In her biography she claims that as a young school girl, she often watched men go off to war and most of them never returning, leaving women to struggle for survival in a society where women were ever abused or ignored. For instance, in *Petal Thoughts* (2008) Gwetai Erica, Yvonne's mother, gives an expose of a young woman who captured her environment's life experience in her writing. Yvonne depicts her mother in the character of Phephelaphi through the relentless quest for freedom in order train as a nurse. Gwetai, Yvonne's mother attempted abortion a number of times without success. The characterization of her main

character Mazvitah in *Without a Name* is influenced by a story she read about a woman who had strangled her baby with a necktie. Vera locates the position of women as trapped in between the colonial excessive power forms and patriarchal power imbalance. She felt compelled to understand and expose the power problem that had debilitated her society. She exploited her space as a feminist writer to be the liberating voice of marginalized women. Vera, in her fiction, interrogates the social and political discourse on power. She also investigates how the various modes of power exercising affected those deemed by the society to be “powerless” like the women.

Specifically, Vera interrogates the discourse that motivates power appropriations, the strategies used and their significance, and other power related evils that have depleted the moral fiber of her society. Though the magnitude of her concern for women is great, Vera decries the colonial and patriarchal powers that have taken the men captives so that women are always on the receiving end. This research is therefore motivated by the need to understand Vera’s fictional approach to the power issues that characterized the social landscape of her time. This is not to downplay the significance of the political phenomenon, characterized by wars, like the *Chimurenga* uprising and the colonial administration in the understanding of Vera’s fiction and her concern for women. Of significance to this study is the impact of the convergence of the colonial and political powers on both the interior and exterior worlds of the women and some men as reflected through their subversive actions.

This study interrogates these actions through societal power structures. It focuses on the power contradictions as depicted through the actions and behaviors of both men and women. The actions being addressed in this study are those that deviate from the

social norms of the African society. They include rape, incest, infanticide, murder, and prostitution, rejections, withholding basic rights, exploitation of labour and taking away what rightfully belongs to others. More often than not, these actions elicit both desired and undesired results hence the theme paradox of power.

The study's focus is influenced by the fact that in the world of Yvonne Vera's novels, socio political problems are explored as analogous themes of patriarchal dominance over subservient social categories. The novels are set against the convergence of both oppressive patriarchal structures and post-colonial tensions. The social and the political landscapes of Vera's writings are informed by the political upheavals of Nineteenth-century through to twenty-first century. In these novels, Vera portrays the hurtful and oppressive socio-political environments that women live in. Vera's argument is that though both men and women are suffering different forms of oppression, women experience double suffering from both colonial systems and patriarchy.

Vera's concerns, as captured in her novels, envisage the creation of a consciousness that shapes the minds and social awareness of members of every society in order to influence emergence of a society that does not discriminate based on one's gender. Molaria Ogundipe- Leslie's STIWANISM, an acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa, intends to conscientize the patriarchal society of the importance of a society that fully integrates women. The argument here is that people, especially men, need to embrace a consciousness that views women as equal members of society and with whom they can share both private and public spaces for societal development. Vera, having witnessed some of the women's tribulations first hand, is therefore concerned with the betterment of the unfavorable conditions of women by

trying to challenge the political, economic, societal beliefs, norms and values that are detrimental to women. It is no wonder that she consistently, in a text after another, exposes the oppressive conditions that women have had to endure.

In her perception, the oppression of women continued even long after the colonial oppressors left the country. As the black men celebrated their newly acquired freedoms, the women came to the realization that they still had to deal with not only the men's colonial bruised egos but also the societal demands of patriarchal authority. While the older women tended to remain voiceless and very submissive to the traditional practices and beliefs, the younger ones attempted to project their voices through narratives that contradicted the norms of their society. These women, in the spirit of patriarchal principle belief, went contrary to the expectation that Zimbabwean women were to keep things *Under the Tongue* and to suffer in silence (p. 222). This devastating impact of the convergence of oppression, colonialism, racism, war and sexism, prompted Vera's writing. Caught up in this painful experience, Vera explores the place of women in post-colonial Zimbabwe. She portrays to us women who are suffering under the oppression of both patriarchal and colonial structures. The study's focus is partly to explore the women's double tragedy in order to find out the manner in which power is appropriated upon their bodies and to analyze the impact of their actions as strategies of resistance.

As an African postcolonial writer, Vera describes the dire consequences of the first and second *Chimurenga* (1896) and (1960s) respectively. *Chimurenga* is a Shona word that means struggle. According to Gunner (1975), "The Zimbabwean *Chimurenga* was a guerilla war and it was in important ways a people's war with land and a sense of dispossession at the centre" (p.109). To a great extent, the war which

brought the natives and the colonizers face to face not only destroyed the moral fiber that held the society together but also planted in the people a strong passion for power to revolutionize their lives.

Through her novels, Vera gives detailed representations of the dehumanizing effects of the ruthless social forces that the people had to endure. For Vera, though the general population is reeling under the devastating impact of the historical events of the time, her concern is centered mainly on women. According to her, women are the most hurt because the advent of colonization was catalytic to the injurious forms of subjugation that were the bedrock of the already existing African patriarchal systems of oppression. What is of primary interest in this research is to explore Vera's portrayal of the significant features of modern consciousness which have accrued from colonial and post-colonial anarchy, and which Vera has laid a heavy emphasis on in order to illustrate how the past events have accumulated to accentuate the problematic circumstances of the present. In this respect, therefore, this study examines her representations of the devastating impact of these emergent social forces on her characters, and how they contributed to their tragic reactions.

Vera, just like many African writers of the time, is influenced by the socio-political environment of the time, dealing with the place of the woman caught up in complex processes of political and cultural transformation. Michelle Cliff (1997) writing in *The Village Voice* describes Vera as writing within female experience, within a colonized context, exploring the limits placed on women by the colonizer as well as by traditions, describing the consequences of failing to operate within the confines of the rules. What is ironical though, is the fact that even those responsible for setting the systemic rules within patriarchy and colonialism are also caught up in the web of

oppression with its subsequent impact. This is demonstrated in Vera's works of fiction through characters like Fumbatha, Kaguvi and Mr. Brown among others.

A keen look into Vera's five novels reveals her exploration of this oppressive environment that are marked by taboos and tragedies that affect not just the women but also the men. She foregrounds the content of each novel by highlighting the actions of the individual characters, the discourses that motivate their actions, and their subsequent impact on the individuals and society. Reif-Huesler, as quoted in Opondo (2010) says; "the important factor in all that goes on in any human civilization seems to be the individual and his or her decisions. To reveal the same, one must delve into man's inner world and this is his psychic" (p. 7). Reif's sentiment elucidates the significant role a man's inner world plays in influencing the decisions he makes and the actions he appropriates. Thus, in order to understand and explicate the complex literary world of Vera's female characters, their actions should be looked at as influenced by not just what happens in their physical environments but also their inner worlds. The characters ponder over their actions before executing them in order to succeed in gaining freedom and independence.

Characters like Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins* and Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning*, for example, are caught up in these environments that are characterized with pain and suffering occasioned by a convergence of systemic problems. They endeavour to reconstruct better enabling environments. Sibaso uses the power of the gun bestowed upon him by the colonial government to fulfill his set goals. His choice of actions like rape and murder which he uses to succeed bring him more pain and suffering. Phephelaphi, on the other hand, chooses to transform her life by undertaking a nursing training but she is caught at cross roads, entangled in a web-net of patriarchal and

postcolonial structures that complicates her career life and informs her decision to terminate her pregnancy. Through such characters as Sibaso and Phephelaphi, Vera depicts men and women who will stop at nothing to change their destiny.

This is a demonstration that the enduring impact of patriarchy and colonialism in Zimbabwe, as depicted in Yvonne Vera's five novels, rendered the women voiceless, traumatized, desperate and dependent on one hand, and on the other hand, saw the men's power temples crumbling down, exposing their vulnerability, frustrations and bitterness. Although in her writing, Vera basically discusses ordinary issues that both men and women of Zimbabwe face in their daily lives, they are written in complex allegorical and metaphorical narratives dominated by painful, torturous and subversive acts that transform the ordinary environment into an irrational strange one. These subversive narratives are presented in *Nehanda*, *Butterfly Burning*, *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins*. In these novels, Vera's characters include humans and spirits who engage in oppressive power narratives characterized by power manipulations.

In *Without a Name*, for instance, Mazvita refuses to name her child, a being she views as a seed of rape and an obstacle to her freedom and independence. Though her action of eliminating the baby from her life feels her with fear and pain, she braves it for the simple fact that it is the only sure path to her freedom and success in life. Confidently she prepares the baby for its execution by coercing it into keeping still on the bed where it lies on its back staring at its mother with its innocent tiny eyes. Mazvita ties a painless knot with a necktie around the baby's small neck. Usurping the power of dominance over the body of the baby, she pulls at the tie hard until she felt the bone at the bottom of the baby's neck break and fall while the baby remains blindfolded and

trusting. Such horrific incidents and the intricate narrative structures within which power is manipulated appear to mainly contradict what the character and the reader expect. It is this contradictory power exercising outcome to the conventional expectation that this study calls the paradox of power.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study investigates the extent to which power as exerted by the characters through their subversive power strategies such as incest, infanticide, murder and rape, impacted their lives. To what extent, for example, do the characters' subversive power strategies responsible for the attainment of their target goals, or are there possibilities of integrative effects of power appropriation on the characters' lives which constitute power as a paradox in Vera's fiction?

The study examines the oppressive traumatic incidences that reveal power manipulation and its destructive aftermath as demonstrated through the five selected novels: *Nehanda*, *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue*, *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins*. The research addresses the narrative complexities of trauma, desperation, bitterness and painful circumstances through which power discourse unfolds to expose the manner of their deployments in the politics of resistance and achievement of desired goals by both men and women in colonial Zimbabwe, and their attendant reversal impact on them.

1.3 Objectives of the study

Given the situation discussed above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. To investigate how the male characters appropriate and manipulate power to oppress and torture the female characters.
- ii. To interrogate the significance of the 'deviant' social acts of Vera's female characters as strategies of resistance.
- iii. To investigate the relationship between male colonial subjugation, and the oppression of female gender
- iv. To explain the subversive power discourse with regard to its paradoxical nature.

1.4 Research questions

This research answers the following questions:

1. How do male characters appropriate power to torture and oppress the female character?
2. What are the female character's deviant social acts, and to what extent are these social acts strategies of resistance?
3. What impact does male colonial subjugation have on the female characters?
4. How do the characters' deviant social acts constitute power as a paradox?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study is relevant to the twenty-first century's notion of fair treatment to both genders, which takes cognizance of women's significant place in society. It dissuades the notion of patriarchal socialization of the culture of dominance which privileges men over women and which has prevailed for several years, provides the framework and cultural sanction for oppression and exploitation of women. In the African continent, the situation was made worse by the colonial experience and the post-colonial tensions. It is all a question of power. Vera, in her novels, empathizes with the situation by portraying women as the ultimate victims who suffer the double tragedy of sexism and racism. While men's sufferings under the colonial subjugation are portrayed through projected subversive power manipulations on the women characters, the impacts of the women's sufferings manifest themselves through the women's internal and external spaces in the forms of, "madness" and overt actions that are against the societal constructed regulatory codes.

It is therefore important to interrogate the characters' 'deviant' social acts to establish their major motivations and significance, if any. It is worth noticing that though Vera is passionately concerned with the place of women in Zimbabwean society, the space of men under colonial administration is crucial for the understanding of the plight of women. It is also important, to investigate the relationship between male subjugation and the situation of women in Vera's novels. The examination of the actions of both the male and female characters is significant to this study because it reveals the gendered power play with their successes or failures in the attainment of set goals. As central as power is to social life, even as depicted through the actions of Vera's

characters, this study argues that it has not received much attention from literary scholars. This, therefore, necessitates the undertakings of this study.

A close reading of Vera's fiction reveals characters who are determined to reconstruct their identities and claim what they perceive to be their rightful positions. This journey to metamorphose the self, necessarily includes the enactment of bold narratives. This study finds it necessary to critically examine how these narratives are structured to project the characters' resistance. The study focuses on narrative strategies to understand how they are deployed in the politics of resistance and power.

The patriarchal appropriation of social and political power and its manipulations especially on the women, are analyzed on the backdrop of a society riddled with power struggle, cultural taboos and the mores of township life. A Foucauldian reading of Vera's texts presupposes a paradigm shift in the societal power centers. The argument here is that individuals who are traditionally perceived to be powerless like women can also exercise power in their various forms. Foucault approaches the issue of power as diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' (p.78).

He claims that power is what makes us what we are. He challenges the perception that power is exercised by people or groups by way of 'episodic or sovereign acts of domination or coercion, seeing it instead as dispersed and pervasive. For Foucault, power is everywhere and comes from everywhere; it is neither given nor exchanged, nor recovered, but exercised, and that it only exists in action (p.63).

Postulating Foucault's thoughts on Vera's novels, Vera seems to justify the actions of the women in Zimbabwe who are living under similar circumstances. This is quite

significant as it readily lends itself to a better understanding of the present society, which continually manifests Vera's fiction realities.

Finally, according to Thornton (2015), the patriarchal ideologies and colonial authority convergently contributed to a mentality of seeing women as unequal in society so that they live under men. In Ram saran's view, this situation has reduced them to an underdog position, and equivalent to cattle (p.16), it is imperative to carry out a study on the impact of patriarchal and colonial power appropriations and manipulations on Vera's characters in order to understand and explain their actions.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study is analytic in nature, and it critically analyses Yvonne Vera's novels to find out how she has used the narrative form to foreground the paradoxes in her characters' power appropriation in resisting patriarchal and colonial dominations. It is done within the confines of qualitative research methodology and limited its focus on women and men in such predicaments as presented in Yvonne Vera's five novels: *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (2000) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). These novels are read and examined within the framework of feminist criticism and Michel Foucault's concept of power. The novels are studied against the background of their immediate socio- cultural and political contexts.

The study's scope encompasses the novels' discourses, which are to establish the nature of the patriarchal power appropriations that are used as instruments of oppression and subjugation of women and the nature of the women's responses. In *Feminist Thought: Comprehensive Introduction* (1989), Kate Millet argues that sex is

political primarily because the male-female relationship is the paradigm for all power relationships. She says:

Social caste supersedes all other forms of in egalitarianism: racial, political, or economic and unless the clinging to male supremacy as a birthright is finally forgone, all systems of oppression will continue to function simply by virtue of their logical and emotional mandate in the primary human situation. Because male control of the public and private worlds is what constitutes patriarchy, male control must be eliminated if women are to be liberated (p.121).

Millett's argument forms part of the framework within which we interpret the dramatized power play in Vera's fiction. The study explores the works only in line with the aspect of power. The scope of this research is limited to the subversive power narratives that constitute the paradox of power as presented in Vera's five novels under study.

1.7 Review of Related Literature

Many critics have come up with various ideas about Yvonne Vera's fiction. Her novels have been interpreted from multiple perspectives. The texts that are reviewed in this study are critical texts on Yvonne Vera's writing and those that discuss the 'third world' woman and man in their 'subaltern' locations within the colonial and patriarchal power sites. These texts are reviewed within the considerations of the objectives of the study. The intention is to examine the manner in which the men and women deal with power issues against the backdrop of colonial and patriarchal power dominance in order to locate gaps that would give this study the thrust it requires. Texts on power and gender relationships are also reviewed to enable new trajectories of interpreting the exercising, locate this study appropriately within the existing literature and determine the effects of various forms of power on individuals who engage in the power play. Palmer (2009), Okayude (2009), Ogbazi (2011), Berndt

(2008), Thabella (2010) and Farrar (2000), for instance, explore Vera as a writer whose main concern is the oppressive circumstances in which the women of Zimbabwe live. The critics have interpreted Vera as an African feminist looking out for the advancement of Zimbabwean women in terms of identity. Palmer, for example, observes that Vera's writing criticizes the patriarchal belief in the subordination of women and encourages them to fight for identity. Farrar reads Vera as a writer who criticizes the deplorable condition that women live in and their emotional exploitation by men who don't look after their interests. Nkeala (2016) views Vera as a feminist writer who empathizes with the women of Zimbabwe due to the oppressive systems of patriarchy they live in and which has denied a dialogue space. Zeleza (2007) discusses Vera's works as colonial fiction whose main concern is the British invasion of Zimbabwe. He argues that history was central to Vera's work. This section of the study examines what these critics portray about Vera's writing in order to identify the gap that necessitates research.

While the criticism on Vera's writing indicates that scholars have explored the writer's work mainly under thematic perspective under socio-cultural consciousness, this study takes a related but different approach: it explores the writer's work within the paradigm of power as deployed in her fiction. The thrust of this study lies in the interrogation of the subversive narratives employed by Vera's characters as power strategies to reverse their oppressive, painful circumstances and realize their desired goals. The narratives are part of the intricate power structures that depict the Zimbabwean oppressive systems built on patriarchy and colonialism. The subversive narratives reflect power exercising through actions that subvert the norms of the society in order to resist and succeed in the characters' set goals. Through the

narratives unfold the contradictory nature of power, which characterizes the oppressive complicated world that the people of Zimbabwe live in.

Though some of Vera's existing scholarship, as has been mentioned earlier, significantly discussed the thematic concerns raised in her novels, other narrative dimensions that boost the thematic structures have also been discussed. Flora Veit-Wild (2003) examines Vera's *Without a Name* on the basis of African myths about scarred women. The critic analyses Vera's presentation of the women of Zimbabwe as traumatized by the traditional myth about the subordinate position of the women. She argues that claiming the subjective position of a traumatized woman may offer an alternative trajectory towards the control of her own life. Wild mentions Vera's concern about how women can change their oppressive circumstances to a better life. This study's perspective differs from Wild's in that it examines the impact of power on the characters through their subversive power narratives.

Felicity Palmer (2009) explores the possibility of identity acquisition that Vera discusses in her novels. She discusses this claim in her work, *Beyond Freedom and Constraint: Alternative Intimacies in the Novels of Yvonne Vera*. In her view, the women characters in Vera's novels are conscious of their oppressed status and are determined to ventilate. She refers to their ventilative narrative as:

A fiction in which the violently curtailed quest for autonomy and pleasure is not simply a mark of failure, but rather a mode of uncoupling freedom from individualism and constraint from group identity that looks forward to a different social vocabulary" (P. 7).

Palmer goes on to point to the invocation of "alternative intimacies" in forms of affiliation that go beyond the monogamous, heterosexual, conjugal norm. She explains that these different forms of intimacies resist the hierarchy in which

heterosexual, monogamous, and reproductive models are seen as both the most civilized and the most ethical way of arranging familial and social relationships.

Palmer looks at Vera's texts in terms of sexual power and its paradoxes. She observes that Vera's works are evocations of both erotic desire and sexual trauma. The emphasis of Palmer's criticism is especially on the sexual oppression of women and their determination to ventilate at whatever cost. This study leans on Palmer's argument but takes a different trajectory which examines the power narratives strategies for their impact on individual characters and those around them. The abuse of power and the trauma experienced by the characters under the convergent powers of patriarchy and colonialism have elicited resistance against the authorities and awakened in the women a consciousness for freedom. This argument is reflected in Obi Nwakanma's work *The Nation and Subaltern* in Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning* (2000) where he concerns himself with Vera's perception of the place of African women in the context of power within both the colonial and the post-colonial moments. Using the discourse of subalternity, he situates Yvonne Vera's women characters in *Butterfly Burning* as primarily resisting the situation of the patriarchal enclosure under colonialism. This study finds Nwakanma's claim supportive as it reinforces its trajectory of argument, which views sex in Vera's novels as a major source of trauma in the lives of women. Specifically, this study interrogates how Vera's male characters use sex to inflict pain and cause trauma to the lives of Vera's female characters.

The study also incorporates Vera's four other novels and interrogates power appropriations on the female characters and their strategies of resistance against the dominant systems of power. The study focuses on the nature of resistance and its

significance in the female characters' well-being. The interrogation is significant to this study since fictional characters can be understood based on the readers' knowledge of and response to real people (p.25). In this, it provides a new trajectory of understanding power, that is, a possibility of its integrative impact on a character's action. What this research refers to as the paradox of power, hence providing alternative possibilities in the reading of power discourse.

Reading Vera's novel, *Butterfly Burning*, Farrar Straus (2000), remarks that the novel depicted a man and woman who seemed to be in some kind of love. He remarks thus:

Set in Makokoba, a black township in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), in the late 1940s, the novel is an intensely bittersweet love story. When Fumbatha, a construction worker, meets the much younger Phephelaphi, he "wants her like the land beneath his feet from which had severed him. "He in turn fills her "with hope larger than memory. "But Phephelaphi is not satisfied with their "one- room" love alone. The qualities that drew Fumbatha to her were her sense of independence and freedom, which ended up separating them. And the closely woven fabric of township life, where everyone knows everyone else, has a mesh too tight and too intricate to allow her to escape her circumstances on her own" (p.144).

In Farrar's view, the novel is so much more than a love story between Phephelaphi and Fumbatha. It is a depiction of the struggles of a black underclass, torn from the countryside and living in shantytowns, cobbling together some sort of humanity out of the inhumane of a woman's burning desire for an existence independent of her lover, and self-acceptance. The argument advanced by Farrar is that gender relations are power relations that perpetuate the power inequalities, which they are based on. This study appropriates Farrar's argument and considers it an eye-opener to the fact that women in the world of Vera's novels are more concerned with their rightful places in the society than a love affair and that the women are as conscious of their present predicaments as they are of what they want. The study also examines the discourse

that informs the subversive power narratives of Vera's characters not just in *'Butterfly Burning'* but also in her other four novels to establish the discourse that motivates the gendered power struggles and their effects.

The subjugation of women, for instance, ensures their occupation of inferior spaces as per the dictates of patriarchal socialization. They are expected to submit to men unconditionally. They are denied a dialogue space, so they are supposed to be voiceless. In *Under the Tongue*, for instance, Runyararo laments about the subordination her husband has subjected her to over the years as a way of defining her position as a woman. In her lamentation, she asks rhetorical questions thus:

Did he not teach me silence, this husband, that a woman is not a man? I am silent. Just silent to speak my silence against the husband who is not a man but a lizard with a rotting belly (p.152).

As an ideal patriarchal woman, Runyararo totally submitted to her husband and remained silent about her troubles until she got confronted with his deviant act of raping his own daughter. The magnitude of the hurt she experienced brought a turning point in her life when she did not only engage in a deviant act of murdering her husband but also projected her voice verbally in a series of lamentations.

Men too are subjugated and forced to occupy inferior spaces by the colonial powers. Moses Mashoko in *Nehanda* has to cook and carry out other chores that are traditionally designated for the female gender. Though confused and ashamed of his work, he is forced by prevailing circumstances to work for the white man to earn a living and keep his meager property safe. The narrator confirms this when she observes that Mashoko does not find his work interesting; in fact, when he is in his village, he feels ashamed of it. If it were not for the hut taxes that he is being made to pay, he would not accept the work. His cattle will be confiscated if he fails to pay the

money asked of him (p.45). Mashoko is faced with a dilemmic situation where he has to make a choice. He chooses to endure the humiliation of his inferior position to sustain a livelihood.

Scenarios such as that of Mashoko have prompted thought-provoking observations from scholars like Heise (1994), Khan (2000) and Lykes & Qin, (2001). For these scholars, the unequal distribution of power in society between women and men is responsible for gender discrimination hence the quest for freedom and a new identity; an identity that redefines a woman as she wants to be. This study underscores the significance of a truly reflective identity as a prerequisite to growth in power relationships but charts a new path of examining the strategies the women employ in their quest and their conclusive impact on them.

The concept of identity in Vera's texts is interrogated by Tumisang Thabela in; *Standing on the Outside, Woman's Search for Identity in Yvonne Vera's Why Don't You Carve Other Animals and Without a Name (2010)*. Thabela's focus was on the stories of women who battle, in different historical and socio- cultural contexts, with the question of self and being. Some of the women try to define their sense of self as individuals, whilst others seek their identity as members of groups. A few others, such as the *Guerilla Recruiter* Madube in *'It is Hard to Live Alone'* (1992), search for their identity both at individual and group levels.

This study shares in the notion of the quest for women's identity by themselves and in groups, and heralds their decision of self-assertion, which authenticates their rejection of their positions as victims of patriarchal oppression. The study further focuses on the methodologies employed by the women to resist the colonial and patriarchal

power machinations that put them under the yoke of oppression. The study also looks into the individual power manipulative strands in order to isolate specific reactions of women and examine their impact on both the individual protagonists and their societies. Implicit in this study is the narratives that inform the women's reactions and the statements they are trying to make as a way of redefining themselves as individuals in their own rights.

Okuyade (2009) views Vera's work as dominated by a power struggle. His focus is on the space, time and identities of Zimbabwean women in relation to the society they live in. At that point in time, the women had neither space nor self-worth as significant human beings. Okuyade's views give impetus to this study to delve into areas he alluded to and to discuss those he omitted. For instance, this study examines how the women in Vera's novels appropriate power to redefine their identities, and the significance of their newly found status, if any. The study endeavors to find out the impact of power as exerted by the women through whichever strategy they chose.

Ifeyinwa J. Ogbazi (2011), in *Speaking for the Voiceless*: looks at Yvonne Vera's characters in their social conditions. Specifically, he examines the women in Vera's four books: *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue*, *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins* to find out how the women characters speak for the voiceless. This study leans on Ogbazi's research as it interrogates the actions of Vera's female characters to find out factors that motivate them to "speak" in the manner that they do. The study further explores to explain the relationship between male subjugation and women's oppression.

In addition, Ogbazi's research is important to this study because it reinforces the researcher's argument that the women of Zimbabwe as presented by Vera in her four

subsequent novels after *Nehanda*, are speaking for the voiceless. The study understands the voiceless as those people without space to exercise their full human rights; this study interrogates the methodologies through which the “voices” are projected for their impact.

It is also important to point out that while Ogbazi’s scope of research was mainly confined within Vera’s four novels after *Nehanda*, this study covers all the five novels; *Nehanda*, *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue*, *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins* to explain the power discourse that runs across the novels. Finally, while Ogbazi limited his research to the characters’ social conditions, this study stretches its scope to include political conditions because, besides Zimbabwe being an African state where political narratives redefine people’s identities, the unsung place of women in the Chimurenga uprising is significant in the sense that it renders itself to the interrogation of power manipulations and the effects thereof.

While carrying out research on *Female Identity in Contemporary Zimbabwean Fiction* (2008) Katrin Berndt sets out to examine constructions of female identity in selected novels by male and female Zimbabwean authors. The focus was to distinguish between the various identities available to Postcolonial Zimbabwean females; this study appropriates the notion of identity and goes further to explore how the strategies employed by the Zimbabwean women to acquire for themselves new identities as they vacate their traditional positions of ‘otherness’ are reflected in power settings.

Alongside Vera’s texts, the study has reviewed general works on women's issues to give a critical perspective on how women in the patriarchal setups are treated. In patriarchy, male authority that ensures his dominance over the woman has been tolerated for decades and manifested in family power relations between men and

women. In the views of Liddle (1989), patriarchal capitalist societies were usually characterized by male domination and practices of women subordination. The culture of domination and subordination has become inherent and almost normalized by the societal structures. The situation has attracted research from scholars like Totem (2003), who conducted a study on the development and effects of familial and gender ideologies on the masculine identities of marginalized male youth in American Society. The qualitative data led to the derivation of the subsequent five specific assumptions:

That sexual division of labor was natural, that is, the women were considered the 'natural' child-rearers and homemakers whereas the men were believed to be the natural breadwinners. The general understanding was that women should be obedient to, respectful of, and dependent on men. Female intimates should be sexually accessible, loyal, and faithful to their male partners. It was also assumed that women were sexual objects to be conquered by men through heterosexuality which was reported to be natural and moral, while all other forms of sexual orientations were considered to be immoral and punishable. The report sanctioned abusive behavior as an appropriate way for biological fathers and boyfriends to resolve conflicts and maintain dominance in traditional gender role relationships of men with women. The reported assumptions viewed manhood as indicative of a glorification of physical toughness by being strong, wealthy and breadwinner, heterosexual and sexually active, and having control on life and women (p. 37).

Mostly, researchers have focused on patriarchal capitalist as a single construct of male dominance and gender-based discrimination of women. The experiences that inform this study are not exactly the same, given that women in Yvonne Vera's texts not only struggle with violence emanating from patriarchy but also from colonial and post-colonial experiences. This study examines the actions of Vera's male characters upon the female characters to find out the nature of violence faced by Vera's female characters and the significance of the strategies they deployed in putting up resistance. In the conventional patriarchal ideology of gender relations, Masculine ideology usually provided the parameters of defining the intra-familial power relationships

between men and women. The Differential adherence to masculine ideas reinforcing male dominance might determine the varying preferences of male family members for controlling family women through coercive means. This study examines the motivations of power appropriation contest by women in Yvonne Vera's texts and the significance of their newly acquired freedom (if any).

The argument on the treatment of women by men is continued by Fox (2002). He explored three great bodies of thought, that is, Judeo-Christian religious ideas, Greek philosophy, and the Common Law legal code that influenced western society's views and the modes of treating women. He found consistency in all three traditions of thought with respect to treating patriarchy as a natural expression of male dominance rooted in male superiority. The contrastive approval of male family members to their women's autonomy could minimize or heighten conflict over issues of controlling family women through coercive means. It has been hypothesized that the propensity of using male physical violence against family women may be a consequence of adopting the varying tendencies rooted in the religious as well as patriarchal ideologies of gender power relationships and resolving interpersonal conflicts between men and women.

This study agrees with Fox's views on male dominance that informs their violence on female characters and draws them in an argument that in patriarchy, male dominance comes with unquestionable authority over women even if that woman is a family member. This is exemplified in Vera's *Under the Tongue* (1997) where Muroyiwa repeatedly rapes his daughter, a young girl named Zhizha. The continuous sexual violation by her father has become a constant nightmare at her tender age. The study examines the actions of Vera's male characters to confirm whether patriarchal

ideologies or other forces influenced the male characters' power appropriation to harm the female characters even if that female is your biological daughter.

Malhotra and Mather (1997) used a survey life history, and focus group data for empirical examination of the relationship between schooling, paid work, and power in domestic decision making for young and married women in Sri Lanka. The findings confirmed that education and employment of women played a significant role in determining women's contributions in financial decisions. However, they were largely immaterial in making decisions related to social and organizational matters influencing their households. The implication here is that male family members had serious concerns about women's conduct that could potentially challenge their authority particularly in matters falling within the male specific domains of activities. The position taken by the men seems to be baseless because women like Nehanda in '*Nehanda*' by Vera, for example, exercised the leadership role; uniting Zimbabwean troops to confront the veracious white invaders. This study challenges the traditional patriarchal canon that brands women powerless and to shows that women, like men, are able to fight not just for their own liberation but even for that of their citizenry.

In the essay, *Colonial Fictions: Memory and History in Yvonne Vera's Imagination* (2007), Paul Zeleza reads *Without a Name* from a gender perspective. The critic claims that Vera's female characters are traumatized and dehumanized by the sexual violence netted upon them by patriarchy. He illustrates his claim through Mazvita who, according to him, has been traumatized by sexual violence, which ensures her loss of speech and invisibility. He adds that she, in her desperation, strangles the child she has conceived through rape without even giving it a name. Zeleza introduces the theme of oppression that women suffer in patriarchal setups where anti-colonial

violence for national liberation is imposed on women so that they suffer mental neurosis that transforms them into depressed individuals. Zeleza's claim suggests that men exploited the anti-colonial war on liberation to sexually abuse the women who ended up suffering in silence (p. 14).

The interpretation that Zeleza has adopted in his analysis of the events of Vera's *Without a Name* highlights the theme of oppression of women. This study not only examines the theme of oppression but also looks at individual actions to find out what motivates them and the effect they have on the individual characters.

The study also examines the power play between Vera's women and patriarchal forces in Zimbabwe to establish their effects on the individuals. This is informed by the fact that, Patriarchy, just as perceived by Hunnicutt (2009), is characterized by power imbalances and control. She defines it as a system of social and cultural arrangement that privileges men over women. An interrogation of the power play between women and men is important because it anchors the problem of violence against women in social conditions and permits the examination of various sources of power and their importance to the people.

While the sentiments expressed by Hunnicutt are a reflection of Vera's thematic concerns, this study examines the claim behind the notion that men with little education are more restrictive and conservative about gender roles of men and women hence more violence towards women. The study likens this category of men with the colonial downtrodden men in Vera's novels with an intention is to explain men's appropriation of power on the women in Yvonne Vera's five novels. One of the significant manifestations of the appropriation of power is violence against women. Narayan's (2013) article, *Dislocating Culture: Identities, Traditions, and Third-world*

Feminists, draws attention to the problematic ways in which “Culture” is invoiced in explanations of forms of violence against Third-World women (Narayan in Thornton p.20).

This study refers to Narayan’s argument to explain the unchallenged men’s power appropriations and their manipulations to abuse the women in Vera’s fiction. Adrienne Rich famously isolates the need for a critical awareness of location in her 1984 essay; *Notes towards a Politics of Location*; developing her realization that generalizing all women from her own white, middle class, and western experience elided important differences.

Extending this line of thought more recently in her book “*Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse*” (2002) KwokuPui- Ian highlights’ the danger of “Colonialist feminism” or the ostensibly compassionate desire to “save” “brown women” from their backward cultures, understood from a privileged Western perspective. Since colonialist feminism developed in the partnership of Christianity and imperialism, Kwoku argues that missionaries justified their colonizing presence by reference to the social as well as spiritual good their message could bring women. She writes:

The Subordination of women was often cited as symptomatic of the inferiority of indigenous cultures, and saving colonized women from their oppression, ignorance, and heathenism became an integral part of the colonialist discourse. Shuttled between tradition and modernity, indigenous women were seen either as victims of male aggression or as pitiful objects of Westerners’ compassion (p. 219).

Deviating from Kwoku’s view that concentrates on brown women, this study broadens its scope and interrogates cultural forces of black women’s subordination. It further examines the colonial impact on Zimbabwean women as depicted by Yvonne

Vera in her five novels. Unlike the western women who, according to Kwoku became an integral part of the colonialist discourse “to be saved”, Vera’s women resorted to ‘saving’ themselves through their deviant social actions, including self-inflicted death. This study further examines the actions in order to identify the motivations behind such undertakings and their significance.

In his perspective to Hegemonic masculinity, which privileges patriarchal dominance over women, a sociologist Michael Kimmel (2008) describes three cultures that support masculinity in his book, *Guy Land*, Kimmel points out that in patriarchy, men are privileged through the culture of entitlement where men feel that they not only deserve but are also entitled to unlimited access to societal treasures including women. Key in the list is the power to dominate societal systems and women’s bodies. He goes on to say that men are expected to observe silence because it is synonymous with masculinity performance which includes rape and bullying, among others. Kimmel concludes his argument with the culture of protection which ensures that men are not held responsible for their questionable and illegal actions. Kimmel’s observations give an illuminating landscape to Vera’s depiction of patriarchal men in her fiction. Though Kimmel’s discussion points out some of the subversive power narratives in another society, this study interrogates the hegemonic masculine power play on Zimbabwean women as presented by Vera to find out the discourse that motivates such actions and the significance of the resistance strategies employed by women.

In her observation on women’s suffering under the Nigerian post-colonial experience coupled with disillusionment from patriarchal domination in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, Pauline Ada Uwakweh (1998) asserts that:

Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expressions that are religiously and culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on subordinate or muted female stricture (p.75).

This study reads Uwakweh's assertions as a true reflection of the practice of patriarchy. Nevertheless, the study argues that the female characters, as presented in Vera's five novels, have abdicated their spaces of silence through narratives of protest and resistance. The study, therefore, interrogates the resistance narratives to establish their significance in the power struggle. Nevertheless, the study argues that the severity of violence against women in Yvonne Vera's texts is such that they cannot counteract such violence and regain their voices on their own (p. 106). The study therefore seeks to find out the possibility of an integrative impact of power on the characters' actions.

While this study takes cognizance of 'silence' as a typical reaction of these women on the face of violence, it goes on to examine its signification on the very women and the male characters responsible for their silencing. Uwakweh's observation is, therefore, a boost on the trajectory of this research.

Fwanyii, Ada (2011) argues that women are denied so many rights and privileges because they are sometimes regarded as second-class human beings. She reiterates that traditional beliefs and myths ensure that the woman is permanently placed in the second position. Ada postulates that the sole aim of a woman's existence, according to this belief, is to satisfy the man. It is believed that a woman has no worth or honor outside marriage in an African society because 'A husband crowns a woman's life. No matter the level of a woman's achievement, her father or husband owns her (p.11).

Fwanyi's reaction to the treatment of women in Vera's novels depicts her discomfort with a patriarchal arrangement on how to treat women. She decries a woman's subordination to man and her being owned like property. While this study shares in Fwanyi's rejection of the subordinative and commoditization of the African women, it deviates to find out the strategies used by men, their motivation, and the subsequent effect on both the men and the women gives thrust to this study due to the study's concern on Vera's representation of women. However, her claim that the women will remain culturally invisible in a male dominated society unless she reconstructs her image gives impetus to this study's concern with the strategies they use to reconstruct her image as free and independent individuals.

Using Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), as an example, she explains that in spite of Ifeoma's efforts towards providing the need of her family and the old father, Pa Nnukwu, reminds her that she is a woman and therefore she doesn't count. He fails to understand that any achievements, whether attained by man or woman, are the same. Ada's perception is important to this study because it elicits a comparative analysis to gauge consistency in the presentation of women in Africa by feminist writers. This study draws on Ada's thoughts on the place of a woman in Africa, and specifically examines the plight of women in Zimbabwe as represented by Vera in order to understand their social environments and the motivations of their actions.

When discussing the place of a woman in African society, Felicity Palmer (2009) focuses on female experiences of both sexual desire and sexual training as two sides of a coin. She looks at sex as a form of both desire and oppression. She feels that the modern woman, just like the traditional one, has no freedom even over the most secret and private aspect of her life. In her dissertation, she challenges the assumption that

romantic love is the province of free and consenting deracinated subjects while other forms of relationships are the product of inherently oppressive and onerous kinship demands and inheritances (p.39).

Palmer's idea of oppression of women motivates this study to explore other forms of oppression the women are subjected to by patriarchy and colonial forces in Yvonne Vera's novels. The study also examines the various strategies employed by women to resist patriarchal power machinations. Palmer's thoughts on sex and desire are significant to this study as they give a glimpse into the complex nature of power, which is the main thrust of this research. The oppressive and dehumanizing situations women undergo worldwide are of concern to a number of women critics. Judith Astellara in Azuike (2002), for instance, encourages women to take their destinies in their hands and fight for significant spaces in society in order to be contributors other than receivers of leftovers' from men.

The sentiments expressed by both Astellara and Palmer are consciously reflective of the spirit of this study. The study explores Vera's works on the plight of women in Zimbabwe and the attempts they have made to free them and redefine their identities. Astellara's thoughts highlight a major concern for this research; a woman fighting for space in an environment that is choking with the dominant male authority.

Still, on the issues of women, Mariam Ba (1980) observes that Literature as an effective tool in the fight against patriarchal oppression has motivated and still motivates many African women narratives. She further argues that the targets are those long-established practices that subordinate women in particular ways such as marriage, motherhood, the bar to education, the acceptance of second and third wives,

the social rules governing patrimony and patrilineage, and the imperative provision of a male heir (p.23).

Here, Ba discusses the self-appointed superiority of male power and its effects upon all walks of women as a constant sore in their lives. This notion provokes the need for further research on women's issues. This study takes the challenge to interrogate the impact of patriarchal power domination over the female characters in Vera's five novels. This is aimed at providing a better understanding of the gendered power play in the novels and their significance to life as lived in the patriarchal society. In her discourse on politics and activism of women's rights in Africa, Ogundipe- Leslie (1987) takes cognizance of the oppressive conditions women have to endure, regardless of their social positions. She observes that if colonialism posed a traumatic disruption to African male novelists, then African female novelists have suffered a "double yoke of traumatic disruption in their cultural histories. Not only have they had to contend with the alienation and dispossessing effects of colonialism, but they have had to navigate and negotiate the frequently strenuous and vigorous exclusions, and marginalization's posed by a deeply entrenched structure of patriarchal power.

Ogundipe's sentiments emphasize the need for further research on the oppressive conditions African women have had to put up with in the past to enable a reconstruction of a less oppressive society. It is for this reason that this study deviates from Ogundipe's trajectory in the sense that it specifically examines the oppressive conditions Zimbabwean women have had to put up with and the significance of the methodologies they have employed to survive. The argument gives an insight to this research about the challenges feminist writers face in their endeavors to expose the ills the women suffer in patriarchy. It reveals how writers like Vera use their own

experiences to negotiate women's issues in society. It underpins the power issues and their effects on both men and women in Vera's novels.

In her short novel '*The Legacy*' (1992), Tsitsi Himuyang Phiri portrays the degrading beliefs and practices of male-dominated Zambian society. In the sketchy plot of her novel is a court hearing to rule on the property claims of Moya Mudenda's in-laws upon his death, which threaten to leave her without any of the financial and material accumulation for which she and her husband have fought so hard during their marriage. The rules of inheritance, through which men subjugate their wives to the precedence of the claims of the male's relatives, lead, by way of remembrance of Moya's past life to an interrogation of the general state of women in the society. The novel becomes a condemnation towards the end with a series of rhetorical questions and statements about the ironies and paradoxes of women's lives, with a disclaimer of her experience in a patriarchal arrangement. She discloses how being a woman made her perceive her potential as limited. She claims that society had pushed her to the margins and defined her as weak regardless of her numerous contributions to her society. Moya rhetorically questions the source of this discrimination of women and suggests that the woman's space needs to be redefined in the changing society.

Like Vera's novels, this is a fiction of protest, didactic and outspokenly critical; it unveils the determination to advocate for interrogation of contemporary social politics concerning gender rights. It is urging women to fight back against the inheritance system by legal and other means, rather than passively accepting the status quo and thereby acquiescing in their own subjugation. Phiri's idea of women fighting against the inheritance system is significant to this study in that, it looks into ways through which the women can counter the oppressive system of inheritance and, hopefully,

many others. However, unlike Phiri's concern with the theme of oppression in general, this study sets to examine various forms of women's oppression to establish their motivations and social impact on individual characters. The study also appropriates the idea of consciousness of the women about their underdog role in society and their desire to reconstruct their image and redefine their identities by examining the strategies they employ and the extent to which they are progressively transformative.

Beyala is a feminist novelist who concerns herself with women's oppressive status. In her essay "*The Sun Hath looked upon me*" (1987) and "*Your Name shall be Tanga*" (1988) Beyala reads oppression in women. Her concern is the hidden lives of women, usually the result of male violence perpetrated upon them. She claims that the violence not only works on the woman's physical spaces but also her psyche. She argues that portraying women as super mothers is a form of violence that lulls the woman's mind so that they believe stereotyping definitions that men use as strategies to get their way with them. This study advances Beyala's idea of women's oppression by examining how Vera's treatment of the oppressive male strategies creates and gives meaning to the concept of power as a paradox.

While in her work, Beyala presents women trapped in traditional taboos and patriarchal power supremacy, women desperately in need of emancipation and identity of independence, this study considers a different approach; it explores Vera's work within the artistic perspective of power. The study examines the subversive power narratives of women in Vera's fiction to establish their significance as strategies of resistance and their role in the realization of their liberative intentions.

In *Collector of Treasurers* (1977), Bessie Head exposes the insides of a prison cell that houses four women convicted of similar criminal offences. The women, among them, Dikeledi Mokopi had killed her husband to put an end to her sufferings and the sufferings of young schoolgirls whom her husband made pregnant against their will. Head's approach exposes women who are experiencing double suffering due to their perceived liberative actions, who seem to draw some satisfaction from their actions despite their consequences. This study zooms in on Head's reading to explore Vera's characters' lives within the discourse of gender relationships. It examines the impact of the characters' perceived libratory actions within the realm of power. The women's conversation over breakfast inside the cell reveals that they are not sorry for their assertive actions. This is demonstrated through Kebonye's words when she says:

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. I could see that there was no way to appeal to him if I felt ill, so I once said to him that if he liked he could keep some other woman as well because I couldn't manage to satisfy all his needs. Well, he was an education-officer and each year he used to suspend about seventeen male teachers for making school girls pregnant, but he used to do the same. The last time it happened the parents of the girl were very angry and came to report the matter to me. I told them: "You leave it to me. I have seen enough". And so I killed him (p. 90).

The actions of Head's female characters depict power appropriation as a ventilative and resistance strategy. This study proceeds from this basis and affirms the similarities of actions between Head and Vera's characters. Through feminist thought, the study argues that these women have resorted to 'deviant' social acts like murder to assert the self in a society suffocating under the convergence of both colonial and patriarchal powers.

In *Purple Hibiscus* (2006), Fwangyil, Gloria Ada explores the exploitation and suppression of women in Nigeria. She argues that the subjugating conditions women

live in reduce them to mental wrecks, making them resort to acts considered to be against social norms in a patriarchal society. Fwangyil's focus is on women like Beatrice. Beatrice experiences physical abuse and psychological torture in the hands of her husband and bears it in silence. The only available proofs are the 'jagged scar on her forehead', the swollen eye and her frequent miscarriages. She tells Ifeoma after another episode of Eugene's brutal beatings:

Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me where would I go? Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many told him to impregnate them even, and not bother paying a bride price? (p. 123).

Beatrice does not openly question Eugene's order and authority, even if obeying them is detrimental to her health. Fwangyil argues that women are cornered into risking their lives by the patriarchal structures of society. They have been manipulated to believe that marrying them in the 'proper' way where the bride price is paid is a favor to them, but Beatrice defies the position. For instance, Beatrice finally murders her husband as a means of asserting herself. Paradoxically her actions have serious consequences on her as an individual, her family and the society. This study draws from Fwangyil's approach and narrows its approach to the power concept. It reads that gendered actions as strategies of power and attempts to identify their motivating discourse and their effects on the individual characters. It interrogates the extent to which the power appropriations of Vera's characters are significant in the realization of their intended goals.

Given such important discourse on the quest for power within traditional patriarchy and colonial systems, this study examines and critiques the selected novels against the various forms of power to establish their attainment or lack of it. The study also interrogates the significance of the power struggle to the lives of those involved in the

struggle and the society in which they live. Specifically, the focus is on forms of power as they manifest themselves through actions that contradict the moral regulatory codes of society. This analysis develops from a working assumption that power narratives should be liberatory and anchored towards the attainment of progressive set goals.

As a matter of being objective, this study does not privilege any form of power or actions on others within relationships. Rather, the study discusses and critiques various forms of power as manifested through various actions and affirms their effects and significance on those involved in the power play.

In summary, the works reviewed in this study from both primary and secondary sources reveal that instances of the subversive power narratives had not been given focus. The reviewed works mainly addressed thematic concerns about the issues of women and the historical events. This provides an insightful gap that this study has endeavoured to fill. While finding the said thematic areas enriching to my research, this study has taken a deviation of approach to base its interrogation on power perspective within the research objectives. It examines the subversive narrative strategies employed by Vera to represent the actions through which her characters exerted power to reverse their oppressive, painful circumstances. The narratives have enabled the study to investigate the possibilities of an integrative effect of power appropriation on the characters' actions.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This research adopts strands of feminism and Michel Foucault's notion of power in the study of Vera's characters as they engage in the complex power game across the

five novels. These perspectives complemented each other on different analytical aspects of the study in order to realize a comprehensive analysis.

Employed in this study are different strands of 'feminisms', which in their various aspects of concern to this research, collectively explain the phenomenon of a woman in relation to patriarchal systems. Though feminist thoughts reside in over eight different strands such as radical, liberal, psychoanalytic, social, Marxism, religious separatists, eco, and cultural, among others with considerable overlapping between their approaches, this study utilizes selective ideas that are relevant from a number of the strands. In some instances of the study, the analysis is reinforced by the interpretations of feminist critics drawn from radical, liberal, and psychoanalytic strands of feminism like Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Virginia Woolf (1929), Susan Bownmiller (1935), Nancy Chodorow (1978), Kate Millett (1970), Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977) and Elaine Showalter (1977) to examine the characters subversive narratives that generate a unique world of self-destruction. An overview of these perspectives is vital for the understanding of how they relate to the texts studied in this research.

The idea of radical feminism emerged from the second wave feminism in the 1960s. Its focus is the liberation of women from the oppression in a patriarchal society. It defines oppression as consisting of sexual objectification of women, rape, violence against women and the patriarchal concept of gender roles. It views society as fundamentally patriarchy where men dominate and oppress women. It proposes the abolition of patriarchy by challenging existing social norms and institutions in order to liberate everyone from unjust society. In *The Dialectic of Sex. The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), Shulamith argues that society requires a feminist

revolution not just to eliminate male privilege but of the sex distinction where genital differences would no longer matter culturally. She contends that sexual oppression was the first and worst fundamental form of oppression and proposes that babies should be conceived and developed outside a woman's womb. She is suggesting the creation of a society where both men and women are treated equally in all spheres of life. Radical feminists locate the root cause of women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations. The critics indicate that to defeat patriarchy there must be a basic reworking of women's consciousness to enable them to recognize their values and strength as well as understanding the need to reject patriarchal pressures and work with other women. This perspective enables the analysis of the subversive power narratives employed by the women in Vera's fiction as strategies of resistance. It is especially crucial for the understanding of the discourse responsible for the characters' rejection of motherhood.

Liberal feminists are more individualistic and focus on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Madiha Mazher (2019) argues that liberal feminists' intention is to make the social and political rights of women equal to men. For them, society still holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men, and so it discriminates against the women in the academy, the forum and the marketplace. The critics argue that the subordination of women is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women entrance to, and success in the public spaces. Their struggle for gender equality is through political and gender reforms. Through this strand of feminism, the study is able to explain some aspects of the gender narratives as presented by Vera. For example, it is useful in the analysis of Phephelaphi's experience in her attempt to join the nursing training college.

Psychoanalytic feminism explains women's oppression as rooted within their psych structures and reinforced by the continual repetition of relational dynamics formed at the infant and childhood stages. The focus of these critics is to alter these experiences and family relations as well as linguistic patterns that produce and reinforce both masculinity and femininity. Through critics like Kate Cunningham and Annette Kolodny, this strand of feminism argues that key issues in women's oppression constitute sexual difference and women's 'Otherness' in relation to men. In this perspective are two divergent but closely related thoughts; Freudian and Lacanian. The Freudian feminists are more concerned with the production of dominance by men and the development of gendered subjects in a society where women are responsible for mothering. Lacanian feminists, on the other hand, focus on gender identity and language. Critics Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, and Clara Thompson emphasize the uniqueness of every human being over rigidly gendered development tracks. They claim that a woman's psychic pathologies as generated and sustained by their inferior social status within patriarchy are constructed rather than biologically determined. They interpreted some women's neuroses as creative attempts to address ongoing social subordination. This concept is significant to this research as it enables the investigation of the causes of the characters' neurotic behaviors and confusion to appropriately examine the resultant strange actions and their impacts on the characters and those around them.

Feminism, according to Bressler (2007) is defined as a range of social, political movements and ideologies that share a common goal which is to define, establish and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of both men and women. The broad perspective of feminism deals with the cultures of women in its entirety.

The key tenet of feminism, and which this research appropriates in its interrogations and analysis is:

That all people, women and men are politically, socially and economically equal. The woman's value to reach the threshold of equal status with man is significant as it attaches value to the individual persons, validating and giving significance to the individual rather than a group (p.182).

The tenet suggests equal treatment of men and women in all spheres of life. It encourages the enhancement of a woman's value to the level of a man's in order to achieve equality. Proponents of this perspective, like Simone de Bourvoir (1949) encourage women to assert themselves and move from the position of 'Otherness' to the centre and claim equal positions with men (p. 119). For the claim to be actualized, de Bourvoir suggests the women need to position themselves strategically.

This perspective is viewed by this research as an appropriate tool for the analysis of the selected texts because its framework allows an examination of gender inequalities of the society and the impact of colonization. Through its lens, the study examines the gendered discourse that governs their relationships. For instance, the perspective enables the analysis of the actions of both men and women to understand the discourse that influences them. An argument of the critical feminist approach has been that a number of characteristics must be taken into account when addressing social and structural issues taking place within the society.

Scholars have examined the core concept of feminism with diverse observations. Qin (2004) argues that influences such as an individual's race, ethnicity, class, gender, power and sexuality could have profound influences on the construction of an individual's identity and their ways of knowing and existing. In an attempt to neutralize such possibilities, the proponents of this perspective incorporated politics

because they intended to re-imagine their identities. They also wanted to make possible changes on the self and in the world in which they live; a world that according to them, must learn to validate all individuals, all cultures and all sub-cultures as creative, aesthetic, and rational people who can contribute to their societies and their world (p.167).

Lykes and Qin (2015) added that a critical feminist perspective pays attention to gender inequality, especially to the women experiencing discrimination and stereotyping based on race, ethnicity, class, power, gender, age, and sexuality (p.25). Lykes and Qin's argument relates directly to the circumstances of Vera's women characters and is therefore useful in the analysis of the characters' subversive power narratives that they use as modes of resistance. Phephelaphi, in *Butterfly Burning*, for instance, suffers discrimination from her biological mother, Zandile, who rejects her once again and sends her out in the streets because she is young and pretty and can use the power of her youth to take away Zandile's man. The colonial administration that is responsible for the training of nurses does not validate Phephelaphi on the basis of her capability and education achievement when she is found to be pregnant. The administration stops this significant progress in Phephelaphi's life on the basis of her pregnancy. It is this kind of discriminative treatment of women that the perspective castigates as it advocates for equal treatment of both genders.

Finally, this perspective allows for an exploration of power relations, its appropriation and manipulations by Vera's characters. This is explained by the fact that feminist criticism is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches to culture and literature that are of particular interest to women. Central to the diverse aims and methods of feminist criticism is its focus on patriarchy, the rule of society, and culture by men.

The male structure of power embraces phallocentrism, a belief that identifies the phallus as the source of power in culture and literature, with the accompanying male-centered and male-dominated assumptions. This approach challenges the sex superiority assumptions held by men and argues that literature should be free from such biases as race, class, and gender.

This perspective traces the roots of prejudice against women to western culture. It observes that the ancient Greeks encouraged gender discrimination, declaring the men to be superior and the women to be inferior. According to this culture, women allure men away from seeking after truth hence preventing them from attaining their full potential. For decades, the voices of men articulated and determined the social role, the cultural and personal significance of women. Among the first voices to raise opposition to patriarchal beliefs and statements include Christine de Pizan (2019).

In *Epistre au Dieu d'amours* (2007), de Pizan challenged the biased representation of the nature of women. In her subsequent work *Lucite des Dames* (1405), Pizan declared that God created man and woman as equal beings. In late 1700, Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1992) acknowledged awareness of women's struggles for equal rights. She argued that women must define for themselves what it means to be a woman and articulate the role they would play in society as a way of rejecting the patriarchal assumption that women are inferior to men. The movement gained recognition in the early 1900s when women gained the right to vote and participate as activists in the social issues that affected women. Later, feminism critics from radical and psychoanalytic strands like Virginia Woolf (1941), Simone de Beauvoir (1986), Kate Millet (1960s), Elaine Showalter (1970s),

Kolodny (1975), and a number of other women added their concerns about the plight of women.

These critics challenged the existing systems to give women their rightful spaces in society. Across her five novels, Vera condemns the harsh treatment the women are subjected to, and through her characters, she advocates for their freedom. She exposes to her readers women who are conscious of their oppressive circumstances and ready to assert themselves even through actions that subvert the norms of society. In this study, the feminist voices aided the reading of Vera's novels. They were instrumental in the examination of the terrifying incidents and the character's actions which relate to the quest for power. This assisted in accounting for the characters' deviant social acts as strategies of resistance and rebellion. For instance, Phephelaphi's assertions through abortions to free her in order to join the nursing training school which ended up killing her in *Butterfly Burning* can be understood through the feminist lens.

Annette Kolodny (1980) articulates feminist criticism's chief tenet thus:

What unites and repeatedly invigorates feminist literary criticism is neither dogma nor method but an acute and impassioned attentiveness to the ways in which primarily male structures of power are inscribed or (encoded) within our literary inheritance (and) the consequences of that encoding for women-as characters, as readers, and as writers (p. 209).

Kolodny locates the driving force behind feminist voices within the male structures of power. She claims that the impact of these structures has permeated women's literary inheritance and created in them an inherent yoke of exclusion from the power culture. Kolodny's argument guides the trajectory of this study. It invigorates Vera's deconstructive discourse on male structures of power. Vera encourages her women characters to assert themselves against the structures of power and chart their own power trajectories. The protagonist in *Butterfly Burning*, for instance, is anxious to

find her own path to freedom. Phephelaphi rejects Fumbatha's coercion for her to give up her dream of training as a nurse to stay in the house and depend on his meager provision. He wants her to operate under patriarchal systems that sanction women to be submissive and voiceless.

Similar to Kolodny, Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, authors of *The Mad Woman in the Attic: The woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (1979), assert that the male voice has for too long been dominant. Gilbert and Gubar's solution is that women should develop a "woman's sentence" that can encourage literary autonomy. Toril Moi (1988) defines feminist criticism as "a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism" (p.204). According to Moi, one of the feminist criticism's main focuses is to challenge and review this patriarchal vision established in both culture and literature, denouncing and rejecting all phallogocentric assumptions.

Supporting Moi is Fetterly (1978) who argues that feminist criticism is also a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read. In their views, these critics claim that the source of women's oppression is the patriarchal structures that identify and celebrate the phallus as the source of power. They see this as a fallacy that must be challenged by women through the assertion of their own power in order to be treated as human beings with value and rights. Moi and Fetterly advocate for total change through conscientization based on feminist ideas of equality. The feminist concepts advanced by the critics are important in the investigation of the causes of the female characters' subversive power narratives and their impact on the characters' oppressive circumstances.

In her disgust, Fetterly refers to ideas and beliefs propelled by canonical male writers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Napoleon Bonaparte. In their wisdom, these male writers are reported to have said the following:

“Plato thanks the gods for two blessings that he had not been born a slave and that he had not been born a woman”. Plato (C.427 –C.347 BCE).

“The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled. Woman “is matter, waiting to be formed by the active male principle. Man consequently plays a major part in reproduction; the woman is merely the passive incubator of his seed”. Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

“Nature intended women to be our slaves; they are our property, what a mad idea to demand equality for women!” Napoleon Bonaparte” (1769-1797).

Feminism criticism challenges such patriarchal statements with their accompanying male-dominated, philosophical assumptions. It argues that literature should be free from such biases because of race, class, or gender and provides a variety of theoretical frameworks and approaches to interpretation that values each member of society.

The main belief of feminism theory and criticism is that all people, women, and men, are politically, socially, and economically equal. As such, in this patriarchal world, where man defines what it means to be human; that man is the subject, the one who defines meaning and woman is the object, having her existence defined and determined by the men; women should define themselves and articulate their roles, values, aspirations and their place in society. The women need to analyze and challenge the established literary canon that has shaped such images of female inferiority and subordination. They should contest the long-held patriarchal assumptions about their sex and gender, and they must marshal a variety of resources to assert, clarify and finally implement their beliefs and values.

Reinforcing feminist beliefs, Virginia Woolf (1929), declares that men have and continue to treat women as inferior. She says, “Men define what it means to be female and determine who controls the political, economic, social and literary structures. Agreeing with Samuel T. Coleridge that great minds possess both male and female characteristics, Coleridge hypothesizes the existence of Shakespeare’s sister, one who is equally as gifted a writer as Shakespeare himself. Her gender, however, prevents her from having “a room of her own” (p.9).

Because she is a woman, she cannot obtain an education or find profitable employment. Because she cannot economically afford a room of her own, her innate artistic talents will never flourish. Being able to afford her own room would symbolize the solitude and autonomy needed to seclude her from the world and its social constraints in order to find time to think and write. It is this metaphorical solitude and autonomy that women in Vera’s fiction seem to be looking for. This study sets to interrogate the narratives of these characters to explain the strategies they adapted to obtain their goal, and not, as Woolf is claimed to put it, “Shakespeare’s sister dies alone without any acknowledgement of her personal genius. Even her grave plot does not bear her name; she is buried in an unmarked grave because she is female”.Such a loss of artistic talent and personal worth, argues Woolf, is the result of society’s opinion of women:

They are seen as intellectually inferior to men. Women, Woolf declares, must reject the social construct of femaleness, establish, and define for themselves their own identity. They must challenge the prevailing, false cultural notions about their gender identity and develop a female discourse that will accurately portray their relationship “to the world of men (p.9).

The study leans on Woolf’s notion of rejection of the social construct of femaleness and the definition for the self’s own identity to explain the actions of Vera’s female

characters. A close reading of Vera's novels reveals to us characters like Phephelaphi, Nehanda, Mazvita, and the like, who have rejected the societal rules and resorted to social 'deviant' acts and behaviors in an attempt to liberate themselves from the oppressive convergence powers of colonial administration and patriarchy. Like Shakespeare's sister, Phephelaphi cannot join the nursing college because she is pregnant. Though her pregnancy is at its earliest stage, the harsh discriminative systems lock her out. Her attempts to get rid of the baby in her womb condemn her to a painful cruel death. In the analysis, the feminist concept as interpreted by Fetterly and Woolf enables the exploration of the characters' reactions which are manifested through subversive narratives.

Like Woolf before her, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) believes that men define what it means to be human, including what it means to be a woman. Since a woman is not a man, Beauvoir maintains she becomes the 'other', an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant man. Being subordinate to the man, the woman discovers that she is a secondary or non-existent player in the major social institutions of her culture, such as the church, government, and educational systems. Beauvoir says that women must break the bonds of their patriarchal society and define themselves if they wish to become significant human beings in their own right, and they must defy the classification by men as the "Other".

For her, women must ask themselves, "what is a woman" and the answer must not be "mankind" because such a term allows men to define women. This is what she refers to as 'generic labeling', which must be rejected, for such assumes that "humanity is male and man defines woman not as herself but as relative to him" (p.119). The reality of de Beauvoir's insinuations is demonstrated by men like Fumbatha, whose

main reason for persuading Phephelaphi not to take up the nursing training is because he is working and can support her. This argument punctures Phephelaphi's ego and her desire to make something for herself in order to be independent. She defies Fumbatha's proposal by walking away to pursue her goals. Unfortunately, the strategy she employs in her pursuit contradicts her achievement expectations and destroys her instead.

Beauvoir further insists that women must see themselves as autonomous beings and must reject the societal construct that men are the subject or the absolute and women are the other. She argues that in such an erroneous statement is the assumption that men have the power to control the dominant discourse and the power to define cultural terms and roles. She declares that women must define themselves, articulate their own social constructs of what it means to be a woman, and reject being labeled as the other. De Beauvoir's interpretation of feminism aids the explanation and understanding of the decisions made by the women in Vera's fiction to resort to the kind of actions they exemplified. Characters like Mazvita and Runyararo seem to have reached a point of no return in their oppression and decided to act irrespective of the dictates of the societal norms.

Mary Ellmann and Kate Millett strongly challenged the ideological characteristics of both the male and the female. Millett argues that a female is born, but a woman is created; that is, one's sex is determined at birth, but one's gender is a social construct created by cultural norms. Consciously or unconsciously, women and men conform to the societal constructs established by society due to their socialization as children. She claims that patriarchy provides a cultural canon that regulates the behaviors of each sex. For instance, boys are expected to be aggressive, self-assertive, and domineering,

while girls are expected to be passive, meek, and humble. She claims that such cultural expectations are cascaded through media, including television, movies, songs, and literature. Millet holds that conforming to these prescribed sex roles is tantamount to “sexual politics which propagates the operations of power relations in society. She argues that this kind of power proportioning favors the men and subordinates the women. Women, Millett maintains, must disenfranchise the power center of their culture and establish a convention that will articulate female discourse as well. For Millet, the woman’s assertion for power is a sure way to share men’s power spaces and gain their freedom from the domination of men.

Guerin et al., as quoted in Opondo (2010), reinforces this notion when he says, “the era of recovering women’s texts has been succeeded by a new era in which the goal is to recover entire cultures of women” (p.22). Extending the same line of thought, Ross Murfin in Opondo (2010) notes that “the evolution of feminism into feminisms has fostered a more inclusive, global perspective” (p. 23). Elaine Showalter (1977) sums up feminist theory under three phases: feminine, whose writers upheld patriarchal treatment of the women, feminists who conscientized humanity of the cruel treatment women suffer on the hands of their ‘more powerful’ male creations, and at the female phase where female writers totally reject anything related to the culture of male dominance.

Showalter observes thus:

Feminist theorists and critics now concern themselves with developing a peculiarity female understanding of the female experience in art, including a feminine analysis of literary forms and techniques. Such a task necessarily includes the uncovering of ‘misogyny’ in texts, (p.85).

Showalter believes that feminist critics hold the key to women's emancipation. She claims that the critics are able to deconstruct misogynic texts and reconstruct them into women's conscious discourse that would encourage women to assert their power in a more feminine manner in order to free themselves. For Showalter, women's emancipation is of significance and does not need an antagonistic strategy for its actualization.

Adding her voice to the ongoing debate on the gendered power play, Kate Cunningham (2003) had this to say:

No one is so well calculated to think for womankind as woman herself. In the province of administering to the wants of her sex, no one can be so well adapted as she. Her advancement is no better way proven than by her progress in medicine and literature, to say nothing of the reform movements, which she is steadily carrying on for the benefit of her sex (p.83).

Cunningham takes cognizance of the fact that a woman is an independent being who understands both her inner and external worlds. Just like the man, the woman requires her own space to assert herself and exercise her rights because she understands her needs and wants. It is this space that the feminist thought encourages the woman to fight for. This research has adopted the critical feminist approach because it permits an exploration of the relative positions of power in a patriarchal society, which shapes gender differences. The feminist thought is important to this study as it enables the investigation of the causes of the characters' moral disgusts in order to examine their 'deviant' actions and their resultant effects. Power fiction usually depicts a combative world in which characters are shown either attacking or resisting one another, maneuvering situations, and surmounting obstacles through actions not easy to understand rationally. It is this irrational action of negotiating obstacles that result in power as a paradox.

Michel Foucault deals extensively with power in its various manifestations. This study deploys Foucault's thoughts from a number of his works with a critical focus on power relations in society. As already indicated above, the concept of feminism works jointly with Foucault's notion of power in the analysis of the novels. The idea of power is a concept propounded by Michel Foucault. In his works: *The History of Madness*, *Discipline & Punish*, *Genealogy* and, *Subject and Power*, where Foucault's concern with power is seen in different contexts. In *History of Madness* (Foucault, 1961), Foucault sees madness as a social construct distinct from mental illness. To him, 'madness,' is the culmination of pressures exerted on individuals by society's oppressive systems, which are obstructive to the attainment of goals.

Foucault's genealogical notions on power expose us to a varied understanding of power discourse. He puts emphasis on power and its practices. He discusses power relations whereby the direct relations between powers operate in two ways and bodies: First is the way of power over bodies whereby the power relations have an immediate hold upon the body, they invest it, mask it, frame it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, perform ceremonies and to emit signs. The second way is the body's own power, which he claims to oppose power over bodies. The study appropriates this tenet to explain the actions of women in Vera's fiction.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault explores the manipulation of legitimate power to dominate, exploit, criminalize and punish the characters. The study leans on this tenet to examine the use of authority by the colonial regime on Vera's characters. The colonial power represented in Zimbabwe by Mr. Browning has come with a claim of civilization of the natives as she acquires more power for herself. She manipulates her 'legitimate' authority to oppress the natives. Using divide and rule tactics, she

uses black men to fight their wars and exploit, criminalize and punish their black brothers who refuse to surrender their labor, land, and wealth to her. This provokes resistance from the natives. The result is power impact which leaves a trail of destruction rather than gains. Foucault, In *Subject and Power* (1982) goes on to discuss a form of power that makes individuals subjects, subject to someone else control and dependence, which leads to total subjugation. This study uses this perspective of power to analyze and interrogates the discourse responsible for the characters' subordination and subjugation.

For instance, the study tries to understand the causes of the subjugation of male characters as well as the subordination of women. This is significant as it has a direct link to the tensions that lead to deviant social acts as strategies of power acquisition and the subsequent power impacts. Characters like Fumbatha and Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning* are engaged in such power tussles.

Since Vera's women characters are either in physical or psychological 'prison' what Foucault would refer to as 'madness' coupled with the idea that 'mad' people, according to the Orthodox view, were genuinely dangerous to themselves and to those around them. Foucault's perspective of power, especially on 'madness' and reason, is essential to the understanding of the women's behaviors of self-inflicting harm in order to suggest a way forward for such cases. This study, therefore, finds Foucault's notion of power very useful in the analysis of specific actions of the women with a view to suggesting interventions that are logical and non-judgmental. In *Discipline & Punish* (1975) Foucault portrays how systems are manipulated for power domination. He especially discusses the use of power in prisons, He says:

The prison system allows the upper class to continue the subjugation of the lower class. The prison system effectively incarcerates isolates and economically controls the most dynamic members of the lower class. The continuous cycle of segregation and supervision renders this most volatile group both politically and socially harmless. The discipline of the prison system has spilled out into all of society. This spillover causes a struggle for each member of society. People either struggle and resist the discipline of society and may be labeled criminal, or submit to it and lose their own identity (p.85).

Reading Vera's novels through Foucault's perception of prison power reveals to us characters that appropriate their own body powers to resist the rules that regulate the patriarchal society in which they live. This study utilizes Foucault's views of power over bodies to investigate the characters' actions for a better understanding of the power quest strategies. Foucault goes on to give his views on *'Training of bodies or the body politics'* (Foucault, 1975). He argues that discipline developed a new economy and politics of bodies. He claims that modern institutions required that bodies must be individuated according to their tasks, as well as training, observation, and control. His argument is that, discipline created a whole new form of individuality for bodies, which enabled them to perform their duty within the new forms of economic, political, and military organizations emerging in the modern age and continuing to today. The hallmark of his argument is that discipline creates "docile bodies", ideal for the new economics, politics, and warfare of the modern industrial age.

Contextualizing this argument to Vera's texts, we realize the cruel treatment Vera's characters have had to endure at the hands of both the ruling government and patriarchal forces. While the men are either conscripted to war or subjected to hard labour, women are left without protection because those charged with the responsibility are either dead from colonial bullets or they have turned against them to either sexually molested them or mistreated them in one way or another. This study

intends to examine the narratives that inform such cruel actions upon the women and further examine the actions adopted by the women to resist and survive the oppressions.

In his genealogical work (1970), Foucault's emphasis is on the power that power has to be directly related to bodies. The direct relation between power and bodies, he says, can be seen as operating in either of two ways. One way is the way of power over bodies; he posits that power relations have an immediate hold upon the body. They invest it, mask it, train, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, perform ceremonies, to emit signs. According to Foucault, this kind of power involves actual incorporation of power into the bodies of individuals, controlling their acts and attitudes, and behavior from within. Foucault argues that such 'incorporation' operates through language and signs, but the reality behind it is war-like and battle-like. For him, systems of power use various means of power embodied in both action and language to instrumentalise and control an individual from within in order to make them into subjects that they can manipulate to serve their interests. Foucault, however, contends that these manipulative tactics don't always work to yield the desired results.

The other way of power, Foucault says, is the way of the body's own power, the body's own force of will and desire. He argues that such a power of the body opposes the power over bodies and thereby represents the source of all revolution. Foucault's perceptions of power are crucial to this study because they provide the framework through which we analyze and interrogate the power discourse of both men and women as they engage in the power games of their society (p.156). While reading how power commands the characters' actions in the novels under the study, the

concept enables the interpretation of how and the purpose for which the painful experiences are deployed in Vera's fiction.

In Vera's novels, power manifests itself in various forms due to different circumstances that provoke it. It's for this reason that the study has combined various strands of feminism and Foucault's notion of power in order to realize a comprehensive analysis.

In summary, the subversive narratives employed by Vera's characters, which this study reads as actions of power upon the bodies of characters, have manifested themselves in various forms due to the variability of circumstances that these characters find themselves in. As alluded to earlier, it is for this reason that the study relied on combined ideas of various strands of feminism and Foucault's perspectives on power in order to achieve a comprehensive analysis of the texts. While the feminist perspectives have been instrumental in the analysis of the subversive narratives of the characters, Foucault's ideas on power have enabled the interpretations of these narratives and their analysis as actions of power exercising, emanating from characters' frustrations and dissatisfactions with their oppressive, painful circumstances caused by both patriarchy and colonial systems. Both perspectives enabled the study to account for the characters' subversive narratives through which power and its impact unfolded and which constitutes the research problem of this study.

1.9 Research Methodology

In order to interrogate the impact of power as exerted through the subversive narratives employed by Yvonne Vera's characters to transform their oppressive,

painful circumstances and attain freedom, to investigate how the men appropriated and manipulated power to oppress and torture the women, to interrogate the significance of the characters' deviant social acts as strategies of resistance, to find out the relationship between men's colonial subjugation and women's oppression and to explain the subversive power discourse as a paradox, the study employed qualitative research method. The research carried out a textual study of Yvonne Vera's five novels with the main focus on the power concept as revealed through the characters' subversive narratives. It addressed the narrative complexities of trauma, desperation, bitterness, and painful circumstances through which power discourse unfolds to find out the possibilities of integrative effects of power appropriation on the characters' actions which constitute power as a paradox.

1.9.1 Identification of relevant information

The qualitative research method enabled the study to identify characters with deviant behaviors and self-destructive actions in their power struggle. The relevant discourse was identified and analyzed under five different sections but with related objectives. Under each section, the appropriate information on the research objectives was selected throughout the five primary sources (novels). The information was based on the representation of characters and their violent and oppressive interactions characterized by their painful and sometimes traumatizing experiences. The discourse identification traced individual character's oppressive and traumatizing actions, which in most cases subverted the norms of the society and largely resulted in self-destruction but with short-lived moments of gratification.

The material used in the study included not only the five primary sources but also Vera's other literary works, journal articles, and existing works on the concept of power. The study also employed the use of online information as appropriate.

1.9.2 Analysis Procedure

The study relied on both the inductive and deductive reasoning processes. The analysis was done within selected strands of feminism and Michel Foucault's perspectives of power. The use of discourse analysis in this research allows for critical issues such as patriarchy, colonization, oppression, discrimination, and subjugation, among others, to be subjected to further exploration as it raises consciousness for the understanding of the major motivating factors and the possibilities of reconstructing a more enabling society where every individual right count.

The analysis of Vera's fiction is intended at extending the argument on the paradoxes of power by demonstrating how the concerns in the selected texts underscore Vera's sense of living through a period of rapid social change at the dawn of independence in Zimbabwe. Vera's fiction creates a significant platform for the transformation of our understanding of gender and power politics in patriarchal societies.

This research strongly relies on the selected strands of critical Feminist approach and Michel Foucault's thoughts on power to understand the societal agencies responsible for the sufferings of both men and women and the methods they used to negotiate their spaces. The research places emphasis on the paradox of power with the intention of understanding and explicating the power play within the confines of gender relationships in a society struggling under the yoke of colonial authority and the inherence of patriarchal power.

With regard to Michel Foucault's idea of power over and of bodies and the key feminist tenet that view men and women as equal, the study addresses the social, cultural, and historical circumstances which were responsible for the choices the characters had to make and whose consequences propelled them to act as they did.

The corpus of texts constituting the primary discourse of this research is used to trace the commonalities and differences in the narratives of the various female characters. This provides us with an understanding of the literary configurations of the history of Zimbabwe before and after independence. The study pre-supposes that Vera's fiction appeals for a transformation of the identities of the characters beyond the unproductive essentialism into a pro-active identity. The texts seem to emphasize that the women are constantly in a state of self-discovery and always hungering for a new version of what it means to be a woman hence the gendered antagonistic relationships. The sources of the secondary texts of this study are the Internet, library, and related thesis. The texts are subjected to critical reading in order to gain insights that will strengthen the research. The study brings Vera's works to discourse with feminists and Foucault's thoughts as they converge to explicate the problematics of power appropriation as explored within literary spaces.

1.9.3 Chapter Divisions

The chapters include chapter one, which is the background that provides the introduction to the study, statement of the problem which the research attempts to solve, the objectives and research questions on which the study is based, the theoretical framework which guides the thesis analysis, literature review where other works related to the study are discussed, the significance the study which justifies the research, scope, and limitations which sets the boundary of the research and the

research methodology which provide the techniques and tools for data collection and analysis. Chapter two, **Female Body as the Site of Power Manipulations**, examines how the male characters manipulate patriarchal power to oppress and torture the female characters. Through Foucault's perceptions of power, the chapter explores the politics of sex and race, which are used as the springboard of women's oppression by patriarchal and colonial systems.

Chapter three, **Subversive Narratives as Strategies of Resistance**, focuses on the actions and the significance of Vera's female characters as strategies of resistance. Through feminists and Foucault's perceptions, the study interrogates these deviant narratives that Vera's female characters exude in their quest for power. This is done against the backdrop of colonial evils and patriarchal domination. The fourth chapter, **Colonial subjugation and power Appropriation**, focuses on the relationship between colonial male subjugation and women's oppression. The chapter examines Vera's presentation of a male whose frustration is the cause of patriarchal domination and its attendant evils on the female characters, while the fifth chapter, **The Paradox of Power**, explains the power discourse in terms of its paradox nature. It explores the power question and interrogates its functionality and effects in gender relationships. Chapter six is the conclusion and recommendation.

1.9.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a formidable landscape for the content of this thesis. It has contributed to the main thrust on which the study is anchored. The concept of power as perceived in the chapter has given the necessity for the study to discuss Vera's approach to the African colonial conditions with regard to the oppressive colonial and patriarchal ideologies. The chapter has pointed out the significant landmarks on

which the study is pitched. Notably, the chapter has stated the problem and the research objectives, which present the purpose of the study. The literature review has been instrumental in the identification of gaps that the study intended to fill. This chapter has also established theoretical perspectives and methodological design that guided the study. Finally, the objectives were outlined in chapter divisions which provided a clear trajectory for the workings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FEMALE BODY AS SITE OF POWER MANIPULATIONS

2.1 Introduction

In many communities of the world, the arrangements of cultural systems where men are deemed to be superior to women have influenced how men and women perceive themselves, Dinnerstein (1977). Since these arrangements seem to give unequal advantages to men and women, they have been coined into an ideology of gender inequality that is championed by the favoured gender. The ideology has encouraged the use of women's bodies as sites for masculine egos. Leaning on the ideology, men appropriate power and manipulate it on the bodies of women to feed their masculine egos.

In literature, female writers and critics have expressed their displeasure against such ideologies through their writings. Mary Daly (1971) is among the female critics who challenge the representation of women in literature from a male perspective. In *Beyond God the Father*, Daly observes that:

The Unholy Trinity of Rape, Genocide and War are combined in their one patriarchal person, the legions of sexism, racism and classism. This Unholy Trinity, the single patriarchal person, has one essential message: necrophilia, defined as "obsession with erotic attraction toward and stimulation by corpses, typically evidenced by overt acts. Men not only oppress women's minds, they also oppress women's bodies through such practices as Hindu suttee, Chinese foot binding, African female circumcision, European witch burning and Western gynecology (p.104).

Daly condemns the patriarchal man's obsession with erotic attraction on the grounds that it leads to unconsented sex that not only affects the body but also the minds of the women. In view of Daly's thoughts, this chapter looks at the literary discourse on the representation of women against the backdrop of patriarchal systems coupled with

political upheavals at the onset of colonialism through to the postcolonial period in Zimbabwe. Through her novels, Yvonne Vera presents to us a society where women's bodies are the battlefields for several conflicting emotions and actions. The study proceeds from the premise that the female body, as depicted in Vera's fiction, is the site of power `manipulations. This resonates well with Daly's thoughts in her observation when she talks of the 'unholy trinity. In her view, the trinity represents what this study calls three major evils to humanity, or better still, to women. Rape, Genocide, and War, according to Daly, can be combined to be synonymous to patriarchal obsession with erotic attraction towards women, typically evidenced in the overt acts. She concludes that "men not only oppress women's minds, they also oppress women's bodies through the overt actions".

Central to the chapter's focus is the female body, which the study understands as the whole being of a woman, on which power is manipulated. Manipulation is understood in this context as power used to suppress, oppress, patronize and exploit. Specifically, the study interrogates Vera's novels to explain how her characters have manipulated power over the female bodies and to establish the discourse that motivates them. The overt acts that embody power manipulations are understood in this study to mean: rape, murder, incest, 'love', coaxed sex, obsession, torture, prostitution, and power domination within the patriarchal orientation. The acts are analyzed and explained within various strands of feminism, such as radical, liberal, and psychoanalytic and Michel Foucault's thoughts on power.

2.2 The subjectification of the female body

Socialized in cultures that celebrate the male gender for male sake, the male characters that Vera writes about believe in their domineering superiority. They

exercise this power selfishly over the ‘inferior’ female bodies. The men’s need to be top on the patriarchal pedestal push them to prey on the unsuspecting female bodies. They gloat over the bodies, raping, mutilating, and even murdering them. Vera presents these painful experiences in her five novels in a way that creates fear and disgust at the workings of power. These experiences are isolated and examined through feminism and Foucault’s perspectives.

Feminism is anchored on the idea that the patriarchal structures of the society do not take cognizance of the significance of the female gender yet they use the female body to satisfy their male egos and bodies. Under this perspective, Millett (1969) in *Sex Politics* argues that the root cause of women’s oppression is buried deep in patriarchy’s gender system. For her, sex is political primarily because the male-female relationship is the paradigm for all power relationships where ‘social caste supersedes all other forms of power in egalitarianism; racial, political, or economic, and that unless the clinging to male supremacy as a birthright is finally gone, all systems of oppression will continue to function simply by their logical and emotional mandate in the primary human situation. She reiterates that because male control of the public and the private worlds constitutes patriarchy, male control must be eliminated if women are to be liberated (p.89).

Millett’s thinking explains that patriarchal oppression of women emanates from sex dichotomy, that is, male —female relationship characterized by supremacy and inferiority. This study argues that to feed the male ego and make the man maintain his status quo of superiority, the male is pushed by what Freud refers to as the ‘Id’, the part of the body that propels the desire to conquer at whatever cost. The male

characters in Vera's novels seem to have the desire to control and dominate women in accordance with patriarchal empirical norms.

The desires are manifested through actions that bring pain and frustrations to the women, their bodies becoming the site where men manipulate power to satisfy their egos. Contributing to the debate on the relationship between men and women, Dorothy Dinnerstein (1977) illustrates her thoughts through the use of two very contrasting images: the mermaid and the Minotaur. According to her, patriarchal systems as embodied in our cultures have influenced how women and men perceive themselves and how they behave. She likens the women to the mermaids and men to the Minotaurs. She describes the woman's body from a man's perspective as highly treacherous, seductive and impenetrable. The fearsome gigantic man who cannot control his insatiable lust greedily devours the female flesh. This description allegorically explains the sexual oppression that Vera discusses in her fiction.

Dinnerstein further explains that:

“Our pathological need to make monsters of ourselves is buried deep in our psychosexual development in the pre-Oedipal stage. The infant's relationship with her or his mother is profoundly symbiotic because the infant is initially incapable of distinguishing between self and mother. Given that the maternal body is the infant's first encounter with the material or physical universe, the infant experiences it as a symbol of an unreliable and unpredictable universe. Mother is the source of pleasure and pain for the infant, who is never certain whether his or her needs will be met. As a result the infant grows up feeling very ambivalent toward mother figures (women) and what they represent (nature). Not wanting to re- experience utter dependence on an all-powerful force, men seek to control both women and nature, to exert power over them. Constantly fearing the power of the mother within themselves, women seek to be controlled by men, (p.125).

Dinnerstein's concept of power depicts the power complexities that exists between men and women. Her argument enables the interpretation of the discourse for the gendered behaviors and actions in Vera's novels. The soldier who rapes Mazvita in a

bush decides to exert his power over her in the most inhuman way just to feel all powerful and in control as he satisfies his male ego.

The power manipulation is entangled with contradictions where on one hand, men use power as an instrument to get pleasure from women. Still, on the other hand, they exert power over the bodies of women to torture them through cruel actions like rape. In the novels, Vera vividly describes the acts of rape of Mazvita, Zhizha, Thenjiwe and Nonceba, demonstrating how male characters can manipulate their powers to inflict pain both in the psyche and on the physical bodies of the female characters.

As beings that are already subordinated to another, the women bear the brunt of men's cruelty within their bodies and minds. In Vera's fiction, the female body is a discourse in public domain where male characters play their power over. This kind of power play is supported and perpetuated by patriarchal cultures which define the female in relation to the male and simultaneously claiming superiority of the male and decreeing that the female, by nature, is inferior.

Adding her voice to the debate on the treatment of women by men, Catherine Mackinnon (2006) in *"Feminism, Marxism, method and the state; An Agenda for Theory"*, argues that sexuality is the locus of male power. For her, manipulating this power through patriarchal institutions enables men to forcefully take away from the women what is mostly their own (sexuality) (p.115).

Through rape, Vera's male characters have managed to take by force, women's sexuality. In their analysis of rape, Carolyn M. Schafer and Marilyn Frye (2000) appeal to the notion of a domain. They define this domain as where a person lives. At the centre of this domain is a set of "person –properties" (the ability to reason, the

capacity to self-awareness, the ability to deliberate and make choices,) and their physical location, the body. To isolate the center of a person's domain is to inflict maximum harm upon him or her. Since rape is "a use of a person which involves tampering with parts of her which are, for most people, centrally rather than peripherally involved in their personal identity", (p.67). It is the kind of crime that threatens to disintegrate a woman, making her less of a person by depriving her of bodily autonomy. In rape and incest, sexual harassment, prostitution, and pornography, a man takes a woman's sexuality, as it is mediated through her body, and through his action proclaims that women's sexuality is for men- for what men want and need. This claim reduces the female body to a mere site for power manipulations.

In her presentation through the five novels, Vera locates the anguish and trauma suffered by women in colonial Rhodesia. The legal system that regulated the black population tended to define the African subject as male, and colonial authorities were uncertain how to apply laws on vagrancy, for instance, to women. While in the view of the colonialists women are too inconsequential to be regulated by the law, the African men exert pressure to control the movements of African women whom they considered "their property". In *Butterfly Burning* for example, Fumbatha puts a claim on Phephelaphi. He is grateful to the river for having given Phephelaphi to him. He says the river was not as greedy as he had thought, it had given him this woman. 'He never wanted to let her go. He could never free her. He wanted her like the land beneath his feet" (p. 27-28). Driven by his patriarchal socialization, Fumbatha intends to possess, control and subjugate Phephelaphi. He wants to patronize her as a woman and make her body his property.

In Patriarchal societies, the status of women is mediated through their social relations, whether it is the woman's father, husband, or son. Of these relations, the woman's role as mother of sons is intimately linked with nationalism. In Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002), the protagonist, Nonceba's mother, is depicted as a victim of the importance that the patriarchal society attaches to male children. Her husband's strong desire for a son has robbed her of the dignity enjoyed by married women who give birth to sons.

The scorn and abuse heaped upon her by her in-laws and her husband's desire for a son have forced her to leave her marital home and return to her birth village. The implication here is that in Zimbabwe, Africa and the world by extension, women without male children are consciously excluded and positioned as inappropriate others. Simone de Beauvoir (1974) looks at women's sufferings as resulting from their exclusivity from the power domain in patriarchy. To use her words, a woman is the 'other,' an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male.

Being subordinate to males, the female discovers that she is a secondary or nonexistent player in the major social institutions of her culture, such as the church, government, and Educational systems (p.79). This kind of reasoning is depicted through men like Fumbatha. Even in his precarious status as an exploited laborer, he is not willing to leave the land. For him, a man cannot leave the land because he is the custodian. Since Phephelaphi is just a woman, what de Beauvoir calls 'Other,' she is free to leave just like Nonceba's mother who had to leave her marital home because she is a woman.

The women suffer from rootlessness and unbelongingness. They are perceived as people on transit and whose settlements and identities are determined by men. Despite the mistreatment at the hands of men, women feel obliged to stay by them and perform social rituals, what Foucault refers to as the performance of ceremonies. In his perspective of power, Foucault (1970) discusses power over bodies, a form of power that has an immediate hold on the body. The power that tortures the body, forces the body to carry out tasks and to perform ceremonies, (Foucault, 1970). Women in Vera's fiction operate under this kind of power. They give an expose of women subjected to both bodily suffering and psychological torture. The cruel colonial regime has robbed them of their husbands, sons, uncles and grandfathers. Vera demonstrates this in her novel *Butterfly Burning*, where women protest the killings of their men at the battlefield. What they have are many dead bodies to bury and hearts scarred with endless pains.

The women's spaces as wives and mothers have become sites of pain and secrets about their hanged male relatives. These secrets are released through the birth of newborn babies, beings who are constant reminders of the pain and suffering to which the colonial patriarchy subjected the women. Vera says, "a child is born with a unique secret however concealed" (p.13). She illustrates this notion through the birth of Fumbatha. She says that Fumbatha was born the same year his father died. "He was born with fingers tight over an invisible truth. Trapped in his fingers are the words his mother has given him. She delivers words that are arrows. A single seed gives birth to seventeen more, to a thousand more" (p.13). Fumbatha's mother, like many others, is a woman suffering the pain of widowhood and psychological torture.

Most of the female characters in the world of Vera's fiction neither have jobs nor 'self-worth'. They are desperate beings wandering from war-torn rural villages to cruel overcrowded cities. Phephelaphi, Mazvita, Zhiza, Nonceba, Thenjiwe, Deliwe, Zhakile and others, are women who are jobless with very unstable family backgrounds. Their plight creates dangerous situations for them to get trapped. As they move from war-torn villages and hardship dwelling in search of better conditions of living, they become easy prey to men and are often violated. They are also grossly assaulted by men in overcrowded township accommodations. They are frequently harassed and abused when they least suspect.

Deliwe, for example, is engaged in liquor brewing and prostitution, activities that are dangerous and contravene societal laws. The feminist thought, as interpreted by Allison Jaggar (1983), explains such scenario thus:

Because women in a capitalist system do not have sufficient access to the work place, in order to survive they must connect themselves financially to men. Such women sell, among other things, their sexual services for economic livelihood. This is partly why prostitutes are alienated and estranged from their work, from themselves, and from humanity itself (p.64).

Jaggar's line of argument is an eye-opener for the women because what women like Deliwe are selling is what is closest to them: her body, their sexuality. Therefore, under capitalism such as that of Vera's characters, a woman's sexuality becomes a commodity and her body the site of power manipulations.

The women's sufferings from social evils have been made worse by the colonial wars of conquests and control. Like Deliwe, most of Vera's female characters come from war-torn solitary backgrounds. Mazvita, in *Without a Name*, for example, has no parents because they perished in the chimurenga war between the natives and the colonial forces. With no family, she lives alone. Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning* has

neither family nor a 'normal' name, her name, Phephelaphi depicts the struggles of mother and child "She said that Phephelaphi was the name she had now found for both of us" (29-30). These women are vulnerable and become easy prey for men.

Men exploit this precarious situation to exercise their control over the women's public and private worlds. Through conditioning, they are able to secure the consent of the very women they oppress. Millet (p.36) says, "Should a woman refuse to accept the patriarchal ideology and should she manifest her mistrust by casting off her femininity, that is, her submissiveness or subordination, men will use coercion to accomplish what conditioning has failed to achieve (p.89). In her view, this is intimidation that is practiced by men everywhere. She, however, stresses that despite all the attempts to condition and coerce them; women have never been brought under the complete control of men. This is evidenced in Vera's characters across the novels. Phephelaphi, for instance, is brought up by a woman single-handedly. She tells Fumbatha that her name had been generated from her background. She tells him:

My mother named me Phephelaphi because she did not know where to seek refuge when I was born. She slept anywhere. She had no food in her stomach, but her child had to sleep under some shelter. As soon as I was born her struggles began (p.29-30).

Phephelaphi is a name that signifies lack of identity and struggle. "At the age of six, Phephelaphi's mother changed her name from Sakhile when she realized that the town of Makokoba had no time for a woman who was raising a child on her own" (p.30). Having taken advantage of a jobless and helpless woman by making her pregnant, the men disappeared, leaving her unprotected and uncared for. Phephelaphi's mother underwent torture and self-sacrifice to fend for both herself and her daughter. She had

to give away her child and take to prostitution, a practice that is not only against one's own morality but also contravenes the laws of the land.

Amplifying feminist position, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) reckons that “pregnancy and raising of a child alienates a woman from herself, making it difficult for her to chart, unencumbered, the course of her destiny (p. 207). This view gives insight to the understanding of Phephelaphi's mother's predicament. The struggle of Phephelaphi's mother with a child and no food and shelter portrays a woman determined to beat all odds in life to live. She practically gave up her life for her child. Ironically the same child does not appreciate her mother's sacrifice for her sake. She argues with the memory of her mother questioning their relationship as mother and daughter when they did not even know each other's proper names (p.33). It shows the harsh, oppressive circumstances that Vera's female characters have had to endure. These circumstances negatively impact Phephelaphi. She has no strong family foundation from which she can take her bearing in life. In de Beauvoir's view, mother – daughter connection brings pain, abandonment, infanticide and abortion” (p.34). This pain is engraved in the mind of Phephelaphi.

In *'Butterfly Burning,'* Vera insinuates that Phephelaphi, like her other women characters without childhood, is suffering the consequences. Because Phephelaphi neither had childhood nor womanhood, she had no role model in her young adult life. Through her journey to metamorphose the self and find meaning in life, she becomes a worse victim than her mother previously. In this regard, Phephelaphi's womanhood, is in a way, a continuation of her own mother's. In her life, Phephelaphi's mother had been comprehensively immobilized, and this is the legacy that she bequeathed her daughter.

In her young adult life, Phephelaphi met Fumbatha. Springing from the water like a sea goddess, Phephelaphi emerged breathless and gasping for air beneath his feet. With the power of her femininity, she transforms Fumbatha whom she has just met. Their loneliness and physical attraction brought them together into a 'love' relationship. Phephelaphi needed Fumbatha to fill the void left by her mother's death, and the father figure she never had in her childhood. 'She felt safe in his adoration. She loved him in her own special way and held him to her so that she could never shrink down to where she could not rise. She needed something tangible to hold on to because there was nothing she looked forward to then except being with him' (p.32).

Phephelaphi had been traumatized and lonely in her yester - life. She is apprehensive and scared and, true to her patriarchal orientation, needs a man to comfort and protect her. Fumbatha takes advantage of the situation and exploits her love to the fullest. He even becomes so possessive that he dreads being without her. This feeling makes him want to be with Phephelaphi everywhere and to protect her from everyone, even those passing by. Phephelaphi's feeling of inferiority and insecurity draws him closer to Fumbatha. Dinnerstein finds this psychological and argues that because a woman fears the power of the mother within herself, she is always in search of a man who needs her, a man who can control her. The more a man says he needs her, the more she wants to be with him (p.39). In light of Dinnerstein's postulation, the initial closeness Phephelaphi feels towards Fumbatha becomes very meaningful. Vera says that "She forgot everything and relied upon the generosity and the motion of his body towards her, on his very thought and attention" (p.38).

The argument advanced by this study is that men are more sexually possessive than women because men need to feel in control; they hope to overcome the fact that they

were once absolutely dependent on their mothers by totally possessing their wives and lovers. For this reason, Phephelaphi's decision to pursue her ambition to enter the nursing school is seen by Fumbatha as a rejection of his patriarchal authority and a compromise with the colonial rule against which he resists. The narrator says:

Fumbatha does not encourage her, instead, he reminds her of what they share.

We are happy together; I work. I take care of you. It is not necessary for you to find something else. "He insists on her unwavering loyalty. He mistrusts the city which does not understand the sort of triumph a man and a woman can find and share in their solitude. Does no one know that he is willing to die on the palm of Phephelaphi's hand?" (p.70).

Phephelaphi views things differently. Having received colonial missionary education, she wants to move forward, redefine herself and become better; "I want to become a nurse in the hospital, to enter into something new and untried "(p.70- 71). Phephelaphi's move to redefine herself through the nursing training meets an obstacle through Fumbatha's determination to stop her. And indeed, stopping her, he did through his own seed of procreation. This is what Karen Horney calls flight from womanhood. Karen Horney as quoted in Rosemarie Tong (2013) narrates her experience as a medical student in a college in Berlin. She claims that society uses various forms of power to constrict women's constructive development, which in turn makes them feel inferior and socially subordinated (p.148).

With only an unemployed mother to lean on, Phephelaphi grows up in the Makokoba township of Bulawayo and struggles within the limits imposed upon her by colonialism. Her envisaged progress through the nursing training is hampered by pregnancy on the one hand and by the colonial law that regulates the female body's performance in the colonial systems. These actions of power manipulation by both

patriarchy and colonial authority reduce phephelaphi's body to a mere site of power manipulations.

The rejection by her lover, Fumbatha at this crucial time is a big letdown and a kind of betrayal to her. Though determined to make things work in her favor, Phephelaphi is ultimately betrayed not by her mind, but it is her body; a commoditized and objectified site of pleasure and anxiety which betrays her efforts to transform her life. In the end, unable to overcome the rejection both by the colonial state and her lover Fumbatha, Phephelaphi first aborts the child in her womb and then subjects herself to immolation before Fumbatha, who is forced to become the inexorable witness to her torturous death.

Phephelaphi is hurt by the colonial regulatory powers that have forced her to abandon her dream of becoming the first native nurse. She is also deeply affected by Fumbatha's rejection, a demonstration of Foucault's kind of power that plays over bodies to torture and force them to perform tasks and ceremonies against their Will. Though Phephelaphi has attempted to challenge the power being played upon her body by patriarchy, it is evidenced that her body has become the site of power manipulations.

Like Phephelaphi in "*Butterfly Burning*," Most women in Vera's novels have become the target of men's lust, and are often violated as they move from war-torn villages to towns in search of a better future. In *Without a Name*, *The Stone Virgins* and '*Under the Tongue*,' the women; Mazvita, Thenjiwe, Nonceba and Zhizha are all violated by men. Mazvita gets into a love relationship with Nyenyedzi. Nyenyedzi is the bitter, possessive, and rough man. When in a gesture of love and tenderness, Mazvita holds out to him a mushroom, she finds it tender and lovely to touch, Nyenyedzi takes it and

crushes it with lots of anger, “it could be poisonous” Nyenyedzi said. I will find mushrooms for you if you want some. This mushroom is not for eating” (p.12) Nyenyedzi’s attitude towards Mazvita is patronizing and ‘protective’. He does not trust her judgment and protest, “I wasn’t going to eat it, and I only wanted to touch it. It felt so good to hold it, why did you crush it” (p.12).

Mazvita feels offended and overpowered. Due to her experience of male dominance in her society, she is aware that her questions may not receive any well-reasoned answers. Expressing her thoughts on a similar situation, Allison Jaggar (1983), observes that because men’s drive to exert power over everything and everyone in their world has so often taken the form of suppressing the pride and passion of women, they have developed a resultant false consciousness that sadly perceives the qualities associated with females as less desirable than those associated with males. Jaggar’s view is important for the understanding of the behavior of men like Nyenyedzi. Feeling inferior to Nyenyedzi, Mazvita reluctantly accepts the soft dying mushroom from him. Nyenyedzi, who has used the mushroom symbolically as a conquest bet, feels entitled to Mazvita as his woman and a sex object to fulfill his male desires. He disregards the fact that she has been wounded by his actions and makes sexual advances towards her. The narrator observes:

He touched her below her neck, above her firm breasts and he curled her arm over his back, rested her hand there.She listened. She heard him murmur “Howa”, a name that is used by Nyenyedzi to exploit her sexually. The name thrills Mazvita and makes her melt into Nyenyedzi’s arms whenever it is called (p.13).

In attempting to understand the needs of both Mazvita and Nyenyedzi, this study adopts the view of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759). She defends women’s needs as she castigates the manner in which men manipulate their sexual power over them. In ‘A

Vindication of the Rights of Women she says that “what a woman wants more is personhood. Woman is not the toy of man, his rattle which must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused” (p.135). In other words, a woman is not what the philosopher Kant (1958) calls a “mere means” or instrument, to someone else’s happiness or perfection. Rather, a woman is an “end”, a rational agent whose dignity consists in having the capacity for self-determination. In Wollstonecraft’s view, the ideal woman is less interested in fulfilling herself if self-fulfillment simply means distracting one’s desires than exercising self-control.

Mazvita’s predicament is arguably intimidating since she has just fled from a rape entanglement only to land in the hands of an insensitive Nyenyedzi. Examining Mazvita’s painful experience of rape through Wollstonecraft’s postulation, this study argues that the soldier who raped her was after his own fulfillment both sexually and egoistically, just to get his way.

The soldier brutally rapes Mazvita in a bush. She is traumatized by the experience. The soldier has violated her body, taking for himself what is most precious to her, her sexuality. War, as a creation of man, and as an agent of destruction, has robbed Mazvita, as a growing young woman, of all the basic needs like shelter, food and security required for holistic growth.

Through the destruction of her village and the murder of her parents, the body of Mazvita is exposed to extreme pain and hunger, psychological torture and confusion which immobilizes her and leaves her to the mercies of the cruel world. Since her body has become the site of manipulation of power by patriarchy and colonial agents, the growth of her personality and potentiality is stunted and eventually destroyed. Mazvita’s ultimate destruction comes in the form of rape. The soldier who subjects

her to this heinous act takes away whatever little humanity she has left. However, refusing total defeat, Mazvita gathers whatever little strength she has left and got away. Afraid and terrified, she keeps hearing his whispers telling her that he has claimed her and there is nowhere in which she can hide the things of her body. The soldier has raped Mazvita and he feels good and all-powerful about it. Lustfully he has devoured her body and crushed her soul, taking her entire being with him and just leaving a shell of her former self.

The cruel act of forcefully taking away Mazvita's virginity, her own womanhood, filled the rapist soldier with manly satisfaction of domination, leaving her exposed, defenseless and destroyed. This act sharply juxtaposes the celebration of independence by the people of Zimbabwe. It is very paradoxical that, as people celebrate political freedom, Mazvita becomes a guerrilla soldier's sexual captive and toy with which to celebrate his freedom. The experience is harrowing and nightmarish for Mazvita. Her initiative and opportunity for self-defense come up a little too late. Scared and very hurt, she had slept very still, but briefly, before she started to run. Trying to escape after rape, Mazvita takes to her heels, as if to run away from the blood curdling experience:

She ran with the slipperiness pouring between her thighs, except she was not aware, that her legs were still hers. She was aware, simply, that somewhere her skin carried terrible wetness that she needed to defeat...She longed to escape the insistent cries of his triumph (p.35).

The soldier as a man has demonstrated his power over the body of a woman Mazvita. He has manipulated his power of male dominance to scavenge on Mazvita's body, bringing to focus Vera's presentation of the female body as a commodity in the public domain for all and sundry. This misuse of power is highlighted by Foucault in his idea of power. According to Foucault (1970), power over bodies has an immediate hold

upon the body, torturing and forcing it to perform tasks. This is evidently depicted through Mazvita's rape ordeal. The soldier overpowered Mazvita's body, torturing it and forcing it to accommodate the proceeds of his rape. The soldier uses his male power and "political authority" to exploit and control Mazvita's body and mind. He uses the male power of dominance as a tool for power manipulation on Mazvita's body.

Mazvita feels dirty and used. Her effort to outlive the rape experience turns out to be an effort in futility when after numerous attempts to move on she still faces manipulations in the hands of men like Nyenyedzi and Joel. Her body is weak but she is determined to overcome her suffering in order to look for freedom and independence. Her subsequent relationship with men is her way of defeating loneliness.

Though Mazvita is aware that her nightmares in life are instigated by men, subconsciously, she believes that it is the very men who can help her normalize her life as she continues with the quest for her reality. This trajectory of thought is explained by Dinnerstein when she claims that, because women fear the mother power in them, they seek to be controlled by men (p.113).

Unconsciously, Mazvita is propelled by this insidious mother power to still move on to another man. Her intention is to shake off the rape stigma and live a more fulfilling life. This in Foucault's (1970) view of the body power represents the source of all revolution. To Mazvita, this signifies a revolution to rise above patriarchy and its systems. She rejects Nyenyedzi's notion that she cannot possess anything and that he should possess her instead. Fumbatha's intention is to keep Mazvita under his control and surveillance so as not to upset the patriarchal status quo that bequeath men power

over women. This explains why he ties his allegiance to his ancestral land despite the fact that he is simply squatting in it. He equates abandoning the land to death because his identity depends on it.

Mazvita does not find any truth in what Nyenyedzi is telling her and decides to challenge it because she wants to define her truth differently from Fumbatha's truth that is fixated on land that no longer belongs to him. Her determination gives her a strong sense of power to influence change towards her own reality where she can adjust boundaries to her vision, and dispel limits to her progress. Her ambition is to discover something new in her world where she has no fears of departure.

The rejection by Nyenyedzi and Joel is a shock to Mazvita. Having sucked the nectar of her body dry, the men no longer have any use of her. They had hurt her; the narrator observes that, after all, she had injured herself irreparably; she could not hurt beyond the hurting so hurtful. Empty and abandoned, she walked, leaning forward, past caring (p.43). The final blow to Mazvita's dreams is the baby in her womb. Having 'appropriated' her body with his seed, shattering her hopes and making her feel like the victim of men's appropriation of power, the baby now burdens her physical body and her psyche domain. Her promising world is shattered, leaving her with the burden to take with her to the ruins of her village. The narrator observes thus:

Mazvita saw herself unanchored, moving forward, with the weight of the baby on her back. She would never rid herself of this particular suffering. The baby was her own, truly her own burden. Now her main concern was to secure a seat on the bus ...Her face was bruised. She passed a dry tongue over her cracked lip. There were parts of herself she dared not trust. The truths her imagination asserted formed a major of her distrust of her hopelessness. She trusted only the cold weight on her back. She stood still. Mazvita held on to the baby and the apron and the last strands of her sanity, to propel her steadily forward, for she carried such a weight on her back. She was surprised that she could still manipulate her arm, bring it forward, pull that last bit of strength from it and transfer it to the knot forming on the apron. How was she to undo that knot but lie down? She had lost her freedom. Death was another kind of freedom, she longed for it. Her death, that is. She protected a longing deep as death (p.51-52).

Mazvita feels overburdened by the sinful actions of men. All her woes are the symptoms of male power appropriation on her body. The body has now lost its strength and vigor to move on. At the moment, Mazvita feels defeated and confused; men have had their way with her body.

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera's focus is on life as it is lived in the city and war-torn villages and how women remain on the receiving end. In an emotionally gripping narration, Vera describes the society of 'Zimbabwe' as riddled with moral decadence where men no longer respect family relationships. This is evidenced in the account of Zhizha's violation by her father. Like Nyenyedzi, Fumbatha and Joel, Zhizha's father, Muroyiwa has abdicated his responsibility of caring for the women in his life. The only way out for these men is to manipulate their male power on the women. A victim of her own father's vengeance, Zhizha is hurt, brutalized and confused. Her excruciating pain has penetrated her vulnerable psyche. Her world is crumbling down yet she can't speak about it because of the prevailing culture of silence that has been entrenched strongly within African patriarchy as reflected in Zimbabwe. This is what Michel Foucault (1970) refers to as "the soul under arrest".

The African patriarchal system is riddled with taboos intended to continually perpetuate the cultures of male dominance and female subordination. Vera, in *Under the Tongue*, claims that rape was not a subject for discussion because it was taboo. In her bid to uphold the tenets of societal taboos, a young girl Zhizha, goes through the gradual and painful process of remembering repeated sexual violations by her father Muroyiwa without openly discussing it. Grand mother tells Zhizha “Your father has died, he has drunk the forbidden water from the sea, “swallowed the deep unknown things of my growing, swallowed night. I see father, his forehead bruised. I heard him falling yesterday crushing like rock. He turns me in the salt dark of the sea.” My cry is silence (p.124).

Zhizha, like all the other women in the novel, cannot complain and seek redress. Her speech is suppressed by patriarchal cultures. Vera despises this loss of speech. She condemns the state of being voiceless because for her, survival is in the mouth. Liberation can only come from an individual’s ability to speak. Virginia Woolf (1929) declares that women must challenge the prevailing, false cultural notions about their gender identity and develop a female discourse that will accurately portray their relationship “to the world of reality and not to the world of men. In other words, women must project their voices against subjective patriarchal treatments and assert themselves as beings with equal rights (p.135). It is the world of reality that Vera envisages for women like Zhizha.

2.3 The Ills of Motherhood and patriarchy

Through the novel *Nehanda* (1993), Vera presents the female body not only as the site of patriarchal power manipulations but also a site of appropriation by the powers of nature as agents of patriarchy. This is particularly depicted through the birth of the

protagonist, Nehanda, the young woman who, through the spirit of the dead spiritual leader, led her people through Chimurenga uprisings. The mother underwent labor pains for days, the pain that rocked her body as the child struggled to disengage from it was excruciating. She could no longer sit down:

She slept on a wide grass mat with a low flat stool supporting her head. She was completely naked. The light that fell on her tired face revealed that her wrinkled brow was beaded with sweat, her soft painful sound made the women (midwives) pause in their speech (p.6-8).

Nehanda's mother has had to endure the discomfort of pregnancy and the pains of labor because motherhood, as institutionalized under patriarchy is what defines a woman's worth as a woman and was used to control women. Projecting her thoughts on motherhood, Adrienne Rich (1980) in *Of women born* distinguished between motherhood as "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children" and motherhood as "the institution, which aims at ensuring that the potential, and all women, shall remain under male control" (p.156).

Rich's distinction sometimes appeared as the difference between the experience of mothering and the institution of motherhood, or as the difference between women deciding, who, how, when and where to mother and 'men' making those decisions for women. Rich asserts that biological motherhood, as it has been institutionalized under patriarchy is definitely something from which women must be liberated. For her, men have convinced women that unless a woman is a mother, she is not really a woman.

This study considers Rich's input as a reflection of what really happens in many societies because the idea has been authenticated in most patriarchal societies of the world, including the societies depicted in Vera's texts. For example, in Vera's anthology, *It is hard to live alone*, women are very conscious about the discourse on

motherhood and they have comprehensively internalized its misogynist dictums. They regard a “barren” woman as “useless” and ponder” how can one claim to be a woman without knowing the joy and the pain of childbirth. A “barren” woman is in their opinion, “not a complete woman” who “must be ashamed of herself “ (p.43).

In *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha’s grandmother recalls the painful abuse that was heaped on her when she failed to conceive early in her marriage. Her husband told her that her womb was ‘rotten” and that he had “married a womb filled with termites” (p.62). When she finally gives birth to a terminally ill baby, her husband’s unkind words and society’s pressures lead her to accept the blame as the “wrath of her ancestors” and she is left “praying to the departed for forgiveness” (p.62).

In all these cases, it is apparent that a woman’s body is only respected as a site of power manipulations for motherhood. Away from the task of procreation, the female body is loathed, especially by patriarchy which only regards it as a commodity used by men for their own benefits. Many women, therefore, whether from the advice of men or out of their own desires and decisions, cherish motherhood. Through motherhood, a woman can fully and freely exercise the power of love. This is most probably due to the fact that the love that they give their male partners is never ‘sincerely’ reciprocated.

Drawing from feminist ideas, Andrea Dworkin (1981) argues that men value women not as unique individuals but as members of a class who serve them sexually and reproductively. She refers to two models that best explain what it means to be a woman within patriarchy: the brothel model, which relates to prostitution, and the farming model, which relates to motherhood. Dworkin claims that:

In the brothel model, women are kept under men's control through alcohol, drugs, hunger, desperation and other forms of manipulation. Prostitutes hand over their bodies to men who literally use them up or waste them. In contrast, in the farming model, women are kept under men's control through child bearing. "it is more difficult for a man to distance himself emotionally from the wife he has brought home to "husband" that is "to plough for the purpose of growing "crops" where "crops" means "children", than it is for him to expunge from his consciousness a prostitute whose "service" he bought for one – night stand (p.135).

Extending a similar argument, Mary O'Brien (1981) in *Male alienation from production* asserts that if a woman is to free herself from man's control, she has to understand that "the source of her oppression is also the source of her liberation" (O'Brien, 1981). O'Brien's sentiments on womanhood are clearly manifested in the actions of the young woman who is Nehanda's mother. Her determination to prove her worth as a woman turns to desperation and worries when the baby fails to cry at birth. Her imagination is that her baby girl may be abnormal. Though the mother's worries may seem to have no concrete grounds; close observation of the child's behavior even at this early stage reveals that the baby may not be normal. Her arrival is not accompanied by the usual cries. She seems to have no gift of speech which causes concern even to the midwives.

The mother is particularly worried because she is expected to take responsibility should her daughter have any deformity. Though it is logically clear that a mother has no conscious biological control over a fetus growing in her womb, men manipulated mother child connection to blame the mother and blackmail her into taking a responsibility that is not hers. This has been used as a strategy to punish motherhood, especially in African countries like Zimbabwe. O'Brien (1981), a feminist critic, claims that women take responsibility because of their certain connection with children unlike the fathers, who are never absolutely sure if the child is genetically related to them.

Though this study follows this line of thought to understand the circumstances that occasion the worries of the mother, it reads lack of trust which borders on a man's infidelity. This notwithstanding, Nehanda's mother endures prolonged labor in the hope of receiving her baby in a healthy state only to get pained by the fact that the baby may be abnormal. This pain that she suffers reaffirms her body as a site of power manipulations that breed the opposite of her expectation. The situation is made worse by the fact that the spirits have taken her daughter away. The narrator says:

Mother is agonized. Her head moves back and forth. Though she tries, she cannot move her limbs to save her pestle (an embodiment of Nehanda). Her shoulders are heavy with sleep. The red soil climb over her feet, rising to her knees. She has lost her daughter (p.48).

Nehanda's mother is extremely affected. The magnitude of her suffering weighs her down. She journeys back to her village to mourn her daughter's loss and rid her soul of sorrow. She says "my daughter is not my daughter," she tells her assembled relatives with tears streaming down her eyes. "My daughter is not my daughter'. What has she done, has she said anything to her mother that her mother finds hard to forgive?" "My daughter is no longer my daughter." She looks down to the ground, and weeps (p.49). The distraught mother has lost the very thing she laboured so much to get, displaying the elusive nature of power whose impact is not always the expected. Like the biblical Jesus many years ago, Nehanda has left her mother in agony as she goes away to lead her people from the colonial bondage. She was inspired by the historical figure of a female spirit medium, who was the major leader of Zimbabwe's first 'Chimurenga', the uprising against colonial rule in 1896. The spirit character of Mbuya Nehanda has claimed Nehanda the girl for her own use disregarding her mother's needs for her.

2.4 The female body as a site of colonization.

Nehanda is then captured by the colonial administration. Her body becomes the site where colonial power is manipulated to torture her. The intention is to discipline and punish her for her role in the war and, to persuade her to abandon the struggle. At the entrance to the prison cell, her body is said to have turned to water. The spiritual power that had been Nehanda's strength vacates her body, leaving her at the mercy of the Whiteman to prey on her body. The strategies she employs to shield herself from shame end up exposing her follies and eventually destroying her.

Whether directly or indirectly the colonial patriarchy has used its colonial power to control and punish the body of Nehanda. Her arrest and punishment closely speak to Foucault's thoughts. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault argues that:

The failure of the old system of discipline and punishment to yield desired behavior brought forth modern prison system and simultaneous enlightenment discourse which shifted the focus of punishment not only from just the body but also the soul (p.15).

The traditional system of the people of Zimbabwe has collapsed before colonial power, exposing them to foreign power. The colonial administration manipulated its power apparatus and hit the village so hard that from the time word went round to the village that a stranger has decided to live among them and chose to build his home on the hill, the villagers got scared and confused. They did not even bring the news to the 'dare' village gathering place immediately, saying, "The elders say that what you have dreamt you have dreamt do not awaken it. Perhaps the dream means we will prosper in the future. Our kindness shall be our death" (p.12).

The villagers have already felt the power of the strangers in the most hidden parts of their beings; the soul. It is this fear that prompts Nehanda's disappearance into the

forest to come up with tactics to respond to the aggressor, the white man. What happened to the slain soldiers on the battle field and Nehanda in the prison cell is what Foucault would refer to as “punishing the body and arresting the soul. The restructuring of power is done in such a way that, rather than inflicting physical pain, punishment began to function primarily through the suspension of one’s rights Foucault (1980) states:

The guillotine takes life almost without touching the body, just as prison deprives of liberty or a fine reduces wealth. It is intended to apply the law, not directly to a real body capable of feeling pain as to a juridical subject, the possessor among other rights, of the right to exist (p.70).

In this sense, Nehanda and her people have been denied the right to freely own the whole of their ancestral land and live in it as per the cultural dictates and norms. In an attempt to resist this dominating power, Nehanda’s body and those of others, are subjected to untold suffering and death. Vera’s theme of untold suffering of female characters runs across all her novels.

In her presentations, she makes it clear that the bodies of her female characters are allegorically comparable to the battle front where wars are fought mercilessly and ruthlessly, making land the site of political appropriation, and likewise the female body the site of power manipulation. Sibaso in *Stone Virgins*, for instance, is her representation of men broken by war and who are ready to project their frustrations on the female body for the atonement of their tormented souls. Sibaso inhumanly attacks the two sisters; beheading Thenjiwe before raping and mutilating Nonceba, thus making their tender female bodies the site of power manipulations.

In her novel, *The Stone Virgins*, Vera openly reveals that women of Zimbabwe, whom she brands the stone virgins, in the traditional religion, have made invaluable

sacrifices. Mythologically, the women had been offered as sacrifices in the course of the burial of a king as the narrator puts it thus:

They are the virgins who walk into their own graves before the burial of the king. They are untouched. Their ecstasy is in afterlife Sacrifice means loss of life, of lives, so that one may be saved. The life of rulers is served not saved. The female figures painted on this rock, the virgins, form a circle near the burial site, waiting for the ceremonies of their own burial. (P.103-104).

Through this mythological story, Vera claims that, women have been making serious sacrifices, including forcefully giving up their happiness in order to make men happy. The women have spent most of their lives in the service of men; giving them pleasure and fulfilling their demands at their own expense. They are perceived by men like Sibaso to be “the stone virgins”, virgins of the stone country, Zimbabwe, and as is the nature of stone, they are expected to be without feelings, emotions, or desires. Because of this presumed unfeeling nature of theirs, they ought to be ‘played’ with and manipulated according to the whims of the men like Sibaso, Muroyiwa, Fumbatha and others. Commenting on Vera’s presentation of women in Zimbabwe as depicted through *The Stone Virgins*, Bull (2004) likens the women to stone virgins in the Gulati Caves. He observes:

To Sibaso, Thenjiwe and Nonceba appear to be ‘The stone virgins’. His description of the stone virgins in the shrine in the Gulati Hills creates a connection between Vera’s representations of Nehanda, are depicted as the keepers of time. Sibaso’s interpretation of the cave painting and his likening of Thenjiwe and Nonceba to the stone virgins of the shrine form a re – enactment of the virgin sacrifice in defining act in the novel: the murder of Thenjiwe and rape of Nonceba (p.74).

Just like Thenjiwe and Nonceba, other protagonists in Vera’s other Novels like Mazvita, Phephelaphi and Zhizha have made varied daring sacrifices. They have compromised many things in their quest for personal freedom and fulfillment. Expressing her views on Mazvita’s personal experience, Ruth Lavelle (1998)

observes, ‘realizing the need to salvage her freedom and heal the wounds of the past, Mazvita commits infanticide. Mazvita’s sense of self was shattered after the rape, since then, until she returned home, she was without a name (p.110).

Mazvita’s suffering and destruction occasioned by oppressive patriarchal system is a strong reminder of the suffering of Zhizha and Phephelaphi in *Under the Tongue* and *Butterfly Burning* respectively. Zhizha’s destruction by her father and Phephelaphi’s immolation depicts the magnitude of suffering that the female body is subjected to by both traditional and colonial patriarchy. Thenjiwe is stalked up by a man whose determination is to make her his, to possess her body and her mind. The man uses Thenjiwe’s presence, his longing for her, to undo his persecution memories from the battle field. He is trying to use her to exercise his thoughts. The narrator says:

She walks by and takes over the corner in his mind where some thought is trapped, some useless remembrance about fences with NO TRESPASS signs and NO WORK signs. A remembrance of persecution and possible agonies, of bold urgencies He leans towards her to catch whatever she might say in his regard, noting well the amusement breaking in her eyes. His knees no longer rocking held down by her searching eyes. She stills his knees (p.32-33).

Thenjiwe’s physical presence is strong enough to replace the colonial dent in the man’s mind and calm down his nervousness as he tries to break the ice between them through a sentimental whistle; a whistle she no longer wishes to escape, “she is with no shelter till he stops whistling amusement and lean on her, leans the full burden of his body on her, or so it seems (p.34). This is a clear depiction that Thenjiwe wants and is ready to be loved genuinely; she is oblivious to the man’s selfish intentions. Her realization of his intentions seems to be enough for her to want him too. Thenjiwe wants to be loved; her longing makes her forgive the desire sparkling in her own limbs as she hears each whistle penetrate the air and move in her direction. She

catches and holds it. The power of love has totally appropriated her body. The narrator says:

She sees a single spotted plume dive down from the marula tree and land in her path. She feels naked and wonders if he, too, has noticed that glittering plume. She wants to pick it up but does not. That would be a risk. She has no confidence that could bend her knees that far down, stretch her arm, and still be able to come up for air. She would perish, for sure, with him watching, with him able to blow her ashes off the ground with a single breath. He is totally new to her thoughts, this man; he makes her dizzy. He makes her reconsider each action as though he has a power to form an opinion of her (p.34).

This is one of the dimensions of power exercised outside the narrowly defined political domain. It is part of the mechanics of patriarchal power at the most intimate level of a woman's experience. Thenjiwe is dizzy because she can no longer hold the desires of her body in place; she needs some kind of liberation.

This line of thought is exemplified by Michel Foucault (1982) when analyzing sexuality and the myth of their repression. According to the myth, our natural sexual instincts have been forcibly restrained and hidden during the past three centuries of bourgeois class domination: modern Puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence. So, according to the myth, the truth of sex seem is lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' to surface and if it fails to do so, it is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of a liberation. It is this sexual instinct that Cephas, using his male power, awakens sexual desires in Thenjiwe, overpowering her and destroying her body faculties, thus leaving her sexually exposed.

Reinforcing the issue of sex in modern times, Foucault (1997) argues that sex is that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that power which enthralls us by the power it manifests and the meaning it

conceals, and which we ask to reveal what we are and to free us from what defines. Sibaso takes advantage of Thenjiwe's sexual desires. He rapes and murders her. This kills all the dreams Thenjiwe had conceived about a husband who will love her and raise a family with her.

In a patriarchal society such as the societies in Vera's presentations, the female body is the principal target for male power machinations. The man stocking Thenjiwe is obsessed with her body and is seeking to have total control over it. He claims thus:

He loves her fingernails. He loves each of her bones, from her wrist to her ankle, the blood flowing under her skin. He loves her bones, the harmony of her fingers. He loves most the bone branching along her hips. The sliding silence of each motion, tendons expanding. The stretch of time as she moves one foot after the next, slowly and with abandon. White bones her inner being, her hip in motion. He places his palm along her waist and announces, as though she is a new creation, 'This is a beautiful one.' - - - He places his foot where she has left her imprint on the soil, wanting to possess, already, each part of her, her weight on soft soil, her shape. He wants to preserve her in his own body, gathering her presence from the soil like a perfume (p.37-38).

The body of Thenjiwe is to this man a public site where a power game is played. The strategy to his destruction takes the form of possessiveness and naming. He defines her as a sexual object meant to quench sexual lust. This is what de Beauvoir in her publication. *The second sex* (1949) vehemently opposes. She looks at this kind of treatment as making a woman 'an object' whose existence is defined and interpreted by *the dominant* male. She believes that women must think independently in order to break the bonds of their patriarchal society and define themselves if they wish to become significant human beings in their own rights (p.56). Feeling sexually motivated, Thenjiwe allows herself to be defined. This leads to her untimely death. At

the announcement of the country's independence, the young women at Thunder Bantu store felt they needed to experience freedom.

The women are hoping for a time that they can truly be free and treated as equal human beings. They want to get into relationships with scarred men from war, perhaps because they think the war has tamed their patriarchal arrogance and dominance, a thought which is soon proved to be far from the truth through Sibaso's inhuman actions. Through eerie words, Vera describes the horrifically detailed and choreographed rape and murder scene, which occurs as Sibaso bursts into the twin sisters' lives to behead Thenjiwe before raping and mutilating Nonceba. Sibaso, a name meaning 'a flint to start flame' is registering his harshness and cruelty on the twin sisters through power manipulations. He appropriates the power of patriarchy and colonial authority to destroy the lives of Thenjiwe and Nonceba in the most blood chilling manner.

The rapist, murderer, and mutilator Sibaso is portrayed as a dangerous and problematic man with no scruples. Despite the appearance of power over the female body, Sibaso is as caught up in the self-defeating discourse of colonialism as all the other inhabitants of Zimbabwe. This prompts a question in the reader's minds, what is the cause of Sibaso's cruel deviant acts? According to Jean Elshtain (1987), any explanations for male attitudes and actions that it is just the way they (men) are" provide no real enlightenment at all as to the way individual men think, act, and simply are.

In Vera's novels, just as in all patriarchy, it is not only that man is socialized into the dominant role and power over women that actually define men but it is the essence of manhood. Alice Jaggar, in this regard, thinks differently. Reacting to this line of

thought, Jaggar rejects biological determinism. She doesn't believe that by nature all men are one way and all women another.

This trajectory of thinking seems to be shared by Vera in her presentation of gender coexistence. This is especially depicted in the actions of Sibaso Vis a Vis Cephas. While Cepha's action is that of patronizing of Nonceba, Sibaso's is that of torture, abuse and destruction. Nevertheless, Jaggar's argument does not exonerate the male actions of 'scavenging' on the female body for lack of a better word.

Elshtain (1987) believes that women must overthrow the categories that entrap them into rigid roles even if the roles are those valued by them. Roles, she said, are simplistic definitions that make every man a conscious exploiter and oppressor and every woman an exploited and oppressed victim (p.135). This line of thought is shared by Michel Foucault. In his Chicago journal *Subject and Power* (1982), Foucault castigates the patriarchal system of oppression; a subordination and subjugation of those considered inferior. Foucault describes the nature of this subjugating power as existing only when it is put into action. This is the kind of power wielded by Vera's antagonists like Sibaso and Muroyiwa. They exercise their patriarchal power of domination upon the female body in the most inhuman manner.

Foucault (1982) says that:

This power is not a function of consent. It is the kind that thrives in relationships where an inferior being is the subject of the more powerful one. It applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects (p.97).

In this context, Foucault implies a power that is similar to that of patriarchy. Most of the male characters in Vera's novels continually wield this power upon the female

gender; subjugating and making them subjects to them. In *The Stone Virgins*' Sibaso, a traditional macho man and a victim of Zimbabwean colonial war, vent his anguish on Thenjiwe and Nonceba. He manipulates his male power over Thenjiwe by murdering her and scavenging over Nonceba's body through rape. The manner in which Sibaso has violated Thenjiwe's and Nonceba's bodies seems to follow a 'natural' pattern of action at the war front. During the war, he lost his name and has now become a lifeless envoy of desecration and violation of humanity.

2.5 Conclusion

Through the perspectives of feminism and Michel Foucault's idea of power, this chapter has explored the female body as the site of male power appropriation in the five novels of Yvonne Vera. The analysis has shown that the use of power which is developed through various incidents in her novels enables readers to have a clear view of different forms of oppression and painful circumstances experienced by the people of Zimbabwe, especially the women, against the convergence of both patriarchy and colonial systems. The study has interrogated Vera's novels and attempted to explain how male characters have manipulated the power of domination under patriarchy, to oppress and torture the bodies of the female characters. The study has realized that the discourse that informs this behavior largely emanates from the gendered cultural arrangements which have greatly influenced the way men and women perceive themselves. The insatiable male ego gets aggravated in the context of war where the male aggressor like Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins* and Muroiywa in *Under the Tongue*, view the female body as an object of pleasure and patriarchal relevance. The body of the woman becomes synonymous to a battlefield where all emotions are played

through actions that subvert societal social norms and whose impact is largely the opposite of the expected; the paradox of power.

The internal power structures as instituted in the traditional cultures of African societies make a lot of room for the male to freely subjugate and take advantage of the women. In Vera's novels, there is evidence of the brutal control by man over the woman even if that woman is his daughter. The bodies of the female characters are continually appropriated by the male characters. Equally evident is that the women, despite their struggle against subjugation, subjectivity and submission, still endure lots of torture and suffering from patriarchy and colonial systems. The convergence of power pressure upon their bodies made Vera's female characters neurotic in their psyche and which seems to have influenced their behaviors. The manifestation of these influences is evident in the subversive narratives of the female characters which are depicted as strategies of resistance. The next chapter identifies and interrogates these narratives to establish the extent to which they are strategies of resistance.

CHAPTER THREE

SUBVERSIVE NARRATIVES AS STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE

3.1 Introduction

The discourse of paradox of power in Yvonne Vera's novels center on the oppressive, painful circumstances of her characters manifested through the characters' subversive narratives that they use as strategies of resistance. Vera, in her writing, deploys different forms of power through the subversive narratives of her characters to reveal various aspects of oppression that stifle the living conditions of people in Zimbabwe, particularly women.

The agony of these women is manifested through their deviant social acts which the writer uses to decry the ills of their society which dehumanize women. Through the use of the deviant social acts, Vera depicts different modes of power exercising and the possibilities of their integrative effects on individual character's actions, and reverses the commonly held belief that power appropriated liberates and bring success. This can be observed not only from the actions and behaviour of the characters but also from their mental and physical dispositions as depicted in the five novel under study.

A number of characters like Mazvita, for instance, in *Without a Name* suffer an unintended mental breakdown and tragic actions. Mazvita is so agonized by the atrocities of her life that she chooses to strangle her nameless baby and in a neurotic state, boards a bus with its body strapped on her back to put up resistance and liberate herself. This blood-chilling action is described thus:

She drew the bottom end of the tie across the baby's neck. She pulled at the cloth while the baby remained blinded and trusting. She strained hard and confidently though this pulling choked her and blinded her and broke her back. It was bold, this pulling of the cloth, and she held on till there was no cloth to pull because the cloth had formed one tight circle, the smallest circle there was, and so there was no longer any use to her boldness. No use to her boldness because her boldness had brought a terrible silence into the room... she noticed first the stillness in her arms...bewildered and standing outside her own self, she remembered some of her action toward this child (p.109).

This research reads the above quotation as portraying actions and behaviors emanating from the scarred hearts and traumatized minds of women in oppressive and violent environments, and so the stories they tell and the choices they make need to be put in context.

Women confined in patriarchal systems like that Zimbabwe tend to project voices of protest and resistance through what this study refers to as subversive narratives. We understand the term as consisting of the deviant social acts that attempt to challenge the existing norms in patriarchal societies in which they live. These kinds of narratives not only exist in fictional worlds but also in the realities of our daily lives. Empirically it is not uncommon to witness or learn through media happenings such as a woman killing her children and then herself, a woman executing an abortion which not only evacuates the fetus from her body but also endangers her life, a woman stripping to curse with her nakedness and, a woman who murders her husband for whatever reason among others. These are actions which, due to their dangerous nature, draw gasps from the spectators who either loathe the very women who perform the acts or empathize with them. Although against the moral fiber of the patriarchal society, such actions may be claimed to be the women's strategies to fight social injustices done to them since the dialogic space is not available to them.

According to psychoanalytic feminists, women involved in such actions are neurotic and are protesting their oppressive situations in patriarchy. Reacting to Sigmund Freud's notion on biological determinism in a woman's nature, Alfred Adler (1972) discusses a woman's mutations within patriarchal systems. For Adler:

A woman who has suffered immensely can feel inferior and become neurotic. The women have been thwarted in their striving for superiority, the achievement of power by the "creative self", and as a consequence have developed neuroses as manifestations of their dissatisfaction. Neurotic Women are actually protesting their situation under patriarchy (p.147).

This research situates this chapter within the context of what Adler refers to as immense sufferings from patriarchal and colonial systems that have been experienced by women in Yvonne Vera's novels. Living in War-torn patriarchal environments, the women's sufferings have reached the neurotic threshold from which they must disembark. The vehicles of choice available to them are the subversive narratives, which they use as strategies to resist the oppressions. The term subversive narrative is used in this research to denote a social mode of action that diverts the trajectory of the societal conventionally accepted discourse in order to suit the needs and desires of the individual self.

The focus of this chapter is on the women's deviant social acts such as self-immolation, infanticide, murder and any other action executed by women to resist the hurtful happenings of the patriarchal social order against them. The chapter examines the female characters' subversive narratives to locate the discourse that motivate them and their resultant effects. It explores various forms of the characters' deviant social acts and how they are linked to power in the writer's work. It attempts to analyze how the writer deploys power discourse to expose the ills suffered by the women under the convergence of patriarchal and colonial systems. Guided by the perspectives of

Michel Foucault on the idea of power and various strands of feminist thought such as radical, liberal and psychoanalytic, this chapter interrogates the subversive narratives of Yvonne Vera's female characters in her five novels. Through Foucault's ideas of power, the research examines how the women have used the power of their own bodies to put up resistances against Patriarchal injustices.

Foucault (1975), talks of a direct relation between powers and bodies, where the dominant power exerts excess power on the dominated to challenge their human rights and belief in independence. The dominated, on the other hand, denounces the power excesses through resistance. This is the kind of power that the Patriarchal cultures use on women. This kind of power suffocates women, oppresses them, and pushes them to the level of neurosis so that they resort to painful actions and behaviours that subvert the societal norms in order to get their ways. The other way of power, according to Foucault, is the body's own power, the body's own force of will and desire. This is a kind of power of the body that opposes power over bodies and which, for Foucault, represents the source of all revolution (p.156). This is the kind of power that is appropriated by Vera's female characters. Forced by the oppressive circumstances in which they live the women's focus is to achieve freedom and independence for themselves. This study employed this perspective to interrogate how women in Vera's fiction appropriate different forms of agency to subvert oppressive and violent situations.

3.2 Power to destroy or empower; a case of Vera's female characters

The novels studied in this chapter trace both the physical and psychological development of the protagonist like Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning*, Mazvita in *Without a Name*, Zhizha and Runyararo in *Under the Tongue*, Thenjiwe and Nonceba

in *The Stone Virgins* and Nehanda in *Nehanda*. These developments depict the characters' struggle through their subversive narratives to redefine themselves beyond the oppressive worlds that their patriarchal-spirited men have fashioned against them.

In *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha's mother, Runyararo has committed murder to avenge her daughter's repeated sexual violation. Through the eye of young Zhizha, the victim of incestuous rape, Vera depicts a psychologically wounded woman who's suffering in the hands of a husband, coupled with the grief of discovering that he has been sexually molesting their young daughter, decides to kill her husband Muroyiwa. In her frightened hallucinating state, Zhizha watches her mother commit the murder. This scene is engraved in her mind as she narrates to her grandmother later. She describes her mother's sound as horrible as it originated from a beaten lost voice. She explains how the voice trembled as it receded and eventually died out. In her confusion, Zhizha describes both her mother's voice as she attempts to wail and her father's last groans as life ebb out of his body. Zhizha's confusion reveals the impact both her mother's and father's deviant acts had on her.

The tremors of Runyararo's voice mark the end of Muroyiwa's life but do not end the traumatising memories and scarred heart and body that would forever remain a constant reminder to Zhizha. Nevertheless, she has executed her revenge; the act of getting rid of her daughter's rapist gives her satisfaction and a voice. For the first time in her marriage life, Runyararo has voiced the forbidden. After she murders her husband, Runyararo, through rhetorical questions pours out the injustices her husband had forced her to put up with to ensure peace in her marriage as she conforms to the ideologies of patriarchy. In her outburst, before she is arrested, Runyararo wonders why her husband betrayed and hurt her by raping their daughter yet she kept her part

of the bargain by enduring the ills of her circumstances. As if for him and the whole society to hear, she asks, 'did he not teach me to be silent because speech is for men and a woman is not a man?' (p.152). She swears to bury her husband like a dog because he has disgraced himself and hurt the Zhizha and family beyond repair.

Runyararo's action is a deviant social act because it deviates from the societal norm and contravenes the laws of nature and those of man. In so far as going contrary to the patriarchal canon of women's submission and acting within the prescribed societal laws is concerned, Runyararo has acted in line with the feminist thought as interpreted by Simone de Beauvoir (1949). Though she does not advocate for violence as a systematic method of gaining freedom, De Beauvoir encourages women to reject their subjugation by the dominant male and fight for autonomy and freedom. She blames society and its social constructs that encourage the subordination and general mistreatment of women on the basis of their gender. She claims that women can only gain their value in society if they reject being labeled as the "Other" and assert themselves in ways that appropriately define them.

De Beauvoir's observation enables the reader to understand the presentation of women in Vera's fiction. These women are presented as beings that are subordinate to men and exist at the margins as the 'Other'. Runyararo, for instance, suffers subordination and exclusion among other ills. Pushed by the prevailing painful circumstances, Runyararo has decided to protest her submissive position and assert herself. Runyararo, like other women in Vera's fiction are protesting their submissive cultural demands to assert themselves against cultural injustice through actions that are largely viewed as against the social norms of the societies they live in. Their goal is to discover and change both themselves and their world; a world they feel must

learn to validate all individuals, regardless of their cultures, as rational people who can contribute to their societies and their world.

Through her deviant action, Runyararo has rejected the culture of silence about her daughter's incestuous rape by murdering the rapist who is her husband, Zhizha's father. She has assertively exercised her motherly power within the space available to avenge her daughter's traumatic act of rape. Ironically, instead of enjoying freedom and fulfillment as a result of her actions, Runyararo is jailed for murder. This is a depiction of the elusive nature of power, what I refer to as the paradox of power in this research. The observation here is that power that is exercised with little regard to the consequences is hardly rewarding. Nevertheless, under the serious circumstances that Runyararo finds herself in, her actions should be understood within the context and the choices she has had to make.

Runyararo's strategy to avenge her daughter's rape gives her some satisfaction but further inflicts pain in the child because she suffers the loss of a mother's comfort and upbringing. Zhizha puts it right when she says, "the one who quiets me, the one who reminds me of sleep, the one who comforts...a lullaby for my sleep and my light..." (p. 153). Zhizha's words are her way of expressing her fears for an empty world void of motherly love and care. While she is apprehensive about missing motherly nurturing, her mother, Runyararo is thrown at cross roads from where she can neither help herself nor her daughter. She carries the sorrows and pain in her heart to jail. Runyararo's actions have also affected her mother-in-law deeply. Through Zhizha's voice, the narrator describes her suffering thus:

Grandmother... Her face broken, carrying the heavy things of life. A lonely exhalation; a deep silence. Mother has brought a lingering sorrow, a visit from yesterday... Grandmother cries into the night, she cries that the sorrow which has visited has no origins. It is sorrow which has no disguises. We are naked on this earth, she cries (p.153).

The two people most close to Runyararo, grandmother and Zhizha, are going through intense suffering because of her actions. It is quite paradoxical that her actions have brought more suffering than relief. These sufferings witness to the fact that Runyararo's deviant social act of murder has brought a lot of suffering to those closely related to her even as she gets some psychological satisfaction. The justice systems and patriarchal culture of silence have aggrieved Zhizha, her mother, and grandmother. This is a clear depiction that the society in Vera's fiction studied in this chapter is not ready for a self-defined woman who seeks justice and self-emancipation.

The story in Vera's *Without a Name* (1994) depicts a murder most foul. An innocent baby is strangled in cold blood to clear a path for freedom and self-fulfillment. This is the chilling story of Mazvita, a woman who has gone against the norms of society and killed her innocent baby in cold blood, and journeyed with its cops in a passenger bus to bury it at the ruins of her rural village.

In the novel, Vera captures the painful, traumatizing actions of a homeless, orphaned young lady who has been raped and impregnated by a 'gorilla' soldier, and rejected by a man she thought had loved her. The magnitude of Mazvita's suffering is so great that she becomes neurotic and confused. The pain emanates from different interlinked cruel events like the loss of her parents and a home to a devastating inferno, started by the rapist soldier. The memory of that incident is too painful for her to indulge in.

This is evident in her hesitation to tell Nyenyedzi the truth of her past. “Why did you leave your home? We must go back to Mubaira”. He wants to know about her, to know her better and to understand what compelled her to seek work at the tobacco farm. Mazvita, however, seemed to see through Nyenyedzi because she is aware of his limitations. He can neither change the past nor the future. She is in the know of the fact that her destiny is in her hands so she is not interested in divulging the information. Her negating answer was given with finality “I can never go back there. The war is bad in Mhondoro. It is hard to close your eyes there and sleep. It is hard to be living” (p.29).

Mazvita is determined to outlive the torturer’s memory and move forward; even her parents are now a part of that memory. Ordinarily, Nyenyedzi’s wish to meet her parents would have thrilled her. Now she does not even respond to his statement about meeting her parents, instead she decides to move on.

I argue that Mazvita has come to the realisation that the power to change one’s destiny resides in individuals regardless of sex. She has to use her own power to stop romanticising her past misfortunes and live in the present if she wants a meaningful life for herself. She is traumatized at the thought of going back to her war ruined village but she is determined to depart from her perceived inferior space. She strongly desires to empower herself and get freed from the burden of fear which Vera reveals thus:

Mazvita carried a strong desire to free herself from the burden of fear, from the skies licked with blue and burning with flame. She had not told Nyenyedzi everything. She had not told him about what that man who pulled her down had whispered to her, how she ran through the mist with torn clothes, with his whispering carried in her ears, how the sky behind her exploded as the village beyond the river burned, and she shouted loud because her arms reached forward, but not forward enough to rescue the people, to put out the flame, and she cried and ran with her two legs missing, buried, and she thought she ran with her arms because she saw them swing forward, swing back, swing forward, carry her through that mist toward the huts.. Then she fell down, looked beneath the mist at the burning hut because the mist had lifted (p.31).

What emerges here is gender power play with regard to societal assigned social status.

The culturally perceived inferior sex has been disadvantaged by the gun empowered domineering male. Both Mazvita's body and psyche have been violated to underpin her to her inferior social space on the one hand, and to authenticate the man's authoritative superior space on the other hand. Mazvita rejects the inferior space and is determined to vacate it for a more significant space even if the severity of her suffering threatens her sanity.

The painful experience of the village destruction and the perishing of her parents depict the trauma that she has had to endure. This initiates a stronger desire for freedom in Mazvita. Her emotions are in a constant quest for an outlet. Mazvita is aware that only she can create her outlet and so she must decide on an action to propel her forward. She says with determination, "I must move on, I will move" (p.31). This study reads Mazvita's determination as prioritising a trajectory of change with little thought on the means. Her emotional saturation has clouded her reasoning faculties and so she has to act to resist getting consumed.

An equally painful event that left Mazvita's mind in chaos, and which provoked her subsequent cruel actions was the rape that defiled her very being and planted a child in her womb. The narrator recounts this ordeal in the most painful manner, clearly

reflecting the excruciating pain and torture that Marvita had to put up with in the hands of the guerilla soldier:

It was a man that pulled me into that grass. He held a gun, though I did not see it. He had claimed her, told her that she could not hide the things of her body, he whispered as though he offered her life, in gentle murmuring tones, unhurried, but she felt his arms linger too long over her thighs, linger searching and cruelly, and she knew that if there was life offered between them, it was from herself to him, not offered, but taken. She ran with the slipperiness pouring between her thighs. She longed deeply for the silence to be completed. She longed to escape the insistent cries of his triumph (p.30-35).

In her reflections, Mazvita confidently acknowledges what had happened to her on that fateful day of rape. What was not clear to her then was that she not only suffered a humiliating rape at gun point, but also forcefully received life from the rapist. She did not only run away with the man's sperms pouring between her legs but also with his child growing in her womb. Though not aware of it at the time, the magnitude of the soldier's triumph was enormous and her longing for an escape would just remain, a longing no matter what she does. She has the rapist's child in her own body, a permanent living reminder and an 'obstacle' to her freedom. Mazvita has confirmed the soldier's whisper "as though he offered life" and proved she was wrong by thinking that "it was from herself to him". She cannot freely engage in a meaningful relationship with Joel because she is haunted by her past. The presence of the child in her life has stigmatized her and has become a milestone to her progress.

Joel's rejection of her, and his chasing her away with her nameless unwelcomed child, drives her psyche to a breaking point. Mazvita feels cornered into making a drastic decision in the hope of relieving herself of her problems. Her decision to castigate her child by refusing to name it is cruel and against the social norms of the society she lives in. The normal expectation is for a mother to name a child on its arrival to the

world. In the contrary to this expectation, Mazvita declines from this noble activity because according to her, her body has betrayed her by allowing a child of rape to creep into her life and so she must reject the baby to get her freedom:

She had no name for the baby; a name could not be given to a child just like that. A name is for calling a child into the world, for acceptance, for grace. A name is for waiting, for release, an embrace precious and permanent, a promise to growing life. She had no promises to offer this child. Mazvita could not even name the child from the emptiness which surrounded her. She simply held the child, and fed him from her breast. The child grew in a silence with no name. Mazvita could not name the silence (p.85).

The rejection of the child and denying it a name is Mazvita's strategy to resist the hurtful oppressive conditions in her life, and get her space and freedom. Unfortunately, the problems with Joel persisted. He was not satisfied with the fact that the child was nameless and therefore unimportant in her life. He wanted her to leave with her child and her hesitation only made Joel jittery. His determination to push her away is further evidenced in his subsequent violent words which provoked her second strategy to free herself not just from Joel but also from the child whom she viewed as an obstacle to her freedom and progress.

When Joel violently prompted her again to leave the next day after her decision came to her slowly.' When it did come, she was not sure that the decision had been entirely her own" (p. 95). She felt that the child had brought to her such powerlessness she could hardly move forward. It was an obstacle that had to be done away with. Mazvita suddenly became obsessed with the thought, but she wanted the baby to close its eyes to make it easier for her to execute her plan. Though Mazvita is determined to push through with her murder plan, she is very cautious and remorseful about it. She demonstrates this through her silent weeping and desire for the baby to sleep.

However, the thought of what she stands to gain by killing the baby gets the better of her.

The premonition becomes too strong for Mazvita to ignore. Though she is apprehensive of carrying out the action of killing the baby when he is awake, the desire to put an end to her suffering, to rid herself of the man's burden and free herself is driving her mad, madness from which she wished to recover. What Mazvita is not acknowledging is the fact that her guilt faculties are vehemently opposing the act she is about to execute. I argue that Mazvita's disturbing conscience is an indication that she is never going to recover from killing her baby and that her wish to kill will soon revert to a wish not to have killed because the magnitude of her suffering will outweigh her gain. In her present state of mind, Mazvita is not able to listen to her guilt warning, she only thinks of her pain and how to achieve her goal.

Mazvita is experiencing a split in her personality. A part of her is conscious that the action she is about to execute is cruel and so she is trying to avoid the accusing little innocent eyes of the baby. She wants to give him the last comfort of falling asleep, perhaps to lessen his pain and to rid her soul of any guilt. The other personality, however, is a ruthless irrational self-centered one who cannot wait to get rid of the baby, an obstacle to her freedom and self-fulfillment. This split of personality in dealing with her baby as a problem is further revealed through her thoughts where she dialogues within herself:

Mazvita sang slow and dear to the baby that she felt was hers, was not hers, was hers. She paused as though to comfort the child, touched it with one smooth gaze, as though to protect it. The child had deep bottomless eyes. She longed to close the eyes of her child, slowly and gently. The thought brought her an easy satisfaction, an exultant realization of a pleasure ephemeral put true joy beckoned in lilting waves of mercy and comfort. Mazvita took a soft thin cloth and wrapped it over the child's eyes. The cloth fitted across the child's head, and she was able to tie it at the back. She made the knot very softy, whispering to the child to keep still. She made a soft painless knot that kept the child free from harm.... When she had completed this task she felt sure of the direction in which she would proceed, she felt herself gifted and supreme, autonomous in all her decision, in her every gesture and action, and she breathed hard and inward and felt the air flow into her chest. She had closed the eyes of her child (p.107-108).

Though determined to proceed with the task of killing her baby, Mazvita's thoughts are in conflict just like her emotions. Mazvita feels like protecting her child from harm. She is soft, gentle and careful with the baby yet she is brave and courageous enough to rehearse blindfolding the child in preparation for killing him. These activities are a clear depiction of a disturbed, traumatized mind. This is the kind that psychoanalytic feminists like Adler, A. (1972), in *Understanding Human Nature*, refer to as neurotic; a condition brought about by a lot of suffering. Mazvita's suffering culminates in the killing of her baby, an act she perceives as the springboard to her freedom. Though Mazvita is proceeding with her strategy to protect herself from the obstacle which is the child, she is already suffering the guilt of her actions. Her subsequent move of trying to detach herself from what she calls "a ritual of separation" confirms her discomfort with her planned actions. The reference to "her forehead broke into ripples. Water fell from her forehead to her eyes and blinded her" (p.109).

The emotional turmoil Mazvita is going through interferes with the coherent judgments of her intentions. In her precarious emotional state, Mazvita allows her body to be the focal point where power assumes its operation in either of two ways;

power of and power over (Foucault, 1972). Convincing herself about her impending actions, she gathers her strength, what Foucault calls the way of the body's own power, the body's own force of will and desire to perform this blood chilling heinous task. Mazvita has assumed authority over the body of her child, what Foucault refers to as "the power over bodies" and she is ready to perform the torture ceremony on her child and carry out the task of killing him (p. 150).

Ritualistically Mazvita eliminates the obstacle to her success. Killing the baby has been a traumatic experience to Mazvita. The dialogic voice of the baby's own power of innocence forces Mazvita to, as Greene would put it, "use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim (p.185) to appease her own guilt by covering the child's accusing eyes before killing him. This does not work for Mazvita because the cruel act has choked and broken her psychological backbone so that the guilt is imprinted in her psyche.

Mazvita's subsequent behaviours and actions should reflect her satisfaction as she sets off to the path of freedom. Paradoxically the opposite is evidenced. Her memory defies her subsequent actions where she tries to normalize things without success. The reference to the "sound lingering long after she had heard it" is a clear indication that Mazvita's strategy will not propel her forward. Her psyche is pricked with the guilt of killing her baby. She feels responsible for the horrible irreversible truth of her actions; this feeling traumatizes and tortures her. Nevertheless, she proceeds, ignoring the discomfort she feels throughout her body: her mouth turns dry and her breath tight in her chest, the entire action becoming unbearable.

The reactions preceded by the killing of the baby clearly demonstrate that any action taken purely for self-benefit is bound to elicit a counteraction and thwarts the intended

goal. The pain born of the guilt of killing the baby mars Mazvita's envisaged freedom. The guilt felt by Mazvita is described as flashes of fathomless heavy guilt. To no avail she tried to close out the thought of the child from her mind. She has become bitter with herself and wishes she never committed the act, that her child was still alive. Mazvita becomes more traumatized and confused. Her mind has become what Foucault (1973) would describe as "wondering mind or derangement of morals" (p.65). For Foucault, this is a kind of mind that is plagued with guilt due to lack of reason. I argue that Mazvita's predicament did not permit any contrary reasoning. Since her actions were motivated by selfish emotions without logical considerations especially of the child, its counter effect on her is far-reaching. The silent nameless being that was Mazvita's child, and whom she unscrupulously murdered in order to succeed in life has come back to haunt her; what I refer to as the paradox of power.

Though the child is dead, she begins to behave in a manner that is not clearly defined. Her mind has refused to accept reality. This is depicted in the way in which she treats the dead child. The thought that the child is alive fills her mind. The selfish act of killing the baby has made Mazvita's situation move from bad to worse. Her behavior is a reflection of a sick mind. This is further concretized by the bus trip that she takes with a dead baby on her back. She plans to bury her child back home in Mubaira and then die there, perhaps to atone her guilt.

In a passengers' bus with a dead body of a child, Mazvita settles in with her ears and body consciously alert. In her deranged state, she imagines, and painfully listens to non-existing sounds and eloquence of her body's silence:

Every sound seemed to listen for her, though she was the one who listened in a rare painful listening that crept across her back, kept still so painfully still the stillness made her sob, a heavy sob that broke over her shoulders, trembled down to her feet, and she felt her toes turn cold, turn cold still. She entered a bottomless ache that left her perspiring and gasping for one slice of moon, to heal her not regretfully, but with a brimming ululating sympathy. It was the stillness on her back, cloying and persistent, which bothered her, choked her, sent a small painful echo tearing across her breast, turned her lips bursting black clay, clinging and cold. She felt her eyes sink into the darkness, gathered somewhere beneath her forehead, beneath the eyebrows, a still cold darkness in which she was sure there was no-recovery (p.113).

Mazvita is conscious of the fathomless pit of misery and suffering she is in. Her suffering has stretched every fiber in her body and mind. The ache in her body, the weights on her back and the pain in her mind are all unbearable to her. This informs my argument that the magnitude of the reverse effect of Mazvita's actions has exposed her to so much suffering that her entire body has become conscious of pain. Ironically the pain is not just hers but also that of the dead body she carries on her back. Its weight weighs on her conscience with a coldness that "burns through the skin" is depicted through the reaction of her body.

Even in the crowded bus, Mazvita feels alone with her dead baby on her back. She is tormented and traumatized more by the present than the past. She has broken down under the weight of her dead child on her back, and the guilt that has overtaken her mind and soul. The Magnitude of her suffering makes her hallucinate. In her world of hallucination, Mazvita imagines that some being, larger than her, was listening to her.

In her pain, Mazvita is reaching out. She needs a being that can understand her predicament and her pain. She does not wish to be judged by her outward action but rather wishes for "an ear into her secret". It is paradoxical that the child who had been the seed of patriarchal oppression and trauma, a physical obstacle to her freedom and success when alive, is now a psychological obsession and obstacle to the wellness of

her whole being in death. It is not a wonder then that in her guilt, she wildly imagines that she is being judged both by the physical and spiritual worlds.

I am arguing therefore that despite the brief experience of triumph and freedom after the act, the killing of the child has brought more pain to Mazvita, and has become a bigger obstacle to her betterment and freedom. This is a demonstration of the complex nature of power. I argue that the liberation value of power actions that are exercised with disregard to inclusivity and compassion is bound to be low. Mazvita's self-centered actions that disregarded the plight of her child is now hurting her more.

In *Butterfly Burning*, Vera presents women who view children as products of male oppression, and obstacles that must be done away with if women are to realize their freedom and self-fulfillment. She demonstrates this through a woman like Phephelaphi who was rejected and given away at birth. Her mother, Zandile viewed her as an unwanted male seed intruding in her life to take away her freedom. Phephelaphi is rejected a second time in her teen years by her mother Zandile, who sends her out into the streets after the death of the mother who adopted her. She still sees Phephelaphi as a burden and an obstacle to her freedom and happiness. In her thoughts, she claims that Phephelaphi will take away her man with her youthful beauty. This kind of action and behavior between mother and child is what this study refers to as the paradox of power. It reverses the 'normal' expectation that associates the power of motherhood with happiness and freedom. A liberal feminist critic, Elshtain (1982) refers to such as complexity of mothering. She postulates that:

Mothering is not a 'role' on par with being a file clerk, a scientist, or a member of the Air Force. Mothering is a complicated, rich, ambivalent, vexing, joyous activity which is biological, natural, social, symbolic, and emotional. It carries profoundly resonant emotional and sexual imperatives. A tendency to downplay the differences that pertain between, say, mothering and holding a job, not only drains our private relations of much of their significance, but also over-simplifies what can or should be done to alter things for women, who are frequently urged to change roles in order to solve their problems (p. 33).

Appropriating this line of thought, this study argues that this action of rejecting one's child has penetrated her psyche and influenced her behaviours in adult life. Phephelaphi, in the quest for freedom and independence, commits an act of infanticide two times, literally killing two sinless babies inside her womb because she realized that a mothering role is an obstacle to a woman's professional transformation. Coupled with the immense suffering she has endured since childhood and the fact that pregnant women are not allowed to train for nursing, a course Phephelaphi craves for more than her own life, she resolves to painfully kill her unformed babies to clear her path for success.

Phephelaphi's move is a contravention of societal norms as well as laws of nature, nevertheless, she is able to exercise her right in decision making and putting up a resistance. Phephelaphi's decision to repeatedly terminate her pregnancies, killing the innocent beings through self-inflicted abortions, is informed by the many injustices she has suffered since childhood. Born of a prostitute mother with no fixed abode, her childhood was very difficult. She tells Fumbatha:

My mother named me Phephelaphi because she did not know where to seek refuge when I was born. She slept anywhere. She had no food in her stomach, but her child had to sleep under some shelter. She had hard times. As soon as I was born she had given me another name, she called me Sakhile. Then she discovered that Makokoba has no time for a woman who was raising a child on her own, so she renamed me. I was six years old by then. She still called me Sakhile but she sat down often with me and said that Phephelaphi was the name she had now found for both of us. She had struggled (p.29-30).

This traumatizing childhood memory lodged itself in Phephelaphi's psyche. She has no fixed identity and is ready to adapt to any other name. Phephelaphi's desperation for a name symbolizes her intense quest for identity in order to belong and gain her worth as a human being with full exercisable rights. She is ready to do just anything to get out of this enclosure of power. It is therefore not a wonder that Phephelaphi literally begs for another name but Phephelaphi. She tells Fumbatha, "You could give me another name. I do not mind being named by a stranger. I do not mind being renamed if it makes the present clearer" (30). Phephelaphi is tired of the struggle that she seems to have inherited from her mother. Her heart desires a life with a promising present and future. She loathes the past life that she lived with her mother. The double abandonment and rejection by her biological mother left scars of agony in the heart of Phephelaphi:

This was the second time Phephelaphi was being abandoned by her biological mother. Though the first time she was just a baby and very helpless when her biological mother got rid of her and placed her under the care of a 'mother'; now her own mother under the guise of a friend prefers to let her go live with a man in order to have her freedom. Phephelaphi is grateful to go but cannot shake off the haunting memories of the death of the woman she thought was her mother. In a flashback she recalls the events surrounding her mother's death and burial. She remembers how one night a stranger shot her mother by the doorway and how she witnessed her arm and body fall with a scary thud.

The memory depicts Phephelaphi's intense suffering. She is traumatized by the memory of her mother's death. The colonial authority did not even have the courtesy of extending a burial invitation to her. She feels dejected. Phephelaphi feels empty

because the pain has stolen a lifetime from her and left her as an unproductive shell. To leave this empty confinement, Phephelaphi is prepared to undertake any actions within her power. She therefore moves in with Fumbatha, not because she loves him but for the convenience of her escape. She hopes that her living with Fumbatha would lighten her burden in life.

Phephelaphi's decision to move in with Fumbatha, a man whose interest is his own healing and not love is her strategy to propel herself forward. Amidst the turbulence, instability and uncertainties in her past and present life, Phephelaphi dares to risk and venture into a new life with Fumbatha whom she thinks loves her. He is a generation older than her and is nursing psychological wounds from Chimurenga war.

Using love as a disguise for his obsession with Phephelaphi, Fumbatha uses her to mend his broken connection with the land. Evoking the meaning of her name, he regards her as a 'shelter' to dwell in. "He wants to 'hold her', never wanting to let her go. Fumbatha had never wanted to possess anything before, except the land. He wanted her like the land beneath his feet from which birth had severed him." (BB, 28-29). Phephelaphi is the medicine Fumbatha needed to cure his nightmares. She is a special woman who was not like many. Deliwe who understood Fumbatha from their long acquaintances, observes thus:

He treasured Phephelaphi above every other woman he had known. He claimed he had pulled her out of the water like a fish and there was every evidence to prove that this story was true. Phephelaphi did not possess a single blemish, a woman whose body was all promise, breasts firm and rounded, a voice so soothing soft no other woman could exceed its charm and no men ignored its plea (p.63).

Phephelaphi's physical attraction makes her stand out as a beautiful woman whose charm surpasses those of the other women, and men like Fumbatha sees her as

special. It is this special quality she possesses that draws Fumbatha to her. Having been downtrodden by the harshness of life in the hands of colonial administration, Fumbatha strongly feels that only a special woman like Phephelaphi can cure his painful circumstances. He makes a resolve that he must possess her and use her as a transformational strategy for his future. Since the relationship is anchored on self-interest and not love, it fails to fulfill Fumbatha's desired goal. Phephelaphi soon realizes that her advancement would not come from Fumbatha and looks for an alternative strategy. Having failed with Fumbatha, Phephelaphi is more determined in her quest. Propelled by a desire for a new identity, to find herself, Phephelaphi applies to a nursing school despite Fumbatha's attempts to prevent her. He tells her, "We are happy together. I work. I take care of you. It is not necessary for you to find something else" (p.70).

Fumbatha's reply to her initiative shows that he has turned into an obstacle that she must put behind her if she has to succeed. Her application to the nursing training college is a move towards finding herself, a move that is very timely according to feminist thoughts that suggests that women must break the bonds of their patriarchal society and define themselves if they wish to become a significant human being in their own right, and they must defy male classification as the "Other" (p.173).

Phephelaphi has turned down Fumbatha's offer to take care of her instead of going to nursing school. Her attempts to break away become a nightmare when she discovers that she is pregnant, a condition that would disqualify her from the training programme. Phephelaphi had wanted this training so much that she agonized for it because it would be the springboard to her future success:

It is not the being a nurse which matters but the movement forward- the entrance into something new and untried. Her heart rises in an agony of longing. She is going to be the first one to train. If the occasion allows her, "No one will come knocking on my door telling me to apply"... Fumbatha could never be the beginning or end of all her yearning, her longing for which she could not find a suitable name. It was a feeling rising like tears. She wanted to do something but had no idea what it could be, what shape it offered for her future (p.71, 75).

Phephelaphi's jubilation at securing herself a place at the nursing college was short-lived. Her dream- come true that was gradually transforming her life into the reality she has always yearned and longed for, came tumbling down in pieces. The smartly dressed young black woman who had walked into the general mission hospital two weeks ago as the hospital's first black nurse trainee is now a very worried pregnant woman, full of tears, confusion and regrets.

Symbolically, Phephelaphi's door to freedom and betterment was shut with her pregnancy, she became bitter and frustrated. She felt her life had lost meaning and would rather die than continue in her present predicament. The pain she felt for losing the chance to train, and the desire she had to transform her life and get her reality converged to force her next action. Different thoughts of the child she was carrying in her womb raced through her mind. A part of her wanted to have the child while another totally rejected it. It is then that she made a decision that would fix her destiny.

Though not in the right form of mind, Phephelaphi has made the decision that would decide her fate. She is ready to get rid of the fetus in her womb. In an agony of the action she is about to execute and a heart-pounding so fast, Phephelaphi chooses a solitary space with little human disturbance. Phephelaphi's choice of place to kill her baby ensures privacy from human eyes. She is surrounded by nature with birds of air witnessing her heinous action of abortion. Using sturdy thorn as the necessary

instrument, lying on her back with legs apart to allow efficiency, and feet firm on the ground under the tingling sensation of sand for support, Phephelaphi had no fear, only the desire to do away with the obstacle to her success, the baby in her womb.

Phephelaphi's determination and concentration depict the importance she attaches to this abortion. The baby in her womb is an obstacle that must be removed for her to achieve her reality and self-fulfillment. Her focus is on the anticipated tremor that is supposed to usher in the evacuation of the unwanted baby. The process she has chosen to execute her strategy is unscrupulously painful. Blinded by the need to positively transform her life, Phephelaphi does not take into consideration the significance of the fetus in her womb and the risk involved in the method she has chosen to terminate its life.

Phephelaphi performs her second abortion in the crudest and painful manner. The physical and the psychological pain she is undergoing is too excruciating for her to bear. Nevertheless, she perseveres knowing that her freedom from the 'obstacle' is very near. The hope keeps her from giving up though she has realized the shortfalls of her strategy.

This realization notwithstanding, Phephelaphi holds on to the process for she desperately desires what she perceives to be beyond the pain that she is experiencing in her current circumstances. Paradoxically Phephelaphi does not live to experience whatever she desires that she imagines exists beyond the pain. She passes into oblivion as a hopeful woman. She is an example of women who are ready to fight for what they believe in; even to death. The very strategy she had chosen to liberate her has mercilessly claimed her life, destroying both her physical body and her hopes. This is typical of power that is inconsiderately utilized.

Phephelaphi's abortion and her subsequent death are clear depictions of the ills of colonial rule in Zimbabwe. In the late 1940s, nurses could neither get married nor become pregnant. Desperate to know herself, to be more, and mad for having been spurned by her lover and betrayed by her body, she sinks into deep madness, she becomes neurotic. The horrific description that marks Phephelaphi's second abortion as an irreversible event in her life is a clear indication of a trapped being whose only escape is death. Through her abortions and eventual death, Phephelaphi has put up resistance to both colonial and patriarchal entanglements of her society. For Vera, Phephelaphi's desire to know the self and become a significant being on her own terms is re-directed to her deviant act of self-inflicted abortion that ends in death. This provokes a critical question in the reader's mind, "what went wrong?" and then we are reminded of the complex nature of power, what I refer to in this thesis as the paradox of power.

3.3 Loneliness, Torture and Murder

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera tells a moving story of the 'incestuous' relationship of a young orphaned rejected school dropout living with her dead sister's fiancée. This kind of action is outlawed by the norms of the society in which she lives. Nonceba, feeling trapped in deep traumatizing problems, has to brave this move to rediscover the self and chart a new path towards her goals in life.

The story is told through the experiences of Thenjiwe and Nonceba, the twin sisters rejected by their mother and abandoned through their father's death. Coming from an equally war-torn village, the two girls are alone and only draw strength and comfort from each other. Sibaso, an ex-soldier who murders Thenjiwe, rapes and mutilates Nonceba, exploits their vulnerable situation. The horrific manner in which these

heinous acts are committed is mind raking and traumatizing. The beheading of Thenjiwe is described from Nonceba's point of view:

His head is behind Thenjiwe, where Thenjiwe was before; floating in her body; he is floating like a flash of lightening. Thenjiwe's body remains upright while Sibaso's head emerges behind hers, inside it, replacing each of her moments, taking her position in the azure of the sky. He is absorbing Thenjiwe's motions into his own body, existing where Thenjiwe was, moving into spaces she has occupied (p.73).

The magnitude of the horror scene and its traumatizing effects are too much for Nonceba to bear. Since she is too weak and too confined to put up any resistance, she allows herself to disappear into the stupor of unconsciousness rather than let the painful horror fill her mind. She passes out after the mutilation. In her hospital bed, she wakes up in a confused, shocked and wounded state.

The boundaries of her psyche threaten to collapse as the previous scene comes back flooding her memories. Nonceba is not ready to accept that her sister Thenjiwe has been murdered. She fights the memories of this painful reality by imagining of her sister's presence among her fellow patients. She objectifies this imagination and uses it as a strategy to resist the trauma of the murder.

When consciousness brings her back to the reality she is not ready for, Nonceba's fragile psyche joins that of the neurotic woman and hallucinatively commit murder alongside the imaginative actions of the woman so that she murders Sibaso, her sister's murderer in the person of the neurotic woman's husband. Even after this imaginative subversive act of resistance, Nonceba's trauma is further stretched when she regains her consciousness in the hospital only to encounter screams from the neurotic woman:

Her voice sweeps down the corridor like a hot liquid. Her voice is high. Something pitiful is pouring out of it, something unstoppable. Her voice is muffled, suddenly held down. Many people are holding her down. The woman is destroying a thought in her mind. She is getting rid of something only light and sound can clean a mind not touch. She is cleansing her mind (p. 87).

Yvonne Vera seems to believe that women are trapped in some oppressive patriarchal memories from which they try to exert their own willpower over their bodies to escape to some self-defined spaces. Like Nonceba, this woman is trapped in some past ugly memories. Her suffering has blown the threshold of her psyche. She is a woman who lived in an unbearable traumatized past and would do anything to unlock her mind and get freed. The narrator comments that the woman's voice is in Nonceba's mind. Nonceba hears voices asking the length of time the woman has been dying, buried in her voice.

For Nonceba, the desire to avenge her sister's murder is so great that she visualizes the woman and her actions as if it has just happened and mixes this vision with that of Thenjiwe. Nonceba's trauma reaches a point of no return. She turns violent, fighting unseen forces; forces that only exist in her psychotic mind. She is mad and the hospital is her place of confinement from which she must disembark, means notwithstanding. Trying to save her from herself, as she tries to save the woman with the ax; the hospital attendants have tied her to the bed.

Though the threshold of protecting herself and her sister is very high, Nonceba is determined to go through with it; however, with her arms tied to the bed, Nonceba cannot move. She is immobilized and only stares in silence. Even in mind she has been subdued. She sees the woman standing in a pool of blood without an ax. She can only watch because she is no longer a part of the fight. After leaving the hospital, Nonceba goes back to her old haunted destroyed house in Kezi. She reflects that

“Kezi is now only a place for those who were born here and had nowhere else to go” (p.153).

Nonceba feels trapped at the Kezi ruins that once served as her home. Her path to self-fulfillment is now hampered by many problems, including the termination of her academic endeavors that would have been her springboard to her freedom and independence. In her desperation for a better destiny, Nonceba hesitantly accepts to move into a flat in Bulawayo with Cephas, Thenjiwe’s lover, under the undefined relationship of both shared and separate lives based on everyday practicalities because they “cannot yet discuss matters that concern the cause of their despair, Not yet. Not together” (P.171-172).

By accepting the uncommon terms of their relationship, Cephas, to some extent allows Nonceba to begin fending for herself; a sure path to independence and resistance to male subjugation under incestuous relationship. On *The Subject and Power*’ (1982) Michel Foucault equates a struggle similar to that of Nonceba with a struggle revolving around the question of self-discovery. Nonceba, like other female protagonists in Vera’s novels, is using whatever agency is available to them, even if that agency is against the society’s social norms, to resist the power of domination and dependency in order to find her true self.

Vera’s protagonist in *Nehanda* is a woman who defies the patriarchal order that expects a young adult woman to get married and have children. According to this order, a woman who refuses to get married is viewed as a social outcast and abnormal. Nehanda has chosen to remain single and live according to the dictates of her ancestral spirits. She is totally silent about it and instead does whatever she can to

be in communion with the dead ancestors. As a young woman, she spends most of her time sitting on a mat behind her mother's hut, oblivious to women's social activities:

The women rise before the men to make the morning fires and prepare food. A woman who slept till the sun went into her month would be considered incapable of raising her household. Nehanda, who sits on a mat behind the hut, does not notice any of these activities. She sits with her legs stretched in front of her, and her arms folded across her chest, but often she releases them into her lap (p.34).

Normal young women who are yet to marry are expected to join in the women's activities to help their mothers as preparations for their future chores. Contrary to this expectation, Nehanda insensitively sits, leaving her aging mother to do all the house chores. This is a deviation from the norms of this society. Nehanda has accepted this path that has been chosen for her by her ancestors with the hope that it will set her apart for a different lifestyle that she believes would lead her to a self-defined type of freedom.

Nehanda's lack of interest in cultural socialization of gender and their roles is depicted through her insensitivity to her mother's toil to keep pace with grueling chores that threaten to break her down. The mother's trauma of failing to understand her is the least of her concern. The mother is said to have grown significantly old and even neurotic due to worries over her defiance against the norms of her patriarchal society that requires a woman to be voiceless and totally submissive.

Nehanda is, instead working on controlling the village's psychology and space. "In her desperate silence, Nehanda longs for a new language to seek wisdom, and ways of seeing" (p. 35). She does not make efforts to explain herself to anyone including her mother. Nehanda's mother is therefore very uncomfortable with her daughter's way of

life. Nehanda has become the object of gossip in the village and though the mother spends time silencing the gossip, people view her as a letdown.

When Nehanda refused to honour the marriage institution by failing to get married, she became a disgrace to the women and of course, the society. The women, including her mother, find her strange. They are at a loss on how to approach the subject with Nehanda. The mother says, "I dare not talk to her about such matters (p. 48). She braces a long-distance walk to her maiden home to seek advice from her kin.

As a mother, she is forced to look for solutions, to rescue her daughter from being an outcast in her own society. In her old age, she braves the long distance to her village to unburden herself. With tears streaming down her eyes, she tells her relatives "My daughter is not my daughter." What has she done, has she said anything to her mother that her mother finds hard to forgive? "My daughter is no longer my daughter" she looks down to the ground and weeps (p.49).

In her sorrow, mother disowns her daughter because she is not able to understand her extraordinary actions. She suffers the deep pain that only a mother knows. Nehanda is set to follow a path that contradicts the societal expectations. With resolve and determination, she chooses to communicate with the underworld spirits and lives her life according to their commands. This self-asserted subverted way of life gives Nehanda unique visibility that propels her to a position much higher than everyone in her community. She adorned herself with spiritual regalia which enables her to exercise leadership, power and dominion over her community. She leads political and spiritual life, which puts her in direct control over her people. Under the muse of Mbuya Nehanda, a legendary spiritual woman leader, Nehanda passes as the spiritual leader of the first Shona liberation struggle.

Like female protagonists in Vera are other novels, Nehanda faces several difficulties in the course of self-assertion and control of power. She enjoys neither her childhood nor adulthood. When the attention of other girls turns to courting and marriage, Nehanda is silent and withdrawn, awaiting her spiritual powers. When she receives her prophecy, Nehanda becomes an old woman, unable to bear children. She embraces her new predicament and chooses to define herself differently, and walk the path of the patriarchal male. Nehanda has come to believe that a life of child bearing and motherhood would be an obstacle to societal service and self-assertion.

Nehanda's way of life seems to get support from some radical feminists. When reassessing the pros and cons of biological motherhood, the radical feminists remain unconvinced that there is a safe form of biological motherhood for women to experience, that is, a form of motherhood that does not change both a woman's priorities and narrow her already limited range of alternatives. Jeffner Allen (1998), for instance, urges women to "evacuate" motherhood to focus not on the power "to have" children but rather on the power "not to have" children. She argues:

At present, and for several thousands of years past, women have conceived, borne, and raised multitudes of children without any change in the conditions of our lives as women. In the case that all females were to decide not to have children for the next twenty years, the possibilities for developing new modes of thought and existence would be almost unimaginable (p.91).

For Nehanda, virginity is a handmaiden to spirituality, power and resistance to colonialism. She has defied traditional patriarchy through her rejection of all forms of male dominance. Rather than leave behind children to survive her, Nehanda lives on in the legends and history of Zimbabwe.

3.4 Sex as a strategy of self-assertion

Dictionary of Contemporary English defines prostitution as “to put a dishonorable use for money”. It goes on to expand and specify the definition as “a person, especially a woman, who earns money by having sex with anyone who will pay for it” (p.833). Alison Jaggar (1983), views prostitution as an act of selling oneself. According to this view, prostitution alienates one from one’s work. This is because what a woman sells in the case of prostitution is what is closest to her:

Her body, her sexuality. So, under capitalism, a woman’s sexuality becomes a commodity...The wife-prostitute and prostitute proper become dehumanized, and their value as persons is reduced to their market value (p. 251).

In the patriarchal society, according to popular belief, the act of prostitution has always been looked at as a deviant social act, and the prostitutes as outcasts due to their “shameful” actions and behaviours. Reading Vera’s fiction in the light of the above postulations, this research views Vera’s female characters as engaging in deviant social acts, primarily to resist male’s exploitation and misuse of their sexuality, and instead give it out under their own terms. In Vera’s novels, city women who free their sexuality from domesticity and male dominance do so at the cost of their reputations, their motherhood and sometimes their lives.

These women would rather abandon motherhood and marriages; roles exploited by men to dominate women, than endure male dominance. They have chosen to use their own bodies to create alternative narratives of resistance against subjugation even if it cost them their dignity. Getrude, Phephelaphi’s mother-nurturer, strapped her (child) on her back and took her “to every possible appointment with every possible male stranger” (p.35). Phephelaphi’s birth mother gave her up to pursue her illicit trade and pleasures. After a jealous lover murders Getrude, Phephelaphi destroys her mother’s

dress that was the symbol of her mother's prostitution. She recalls with shame and disappointment: "That dress, a hugging sort of dress which pronounced the ooze and low of all her energy" (p. 65). Not long after her mother's death, Phephelaphi helplessly goes to live with Zandile, her birth mother, but whom she knows only as her mother's friend.

Though Zandile got into the occupation of prostitution as a way of earning a livelihood because she had no other means of survival in a society where women had no space for anything decent but child-bearing and rearing if she is lucky enough to get married, she has decided to embrace it as a way to get her self-worth as a woman who can also exercise her power over the man who desires and craves for her body. Her pleasure therefore comes from her realization of the significance of her body, that it has the power to elicit desire in both black and white men, and when she is with them she can occupy the space of the 'Subject' while they occupy the space of the 'Other'.

Zandile capitalizes on her newly acquired knowledge and decides to use her occupation of prostitution as a strategy to achieve freedom and self-worth. She then invests in grooming her body as a source of her physical attraction. Zandile's code of dressing becomes the hallmark of her life as a prostitute. She is notoriously described as a woman "with earrings dangling down to her shoulders, her fingers glazed with nail polish and her lips coated with ambition. She is a woman who makes no distinction between white and black men when it comes to pleasure and exchange (Butterfly, 33). Zandile has buried her conscience as far as prostitution is concerned. What matters to her is her kind of freedom to manipulate men for her pleasure and their money. An act of giving away a child to prostitute one's body is against the

norms of the patriarchal society, yet Zandile is not about to abandon her trade any time soon.

After she takes in her daughter as a young adult, Zandile is once again faced with the dilemma: should she have sex with her lover while her daughter lies awake behind a makeshift barrier” she does and immediately decides to have Phephelaphi move out. That night, Phephelaphi listened to the lovers:

As she listened, Phephelaphi wondered where hope begun. With a sigh that was longer, louder, more satisfied than anything the two could ever have anticipated, she rolled over and turned her back to the moon (p.83).

Twice rejecting her daughter, Zandile has chosen to use her body as a stepping-stone to her freedom in her own terms with the power of her body. Zandile is able to play superior with both white and black men dancing to her tune. The prostitute and the men are involved in a complex power relationship. While the men imagine they are exploiting a woman’s body to fulfill their sexual desires, the prostitute uses her body’s power to manipulate the man to follow her dictates.

In her analysis of prostitution, Simone de Beauvoir argues that; like the man who purchases her services, is an exploiter so is the prostitute who, does not simply prostitute herself for money but also for the homage men pay to her otherness (p.208). Thus, prostitution, as depicted in Vera’s novels, is the women’s own agency of resisting domination by men and colonial discipline. They use prostitution as a springboard to freedom and independence to do as they wish with their own bodies.

3.5 Conclusion

The subversive narrative structure of the female characters across Vera’s five novels has yielded another dimension of interpreting acts of power. The chapter has explored

the women's subversive narratives in Vera's fiction. The subversive narratives have been understood in this research as the deviant social acts such as prostitution, murder, infanticide rejections and gnawing silences that they have employed as modes of resistance. They are acts that are influenced by mental impulses due to a lot of pain and suffering. Their desire to become significant human beings in their own terms and rights seems to push through to the conscious domain of their thinking faculties thus creating unwavering thoughts and determination to get to their imagined fulfilling destinations no matter what.

Since the women have no access to dialogic space that is primarily theirs, they unwillingly enter into self-destructive mode because their attempts to free themselves are usually counterproductive. The analysis has shown that power exerted through acts that subvert the societal social norms as means of resistance and liberation has the possibility of an integrated effect on the individuals. Although psychologically they do succeed to some extent, this success is very short-lived and is largely replaced with the destruction of the individual characters and their relationships. The analysis, therefore, reveals how the writer has used the women's various modes of resistance to demonstrate the elusive nature of self-centered power. The writer's style shows that power that is wielded against another for self-elevation feeds on negative energy and occasions reversal destruction; what the research refers to as the paradox of power. This calls for an examination of the patriarchal society and its attendant players. The next chapter looks at the man and the force behind his appropriation of power. It interrogates the connection between men's aggression towards women, and the colonial administration in the society Vera writes about.

CHAPTER FOUR

COLONIAL SUBJUGATION AND APPROPRIATION OF POWER

4.1 Introduction

The physical setting in a work of fiction plays an essential role in the choice and design of a narrative's incidents and in the delineation of the issues that the work discusses. Vera's choices of patriarchal and colonial narratives reveal the existence of links between characters' experiences and the environment that shapes their lives. This chapter explores the way Vera constructs power narratives to reflect the socio-cultural concerns of the people of Zimbabwe. Being embodiments of power in their various forms both the patriarchal and colonial narratives play an important role in the portrayal of the oppressive painful experiences that both men and women of Zimbabwe endured with their continual effects to date.

Within the confines of power paradigms, the power bar is always tilted so that one end is more elevated than the other. In the African colonial context, at a point in time, both Africans and Europeans exercised power. The European invasion of the continent resulted in material exploitation and cultural domination of Africans by Europeans. The African resistance did not stop the invasion; rather it brought disillusionment to the Africans. Dominated by the colonial laws that seek to capitalize "civilization", European supremacy and the destruction of African cultures, the Africans became subjugated.

The colonial subjugation of the African man stripped him of his patriarchal authority, which placed him above the woman and in control of societal issues; a position that made him subordinate and oppress the woman as a demonstration of male authority. Weakened and subordinated by the colonial powers, the African man projected his

anger through power actions, for instance, coercion and rape among others, that contravene the conventionally accepted norms of the society, on the woman as a way of sustaining his male authority and remaining relevant as the one in charge. This scenario brought double oppression to the African woman who is already suffering under some cultural injustices like the absence of a dialogue space for the negotiation of life as they may desire. In Zimbabwe, the presence of the British administration initiated the suffering of men and worsened the situation women. While the oppression of women mainly emanates from patriarchy as projected by men, the men's oppression largely came as a result of the colonial invasion Zimbabwe which brought down their patriarchal securities. Finding themselves exposed and powerless, they resorted to power appropriation to resist colonialism and find their relevance in patriarchy.

Kaur Brar (2012) defines colonialism as consisting of domination, exploitation and subjugation. It therefore means that colonialism breeds subjugation and the two words are sides of a coin. According to Karl-Marx, as quoted in Brar (2012):

colonialism is a stage in a development of the complex phenomenon of capitalism and the manufacturing industry so that it is not only a historical reality of African history but also worked as a socio-economic and ideological farce that evolved and progressed under the basic principle of alienation of African natives from their traditional value system and pattern of life (p.583).

It is evident that the powers that colonized Africans were more interested in depleting African resources by enriching themselves. They did these by disabling the traditional African system that was pitched on patriarchal ideology, subordinating the African man who was the custodian of the African wealth and taking away the cultural authority that had given him domination and control. Karl-Marx's thoughts seem to be shared by other scholars like Aime' Cesaire (2010) who refers to

colonialism as “a great historical tragedy” that befell Africa in its encounter with Europeans. He concludes that “Europe is responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses in human history” (p.2).

This study reads the above definitions of colonialism as a system characterized by exploitation, domination, subordination or subjugation. The word subordinate, according to Gayatri Spivak is coined from the term “subaltern”, derived from the Latin word “sub”, meaning below or under, plus “alternus” meaning alternate, which comes to “subalternus” meaning subordinate or subjugated. The word subaltern or what I use loosely to refer to the subjugated in this research is mainly used to describe a lower ranking or inferior individual. This position is strengthened by Nanda Silima (2013) who observes that the word subaltern or subjugation came to be used broadly to represent subordination in social, political, religious and economic hierarchies in twentieth and twenty-first centuries, under Marxism, nationalism, post colonialism and feminism theories. In Spivak’s view, subaltern women are subjected to more oppression than subaltern men.

The observations advanced by the above scholars speak to the concerns of this chapter which is to interrogate the impact of colonialism on the African men and how their narratives frame the lived experiences of the women in their society. The colonial administration in Zimbabwe created a new order which came with enforcement of new laws and socio-cultural reforms that edged the African man from the patriarchal power centre. Emasculated of land ownership, political and social responsibilities that define him, the man is forced into a more tempered and docile form of his former self. This has punctured the man’s masculinity and manhood and forced him to create strategies of survival as a patriarchal man. The study argues that the overwhelming magnitude of the man’s need for power and control has driven him to engage in

oppressive actions when dealing with the woman. In his book *The Fall* (2015), Steve Taylor makes an important observation about male subjugation and oppression of women:

That their desire for power and control has driven men to try to conquer and subjugate, dominate and oppress the women. Since men feel the need to gain as much power and control as they can, they steal away power and control from the women. They deny them the right to make decisions so that they can make them for them, leaving women unable to direct their own lives so that they can direct their lives for them (p.87).

Taylor's thoughts exemplify the thrust of this chapter's concerns with men's subjugation and their manipulations of power on women so that as Spivak puts it, women are more subjugated than the men. The chapter interrogates the impact of European invasion on African men and how the men tried to vent their anger on women.

The colonial system in Zimbabwe has alienated the African man from his own world, leaving him confused and vulnerable, and subject to its authority. Haunted by this underdog position, man has appropriated whatever little power he has left to oppress the woman as a means of reverting to his patriarchal kingdom. The complexity of this power play is the focus of this chapter.

As has been insinuated above, I interrogate how Vera's subjugated male characters appropriate power as a way of asserting their battered masculinity and the discourse that informs their actions. The interrogation is done under feminist and Michel Foucault's thoughts on power. Foucault (1982) discusses a form of power that:

Applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own individuality, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power, which makes individuals its subjects: subject to someone else by control and dependence; the kind of power which subjugates and makes subject to (p.777-795).

The colonial influence in the world of Vera's novels exposes the society as embracing a form of power that categorizes individuals and assign them dual markings; colonized or colonizer, superior or inferior, man or woman. This form of power subjugates the less endowed members of the society and makes them subjects to the authority that control and make them dependent. On the one hand, the female characters are subjugated and are struggling under the oppressive yoke of patriarchy as well as colonialism. The male characters on the other hand are struggling to survive under the colonial systems that have denied them their economic, political and socio-cultural practices. Millett (1970) foregrounds the perception of this form of power when she states that:

The root cause of women's oppression is buried deep in patriarchy's gender system. Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant roles while the women contend with the subordinate ones. This ideology is particularly powerful because through conditioning men usually secure the consent of the very women they oppress (p.96).

Vera's critical appraisal of the patriarchal gender system in her works echoes Millett's thesis above. The system assigns dominant roles to men, which in turn assure them superior positions. Men, thus, are used to being on top including towering above women. Nevertheless, this seemingly absolute power center occupied by the patriarchal male in Africa collapses under the weight of colonial invasion of Africa. The African men had to play second fiddle to colonial masters and this disempowering of the African men is well captured in Vera's novels. They got subjugated and had to surrender not only their 'superior' birthrights but also their land and had to become squatters whose survival depended on hard labour, physical and psychological torture, and sometimes fighting wars that they didn't fully understand; a

fact that made them bitter and enraged. The men ventilated their frustrations by directing their rage on unsuspecting women who then suffered double oppression in their relationships with them.

The study interrogates the impact of the colonial evils on men as manifested through their narratives of resistance and relevance in conformity to patriarchal systems. The male characters presented in Vera's novels seem to care less about societal morals. They are incestuous rapists, murderers, sex exploiters, self-centered, frustrated power hungry men who relieve their anger on women.

This narrative strand is depicted through a number of Vera's male characters as in the case of Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins*. Sibaso murders Thenjiwe and rapes her twin sister Nonceba. In Vera's other novels like *Under the Tongue*, Muroiywa has an incestuous sexual relationship with his daughter Zhizha. Runyararo murders her husband Muroiywa to avenge the daughter's incestuous rape.

It is significant to interrogate the impact of colonialism on the actions of the man we have referred to in this chapter as the "subjugated male" because his type forms the significant majority in the society they live in. Since he is not capable of shielding himself from humiliations and harsh realities of life under the administrative systems of colonialism, he appropriates power at every opportune time and use it destructively both on himself and on those he perceives as weaker, like the women.

4.2 The Narrative Interspersion of the Traditional and Colonial Power Systems

In the world of Vera's novels, the white man has created systems that have changed the traditional order of things. The man who previously controlled and managed his socio-economic life becomes controlled and the managed. The Whiteman scoffed at

his ways of doing things as uncivilized and inferior. He felt that the land was too good to be owned and managed by the black man so he took control and made the black man a squatter and a labourer in his own land, making him subject to his authority.

In Vera's *Nehanda*, for example, a black elder observes: "who are these strangers....these gold hunters? Our men helped them hunt for gold, and we thought they would leave. Now they hunt us out of our land" (p. 66). The realization that the Whiteman had exploited their good nature and gullibility dawned on the African men when the damage had already been done. Their attempts to understand the Whiteman and sort out their problems got frustrated. The frustrations turned the Africans into bitter beings, defeated and confused. Despite the formidable leadership of Mbuya Nehanda, they suffered humiliation and defeat as articulated in the following rhetorical questions:

Is this what our ancestors prepared us for? Did they prepare us for death among them? Do you already feel shame to claim what is yours? Do not submit to the unknown wisdom of strange tongues. Those who submitted to the spirit of the stranger have brought an abomination to the land. Can we defeat an enemy whose god is already in our midst? (p. 66).

Feeling subdued and overpowered, they apportion blame to their ancestors as well as themselves for lack of preparedness. The once powerful African man who was bequeathed unchecked power by traditional patriarchal systems now has to serve the white man and call him master against his wish. The case of Mashoko, christened Moses, is a good example:

Moses serves Mr. Browning, a white administrator, as a cook and home worker. He loathes his servant position but can do nothing about it because he feels defeated. Instead, Mashoko exercises his domineering powers on his woman back in his own home whenever he gets the chance: when he is in his village, he feels ashamed of it. If it were not for the hut-taxes that he is being made to pay, he would not accept the work. His cattle will be confiscated if he fails to pay the money asked of him (p. 46).

Evidenced here is the colonial disempowerment of the African male. Mashoko has been divested of his male power under patriarchy, and forced to take up duties his culture defines as alien and meant for women, like cooking and housekeeping. The new order has brought down his value to the status of a woman so that he must serve instead of being served. Mashoko has become an absent husband to his wife and absent father to his children. His wife who is already disadvantaged as a voiceless being under patriarchy is now exposed to marriage insecurity occasioned by the colonial system, making her suffering double.

The suffering of Mashoko's wife is a good example of the double oppression the African women underwent under the colonial system. The system has assigned Mashoko duties that ensure his absence from his family. He has to work to pay for the system's taxes and feed his family. Mashoko's behavior, though obligated, affirms Vera's concern with the subjugated African man. He is subject to Mr. Browning's authority and though he hates himself for it, he has to tolerate him for his survival. Mashoko cherishes the times he spends with his wife back in the village. This is not because he loves her but rather because it gives him the opportunity to exercise his domineering male authority over her; a space handed down to him by his ancestors under the patronage of patriarchal ideology.

The Whiteman interprets the African man's attitude towards women as that of superiority. The man sees himself as superior to a woman so that he considers her as inferior and valueless. Simone De Bouviuor (1949) view men's attitude as occasioned by the fact that they control the society so that they influence how things are done including the handling of women. Mr. Browning uses this stance to disregard Nehanda's leadership ability and to scheme on how to handle the men. He observes thus:

I doubt that the natives can listen to an old woman like her. What can she tell them? This society has no respect for women, whom they treat like children. A woman has nothing to say in the life of the natives. Nothing at all (p.75).

Mr. Browning sees a leadership vacuum at the African resistance front. He is confident of establishing a British among them with little opposition. Contrary to Mr. Browning's perception, both the natives and the white men treat Nehanda differently due to her claimed spiritual connections to the underworld. The African men's acceptance of her is influenced by their belief in the spirit of the old Mbuya Nehanda so that they don't see the woman in her. Nevertheless, it can also be argued that their acceptance of Nehanda is because they have been emasculated and feel defenseless so that they are ready to rally behind anyone who has the courage to face the colonial army.

Whatever the case, the research argues that through Nehanda, women have demonstrated that they are fearless and can confront any situation, however difficult. They have also defined in their own terms the identity of a woman as herself not as they are constructed by the patriarchal society. This is what Kate Millett encourages when she says that:

Women must disenfranchise the power centre of their culture: male dominance. By so doing, women will be able to establish female social conventions as defined by females, not males and in the process, they themselves will shape and articulate female discourse, literary studies and feminist theory (p.173-174).

This kind of move by the women culminated into the subjugation of the black man by the white masters as experienced when Kaguvi and Nehanda are captured and hanged. In his cell before he is hanged, Kaguvi feels desperate and confused. The power of the lion that has always been his strength, as per the native beliefs, leaves him. The narrator says:

The spirits departs in regretful spasms that send Kaguvi crawling from one corner of the room to the next. The blood-feeding spirit roars as it leaves him. Kaguvi's forehead streams with water. His ears sing with deafening pulsating blood. After the ceaseless pounding in his head, and the burning in his stomach, Kaguvi understands. His name will utterly destroy him. No one can walk away from the departed free and whole. Kaguvi weeps (p.108).

It is evident here that the black man's power cannot hold before the Whiteman's authority. The intensity of the humiliation suffered by Kaguvi in the prison cell was so great that even his male spirit departed from him. A man as utterly defeated as Kaguvi is dangerous to both the self and any weaker being around him. Kaguvi attributes his suffering to ancestors whom he feels he has disappointed. His confinement in the cell controls him from trying to rekindle his male authority through women.

The African man, referred to in this chapter as the "subjugated man", is as significant in the world of Vera's novels as he is to the current society. In his frustration and bitterness, he overtly manipulates the instruments of patriarchal power for his perverted personal fulfillment. He uses resistance as a chemical catalyst to exercise his own power over those he considers weak, inferior and voiceless. Just as Millett (1970) observes:

Men use the patriarchal ideology to secure consent of women and that "should a woman refuse to accept the patriarchal ideology and should she manifest her mistrust by casting off her femininity, that is, her submissiveness/subordination, men will use coercion to accomplish what conditioning has failed to achieve. Intimidation is everywhere in patriarchy (p.96).

Fumbatha in Vera's *Butterfly Burning* for example, is a self-possessed man who, in his underdog position, tries to possess Phephelaphi, a woman he claims to be madly in love with but whom he just uses to salvage his male virility and revert to the power of patriarchy, power that controls and possesses:

He never wanted to let her go even though they were strangers. He could never free her, even if she rose and disappeared once more into the water. He would remember her. He would hold her. Fumbatha had never wanted to possess anything, except the land beneath his feet from which birth served him. Perhaps if he had not been born the land would still belong to him. The death of his father had not heralded birth. Fumbatha had never met a woman who helps him forget each of his footsteps on this ground he longed for (p. 28-29).

Fumbatha equates Phephelaphi with land and sees in her a dwelling and a substitute for the land he had lost. He hopes, by holding on to Phephelaphi, he would transform his pathetic defeated state to something more meaningful and rekindle the male power that dominates and possesses. Fumbatha, like most men in Bulawayo city, Makokoba Township, suffer from exploited hard labour and indignation in the service of the colonial administration. The work is not their own, it is summoned, the time is not theirs, it is seized (p. 5).

The colonial government has snatched all that they ever owned or inherited from their ancestors, apart from women. They work under the surveillance of the colonialist's administration. This intense subjugation is expected to burst into a resistance against the unbearable atrocities unleashed by the hegemonic power. Ironically, this is not the case in Bulawayo. The men here have resigned to their fate and chosen to put up a unique kind of resistance to lessen the colonial pain. They use kwela music to soothe their battered souls and enable them go through their lives of hardship.

These men survive by performing hard labour under strictly controlled conditions. They operate under a system of power that Michel Foucault (1970) describes as the way of power over bodies. He says that the power relations have an immediate hold upon the body, where it gets invested, torturing and forcing the body to carry out tasks and perform ritualistic ceremonies. According to him:

This kind of hold, in the capitalist economy is used to force bodies to a new kind of labour, to extract productive service from them. This involves an actual 'incorporation' of power into the bodies of individuals, controlling their acts and attitudes, and behavior from within (p.150).

In the same way, Vera's male characters are controlled from within. Their labor is exploited and controlled. Despite their conformity to the rules, these men are not even allowed to walk on the pavements, which they themselves sweep and keep clean. They live within the cracks, unnoticed and unnoticeable, offering every service but with the capacity to vanish when the task required is accomplished.

The men's predicament is humanly unbearable and harrowing. They have been made subjects, subdued and subjugated. They move around like zombies because they are treated with scorn and humiliation which lodge in their psyche, robbing them of their dignity making them liars, selfish, criminals and worthless. The men reverted to kwela music as a means of drowning their frustrations and moving on. They live in the moment and for the moment they are alive. While some men live through these difficult conditions, others just drop dead with people around them pretending to be careless, especially because they are considered to have no value. The dead man becomes his own wife's burden because she has to take away the body:

The man dies.....The dead man's wife finally brings a wheelbarrow and carries him home, after asking the gathered people if they have never seen a dead man before. They respect her loss and keep silent. The tragedy is her exclusive property, they know, but the absurdity is not. After she has disappeared from view and hearing distance they inquire about the quality of a man who has died (p. 43).

The man no longer has value even to fellow Africans. The colonial administration has succeeded in taking away their male power. They have been commoditized and rated accordingly in death. Still, some of these men are brutally tortured to death. The men are branded and marked for death, probably because, according to colonial

administration, they have outlived their usefulness. They are therefore hanged like common criminals.

Even in death, men suffer indignity and humiliation. Their carcasses are abandoned in the open. The situation of the black men in the world of Vera's novels is unbearable, challenging and dehumanizing. Even in such circumstances, the women bear the pain of witnessing the torture and cruel death of their sons and husbands. The men's power strategies of collaborating with the colonial administration and fighting their wars have not produced the envisaged results, rather, they have destroyed them and caused their women more pain hence the paradox of power.

4.3 Desperation for self-worth and Relevance

As he thinks of his father who is among the seventeen dead men hanged by colonial administration, Fumbatha is distraught and pained. He feels worthless, hence his admiration for the silence of death. He observes, "Death is as intimate as love" (p. 13). He was born the same year in which his father was hanged. The white masters turned him into a tormented man whose childhood was full of nightmares of his father:

In sleep Fumbatha drowns in the death of seventeen men. Each night, he listens to a cloud descending from the sky and pulling the bodies apart till their spirits are rent from their bodies. The birds feed on the dead but free them from eternal silence. The men borrow voices from the birds and speak in fluent sounds, clouds gather in the sky and there is heavy rain ---- They leap in and their bodies race down the river like wood. Water swirls round the trunk on which the men have died. There is nothing we can do to save the dead, if they wake, whose life would make them whole again? (p. 14-15).

In both dream and consciousness, Fumbatha is a man under the siege of colonial masters. His subjugation hurts and haunts him. His oppression assigns him to an under-dog position that is both frustrating and torturous. In her presentation of

Fumbatha, Vera describes a man whose life is empty. He has no fixed abode and therefore spends his nights beneath the debris and rubble under a company truck and the safety of its large wheels. With this description, Vera is telling us the magnitude of the suffering of a black man under the colonial systems.

This is a demonstration that Fumbatha, like a significant number of male protagonists in Vera's novels are victims of colonial wrath, poverty and hard labor. In their hopeless situations, they grope around for power that would make them relevant as men in the patriarchal society, which is itself crumbling under colonial assault. Fumbatha wonders about without any fixed abode. His hard labor job only allows him to survive day by day. It is at his temporary shelter by the Umguza River where he meets Phephelaphi. His male power is quickly rejuvenated by her beauty and strength, "Phephelaphi was unaware of the manner in which she had by her presence, transformed him" (p.26).

He immediately took charge, telling her about the river while at the same time being grateful to it for giving her the woman," it had given him this woman, spitting onto the rock like a dream. He waited fearful that he will wake and find her gone."(p. 27) Fumbatha is evidently grateful about his new status as a man being redeemed from a nightmare by some god of nature. His reward is Phephelaphi and he is not ready to let her go because instantly, she has made his male instincts alive. He feels he has a duty to protect her and to own her as per the dictates of patriarchy. Unsure whether he should make inquiries, he asked her, "Where do you leave?" He asked as though to protect her (p. 28).

The question that begs for an answer here is, to protect her from who or what? Seemingly, Fumbatha wants Phephelaphi for himself to enable him fulfill his patriarchal obligations of living with a woman as a husband and a wife:

He never wanted to let her go even though they were strangers. He could never free her, even if she rose and disappeared once more into the water. He would remember her. He would hold her. Fumbatha had never wanted to possess anything before, except the land. He wanted her like the land beneath his feet...Fumbatha had never met a woman who helped him forget each of his footsteps on this ground which he longed for (p. 29).

Vera engages the allegorical connection between the female body and the land to explain their capabilities of holding a man and providing for his most essential needs. For instance, Fumbatha is holding on to land because it links him to his ancestors to whom he owes his biological life while the land is responsible for his cultural life. Both land and woman are endowed with fertility and production capabilities, which are essential for a man's survival.

Having lost the land to colonialists, Fumbatha is keen to have Phephelaphi as a kind of substitute. He is therefore determined to own and possess Phephelaphi, to make him forget his frustrations. Since it is popularly believed that African patriarchy gives immense respect to marriage institution, Fumbatha wants to use Phephelaphi to prove his ability to 'own' and 'manage' a woman in order to portray his authoritative male power over a section of the society that is to be managed and ruled. This, he hopes would make him transcendent as a man. Juliet Mitchell as quoted in Rosemarie Tong (1989) says:

The father desires to be transcendent, to assert his will triumphantly, to be, in some sense of the term, "the Boss" he is ultimately capable of saying "I am who I am".. He is clear thinking, farseeing, and powerful (p.170).

Leaning on Mitchell's view, the research argues that the desire to be powerful or transcendent, to link up with his ancestors and those to be born made Fumbatha want to own Phephelaphi as a wife and become father to their children. I suggest that this is the reason why Fumbatha was very pained when Phephelaphi aborted their first child. After days of pain and avoiding Phephelaphi, Fumbatha finally asked her accusingly:

Last light of the evening on anything less important than her "you killed our child?"... His eyes raised mockingly, telling her without words that nothing could be more important than that and why was she wasting the betrayal (p.141).

Fumbatha's manhood is punctured again because his assumption that Phephelaphi is contented with what he provides for her has not turned into reality. I suggest that this is because being a complete adult human being; Phephelaphi too has her own plans which do not synchronize with those of Fumbatha. He would have wished to have total control over Phephelaphi so that she is subordinated to him. It is this notion of men about women that Marylin French (1985) argues about that:

Patriarchy is the paradigm par excellence for all modes of oppression; that sexism is prior to all "isms", including classism and racism. And that the oppression of women by men leads logically to further systems of domination (p.98).

Drawing from French's line of thought, I argue that a man who dominates a woman culturally wins the approval of the patriarchal society. Fumbatha is thus obsessed with the need to possess Phephelaphi in order to have refuge and to be relevant as a man in patriarchal order. He is therefore prepared to go to whatever extent to make Phephelaphi his own. In Phephelaphi, he envisages a possibility of reclaiming his patriarchal self, healing and settling down:

To find shelter, here was a woman who made Fumbatha finally relax his palms and look high up into the sky. He was no longer on guard. Here was life, water, and shelter of a kind. He could not argue with her shimmering presence. She gave him faith without her saying anything; he felt she had offered him a promise. Fumbatha was eager to begin, with her arrival he discovered a desperate fear, large and unnamable, which he could not abandon. It was he who needed refuge (p. 29).

Fumbatha's psychological wounds of manhood seem to have been cured by Phephelaphi. He finds a safe haven to dwell in, replacing the possession he lost to colonialists. He is physically and mentally pre-occupied with Phephelaphi as his only means to patriarchal glory. He is ready to use whatever strategy he can surmount to make her his own even as he doubts his own worth as a man. In a rhetorical question, he wonders if he possesses anything that commensurates her love. He puts it thus:

What could she love about him, what could she give to him without a loss to himself, without perishing beneath the stream. What words will he use to hold her and keep her still? An older man with his ankle held in a river. Who was he...? (p. 31).

It is clear that Fumbatha is well aware of his shortcomings and precarious position in society. The colonial system has emasculated him so he is self-conscious that Phephelaphi may see through him and fail to love him. He equates loving him with losing oneself and self-destruction because he is a dejected old man who does not even know his true identity. I argue that Fumbatha's foreshadowing of Phephelaphi's self-destruction eventually came when he clings on her and stands between her and her dreams' fulfillment.

Fumbatha loves Phephelaphi because she says nothing about love (p.33). He simply wants to possess her for his own triumph as a man. He cares less about her progress and self-independence. He discourages her from sending an application for nursing training. Fumbatha is ready to give his valueless life up for the ownership of

Phephelaphi. For him, life without her will negatively impact on him, forcing him to be his old self, a subjugated worthless man without an identity in the patriarchal society. He is therefore determined to put an end to Phephelaphi's movement forward and nothing will make him change his mind, not even Phephelaphi's logical reasoning. In her perception:

No one will come knocking on my door telling me to apply," she says to Fumbatha. "And if we do not apply, will anyone know that we are interested?" She asks...Her emotions are flurry of excitement and curiosity, she speaks to Fumbatha with a hopeful tone, believing that he will understand her immediately; he surprises her. Fumbatha forbids it," We have our lives together," he repeats (p. 71).

From his lowly placed position, Fumbatha is experiencing both physical and mental pressure to possess and regulate Phephelaphi's movement. He wants to control and hung on to Phephelaphi whom he now considers his woman. Because he is unable to move forward and transform his own life from that of a dominated oppressed labourer to a more significant man who is in control of his life, he can only make himself visible by stopping the vigor and agility of Phephelaphi in her quest for freedom and success.

Fumbatha is fixated on possessing Phephelaphi as a means to mend his damaged male identity. He wants to suck away the goodness of her youth to better him. A feminist critic Mary Daly expounds this line of argument. For her, women possess some form of power that men feed on, making them grow thin, weak, frail and even anorexic" (p.108). The study argues that Men like Fumbatha feed on women's power to appear strong and relevant in patriarchal society. This is because such men have inferior male morality, which is associated with defeat and subjugation. Daly further argues that even in the two genders there are two categories of people, those with superior and those with inferior morality. She assigns inferior morality to frustrated subjugated

men and assigns assertive women superior morality because they are not only conscious about their dehumanizing circumstances but they are working towards improving them.

Phephelaphi, being a strong intelligent woman instantly initiated change in Fumbatha. While she is oblivious to the impact her presence has brought to him, Fumbatha is well aware and ready to transform his inferior position. If I may use Daly's words, Fumbatha is looking up to Phephelaphi for the transformation he very badly desires. He wants to own a woman like Phephelaphi to earn respect in his society and resist the harsh impact of colonial pressures. In Daly's line of thought, a woman like Phephelaphi is a breed of superior female morality, the type that is able to cure Fumbatha's inferior male morality. The study suggests that Fumbatha is unconsciously aware of this possibility, which explains why he marvels at Phephelaphi's visible qualities as a woman. He confesses that:

He had never met a woman who helped him forget each of his footsteps on this ground which he longed for. Here was a woman who made him notice that his feet were not on solid ground but on rapid and flowing water, and that this was a delight, that there was no harm ...Here was a woman who made Fumbatha finally relax his palms and look high up in the sky. He was no longer on guard (p. 29).

Fumbatha has found a pillar of strength in Phephelaphi to draw his strength from. She is beautiful and courageous and knows just what she wants in life. The same strength and courage that Fumbatha admires so much in Phephelaphi and hopes to use to turn his life around had proved to be a flaw for him when Phephelaphi used it to anchor her own dreams. This is a challenge to Fumbatha. My argument here is that the colonial subjugated men such as Fumbatha required different strategies to turn their lives around. A woman like Phephelaphi is neither ready to be Fumbatha's

springboard to propel him back to patriarchal glory nor is she ready to be the pill for his masculinity. The study, further argues that though women in the hypothetical society that Vera writes about have not been given space for dialogue to express their needs and wants, they are conscious about them and are ready to even do the forbidden to get to their goals.

Phephelaphi's path to transformation is in training as a nurse. Courageously she applies for the course against Fumbatha's discouragement. As if reading from the same script with Mary Daly, Phephelaphi refuses to deprive herself of the career opportunity for the sake of Fumbatha. She has chosen to be called 'bad' or 'ugly' by Fumbatha but assert herself to achieve her dream. When she gets pregnant again, she refuses to grapple with two major tasks of nursing a baby and pursuing her nursing career. She decides to kill Fumbatha's baby through self-inflicted abortion, which ends up killing her. Through this act Phephelaphi has demonstrated that she is her own person who is able to decide her own destiny. Her diversion from Fumbatha's path heralds the feminist thought that encourages women to walk away from patriarchal definitions and societal constructs of women but fails to fulfil her desires. This is a clear demonstration that the power strategy of eliminating the fetus ended up destroying her through death, the paradox of power.

Though Vera's female protagonists employ the strategy of direct confrontation of their adversaries, the male protagonists have chosen a more subtle way of resisting the powers that dominate them. In *Nehanda*, Vera's male characters are so much subdued that they no longer control, or even take care of women, in accordance to patriarchal expectations.

Commenting on Simone de Beauvoir's development of the Sartrean thesis, man as self, woman as 'Other', Dorothy Kaufman (1979) observes that:

If the "Other" is a threat to the self, then woman is a threat to man and if man wishes to remain free, he must subordinate woman to him. To be sure woman is not the only "Other" who knows oppression, blacks know what it is to be oppressed by whites and the poor know what it is to be oppressed by the rich" (p.202).

Through the activities of her female characters, Vera highlights that women are not inferior. They can be sober leaders not just domestically but can also face the international threat. I argue that Nehanda edged men of Zimbabwe from their usual power Centers when she assumed the leadership role against the colonial forces. To this extent, Nehanda concretizes the feminist thought postulation which suggests that human beings need to be validated as individuals based on their individual performances and not as groups of people based on gender.

This challenge awakened the consciousness of men to view women as normal human beings who can perform competitively if given the opportunity. The Zimbabwean men vacated the power seat for Nehanda and took up less grueling tasks. This is evidenced in the person of men like Moses Mashoko; a native working for a Whiteman, Mr. Browning as a servant. Mashoko does not find his work interesting and feels ashamed when he is back in the village.

Mr. Browning's attitude about the native is evident through his treatment of Moses. He thinks of him as a fool, an inferior being. After washing his face, Moses closes his eyes against the droplet until Mr. Browning has stopped splashing. "You can open your eyes now, Moses," Mr. Browning says. What a fool this Moses is, a real clown (p. 45). The white man has subjugated Moses, like other men in Zimbabwe. They are treated with contempt. The white man scoffs at even the elders. He laughs at them and

their beliefs, telling them mockingly that he would give those guns and teach them to pray to his God. He tries to use power coercion to win them over for him to subjugate them with ease and conquer them. The Whiteman has exercised the machinations of his power over the black man. With his superior power, he has stripped the black men of everything, including their beliefs and practices as well as their dignity. They are mistrusted and treated like children who need protection from the queen, a white woman.

Having realized that they have become desperate and powerless, the men turned to Nehanda, a woman whom they believed to possess spiritual power for leadership. Their women are left without “protection” and dangerously exposed. Nehanda’s authoritative speech as she gives direction on how to confront the colonial forces has removed the patriarchal mask from the eyes of men. They have demonstrated this by kneeling before Nehanda as the other women stretch their protective arms around them. This study reads this kind of power exercising as foregrounded by Foucault’s idea on power, authenticating the fact that every individual has power and can exercise it regardless of their gender.

The women, including Nehanda are forced by prevailing circumstances to get out of the kitchen and take up the roles traditionally meant for men. They are compelled by their motherly instincts to protect their children even when they know their efforts are futile. They suffer and face persecution on the hands of the white man because their men who should have offered them protection have succumbed to defeat from the Whiteman.

Vera heralds the efforts of the women because for her, one must never succumb to defeat because survival is in fighting for space and voice. Through the actions of these

women, Vera is making a statement that women's struggle for freedom is transversal and does not depend on man's leadership. They are not ready to go down with their men; they are determined to face the white man's authority and challenge it. Vera's thoughts are in tandem with Julia Kristeva's refusal to identify the "feminine" with biological women, and the "masculine" with biological men. Kristeva argues thus:

If a child has the choice, upon entry into the symbolic order, of identifying with either the mother or the father, and if the extent of the child's masculinity or femininity depends on the extent of this identification, then children of both sexes have the same choices open to them. Boys can identify with their mothers and girls can identify with their fathers.....to collapse language into biology, to insist that simply because of their anatomy, women write differently than men is to force men and women, once again, into patriarchy's straight jacket....."Woman as such does not exist". Such concepts as "woman" and "the feminine" are rooted in metaphysics, the essentialist philosophy that deconstruction seeks to deconstruct. The belief that "one is a woman" is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that "one is a man" (p.230).

The thinking of Vera resonates well with Kristeva's that biological determination has nothing to do with one's limitation and capability. The women in Vera's novels, such as Nehanda have proved that their quest for freedom and autonomy is not dependent on their biological determinism. Their revolutionary powers do not depend on the patriarch's goodwill. If patriarchy cannot protect them from the political, social, and economic exploitation of the white man, then they usurp the power and protect not only themselves but also the men who seem to have submitted to the authority of the white man.

The aftermath of male submission is of special interest to Vera. She continually draws correspondences between the immoral actions of the men and the prevailing sordid situations of city life. In her novels, Vera amplifies how the actions of the men are part of societal malaise.

In *Under the Tongue*, Vera explores the dehumanizing tendency of the social condition instituted by the colonial system and post-colonial policies. The men have become captives of the system and no longer enjoy their patriarchal space. They seek a revert route to remain relevant in their patriarchal kingdoms. Their easy preys are the women to whom they vent their frustrations and pains.

Muroyiwa, for instance, is a man haunted by the myth surrounding his own birth. The fact that his mother talks of having retrieved him from a calabash makes him feel belittled and constantly threatened by its living conditions. The mother claims that he had died at birth and resurrected the following morning hence his name Muroiywa:

Folded into a calabash, ready for the burial which would occur in the early morning, but Muroyiwa rose too with the morning...the women could not burry him. They were not joyous either; they preferred him not to live. This was clear throughout his life. To absolve everyone of any malice in wishing him death, Muroyiwa quickly assumed that death was better than life...it was this which made living tolerable, the constancy of death. Life tantalized him with its promises of an ultimate and reachable fulfillment (p. 128).

Muroyiwa's birth and death puzzle throw his mind into a dilemmic state. He is a tortured frustrated man. He is a tormented man who feels rejected by society. He lives under the shadows of death which to him is more promising than the degrading life he lives. The bitter truth is that he has no honor to cherish and protect. In order to survive and make life tolerable, Muroyiwa reduced death to a shade of sleep. He was determined to reclaim his life, which he attempted at the time of war. His new strategy is to use a woman who is not his wife to rejuvenate his life to propel him from the ruins of war.

In his waiting for death, Muroyiwa is determined to live for the moment and enjoy. He then visualized the object of his desire as embodied in the form of a woman; a woman becomes a means through which to get back to his patriarchal glory hence his

obsession. In his quest to satiate this obsession, Muroyiwa oversteps the threshold of filial relationships and repeatedly violates Zhizha, his biological daughter. The impact of Muroyiwa's incestuous violation is depicted through the fear and vulnerability experienced by Zhizha. She says:

I hide under my tongue. I hide deep in the dark inside of myself where no one has visited, where it is warm like blood. Night waits for my cry but I can only think of my knee bending slowly, painfully, touching the something, the nothing rising above my head, rising from my arms. I know this nothing is something. I hear the door close (p. 21).

While Vera's male characters like Muroyiwa are compelled by the conditions they live in to engage in sadistic behaviors that precipitate into bizarre actions like repeatedly raping one's own daughter, the female characters, in their traumatized psyches, have to either contend with such behaviors in silence or commit acts that deviate from societal norms such as murder, as a means of voicing their hurt and asserting the self.

The traumatic experience of Zhizha is so deep that it gets lodged in her psyche; confusing her and causing a breach or rupture in her powers of presentation. Symbolically, the world of young Zhizha has fallen apart, causing tears of grief not only to her mother but also to her grandmother. The women just can't comprehend why a man would rape his own daughter. In such scenarios, Susan Brownmiller (1975) says that:

The male ideology of rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear..... To be a man means to reaffirm consciously one's identity by oppressing, repressing and suppressing women. Furthermore, it is not only that men are socialized into this role....this power over women actually defines men. It is the essence of manhood (p.134).

Muroyiwa, a man born in frustrations and lived under difficult conditions needed to redefine himself to redeem his manhood. As Brownmiller would put it, Muroyiwa had to rape a woman, unfortunately he sees his daughter as the woman, to inflict fear in her and all the women around him, oppressing, repressing and suppressing them to affirm his power over them.

The visceral force with which Zhizha's pain confronts Runyararo, Zhizha's mother, is so high that Runyararo becomes neurotic and kills her husband to avenge her daughter's traumatic pain. Muroiywa's scheme to use his daughter, a woman as a springboard to manhood, has failed him and caused his premature demise.

Though the shame associated with domestic violence, rape and other forms of indignity meted out on women persist despite their fight, Vera, through Runyararo, is saying that women can be assertive, courageous and strong as a way of registering their disapproval of the injustices facing them. This poses a big challenge to the subjugated men's scheme of oppressing women to prove their capability in patriarchy. Muroyiwa's quest for power has brought him to a disgraceful shameful end. Runyararo says; I will bury him like a dog...I will not bury him but throw him away just like a dead lizard (p. 152).

4.4 Self-Exorcism and Patriarchal Relevance

In *Without a Name*, Vera presents men like Nyenyedzi and Joel. She insinuates that women must reject these men because beneath their physical expression of sexual desires, they possess inner 'wounds' that are chronic. The women offer the escape route to their patriarchal relevance after their subjugation and humiliation by the colonial systems. For Yvonne Vera, the weight of history's challenges falls upon

women. Men whose historical backgrounds are excruciatingly painful are culturally drawn to women's bodies for self-exorcism and patriarchal relevance.

Nyenyedzi, like most male characters in the worlds of Vera's novels, is a man in the shadows of life. He is beaten and downtrodden by the all-powerful colonial regime. His survival depends on hard labour that does not commensurate with the remuneration he receives:

We are servants paid poorly for our labour. We cannot decide which crop to grow, or when to grow it. We do not pray for the success of our crop because it is no longer our crop. We cannot pray for another's crop. There are no rituals of harvest, of planting the crop into the ground. We labor because it is our task to labour. We do not own the land. The land is enclosed in barbed fences and we sleep amid the thorn bushes, in the barren part of the land. We live in fear because even those who fight in our name threaten our lives (p. 39).

Nostalgically, Nyenyedzi takes cognizance of his servant position in his own society. He reminisces realities of their farming activities with a resigned sigh. He has, unwillingly moved to the periphery of the patriarchal power centre. He is a man under siege, afraid and scared of his country men who purport to fight for them but no longer respect their humanity and existence.

To reclaim the confident self as a man in his patriarchal society, he has to possess, dominate and subjugate a woman. In her analysis, Marilyn French believes that patriarchy is the 'sine qua non' for oppression to sustain 'power over'. She argues that:

With man's desire to control the monolith "woman/nature" was born patriarchy, a hierarchical system that values power over originally developed to ensure the human community's survival, power-over rapidly became, under patriarchy, a value cultivated simply for the experience of being the person in charge, the law giver, the "boss", number one in the "pecking order"(p.99).

Nyenyedzi's move was to possess Mazvita, to make her belong to him, to replace the land he had lost. His male instinct compels him to have power over a woman. While he rejects her proposal to leave with her for the city, he also does not want to let her go. Nyenyedzi is a man in dilemma. He is torn between going away with the woman he wants to possess and staying, elusively holding onto the land he no longer owns. The pain of losing the land to the colonialists is so intense that it haunts him. His denial to the fact that the land no longer belongs to him makes him a captive. He says:

The land belongs to our feet because only they can carry the land. It is only our feet which own the land. Our hands can only carry clods of earth at a time. We cannot carry the land on our shoulders. No one can take the land away. To move away from the land is to admit that it has been taken. It is to abandon it. We have to wait here. We have to wait with the land, if we are to be loyal to it and to those who have given it to us (p. 38).

Nyenyedzi's mind is fixed on the land and wants Mazvita to share in his dreams. He wants to possess her and stop her from her quest for freedom and independence. Nyenyedzi, in his frustration to hold to Mazvita, compares her assertiveness and quest with that of the colonialists:

Mazvita refused to share Nyeyedzi's perspective because she has her own; a fact that he does not see. After all, he takes her to be inferior and incapable of thinking independently. Her determination to move on and get her reality and truth became stronger than her need to stay with Nyenyedzi. Mazvita has worked out a plan towards her goal. She is on her way to redefine herself for all to see her transformation.

Unlike Nyenyedzi who is stuck in his frustrated present and still looking for an unsuspecting woman to help him revert to patriarchal manhood, Mazvita chooses to move for progress. Mazvita's thought resonate with Simone de Beauvoir's (1974)

perspective on the trajectory a woman should embrace. She insists that, “women must see themselves as autonomous beings and reject the societal constructs that men are the subjects or the absolute and women are the “Other” (p.173).

In Zimbabwe, the authority of the subject has been usurped by the colonial administration, leaving the native man to occupy the position of what Beauvoir calls the “Other”. Nyenyedzi’s position is too precarious to enable him stop Mazvita. True to Beauvoir’s line of thinking, Mazvita sees herself as an independent being, charting her path in life. She has sensed Nyenyedzi’s intention to control, possess and dominate her for his good, and decided to reject it.

With a traumatic past that is marked with war, destruction and rape, Mazvita’s quest for freedom is so great that Nyenyedzi cannot stop her. Her traumatizing experience of rape by a soldier still occupies a large part of her psyche. Her mind is being clouded and just cannot fathom the extent to which the historical events have affected the personalities of the men, their outlook to life, coupled with their moral behavior. The black men seem to be victims of the Whiteman’s rule. They work under the white man’s surveillance: toiling and making sacrifices, which are neither appreciated nor duly rewarded because the work is not their own, it, is summoned.

The rapist soldier, for instance, is a man fighting a war that he does not understand. Instead of protecting his motherland, he has been instrumentalised to protect the interest of the colonial masters. The soldier is a subjugated man who submits to authority forms. He is an instrument of war against his people. The destructive powers of war have permeated his humanity that he has lost the moral fiber of the self. Like Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins*, the strange soldier transmits his hurt into Mazvita to prove his worth as a man in the kind of society he lives in.

At the height of civil war, a guerilla arrives in Mazvita's village of Mhondoro, burns the whole village and rapes Mazvita. In her traumatized memory, Mazvita relives her rape ordeal; the stranger had claimed her, told her that she could not hide the things of her body from him which he eventually did. Shocked and afraid, Mazvita loathes her rapist.

In his thinking, the guerrilla rapist desires a treatment that befits a king, an all-powerful person. He desires attention from a woman. He wants to have power over her, subjugate and oppress her. She must kneel so that "he drinks water from her cupped hands". His desire is to grab her innocence and make her his to feel contented as a man. He wants Mazvita to exalt and worship him as he rapes her.

Despite employing silence as a type of resistance, the guerilla got through to her very core of being:

He reached for her back and she lay motionless, unaware that she still had a name that was hers. She had discovered the silence to keep his breathing from her back. 'Hauzvadzi'...he said. You are my sister.....he whispered. He did not shout or raise his voice but invited her to lie still in a hushed but serious rhythm. His voice was monotonous, low, but firmly held in his mouth, in his arms. He spoke in a tone trained to be understood, not heard. Mazvita fought to silence his whispering. The task nearly killed her.... She could not always recognize all the words, and when she did, her effort was to quickly gather them into that distance she had prepared inside of her. She longed deeply for the silence to be complete. She longed to escape the insistent cries of his triumph (p. 35).

In his confusion, the guerilla raped Mazvita to redefine himself as a man in control over others especially women. He has taken advantage of his training as a soldier, to demand and get his way. It is not lost to him that here; he is the man, the conqueror and the subject because he has triumphed over her. The guerilla's actions reflect what French (1985) refers to in *Beyond power* as:

‘true grit’, that is ‘doing what you have to do’, and ‘the end justifying the means’, but no room for ‘knowing when to stop’, savoring the ‘best things in life’, or reflecting on process as well as product. Thus, to be a total man, or patriarch, is not to be a full human being but to be a minotaur- “(the) gigantic and eternally infantile offspring of a mother’s unnatural lust, (the) male representative of mindless, greedy power, (who) insatiably devours live human flesh” (p.100).

The guerilla devoured Mazvita’s flesh, traumatised her psyche and shattered her entire life through a mindless power greed act of rape, just to prove himself as patriarch and to heal his war wounds from the colonial administration.

4.5 Colonial Power and Male Instrumentalisation

In *The Stone Virgins*, one gets the underlying argument that the problems of human society result from the insatiable desire to appropriate power over the perceived insignificant others in society. The power quest is a vicious circle that neither has a beginning nor an end. Vera in her writing is appealing to the society to change her perspective about power play. By discussing both men and women’s activities side by side, she is challenging society to accept that the gains of power depend on individual players and not gender. The city laborers, as Vera refers to the black workers, are men charged with responsibility of propping up the colonial economies of both Rhodesia and South Africa. They are said to voyage back and forth between Bulawayo and Johannesburg and hold the city up like a beacon. Though the work is not their own, they give it their all. It is said that:

They have been dipped deep in the gold mines, helmeted, torch lit, plummeted, digging for that precious gold which is not theirs. Not at all. They are not only black; they are outsiders. They make no claim. This is paid work, so they do it. Egoli.. They say and sigh....about Johannesburg...They are nostalgic and harbor a self-satisfied weariness that belongs to those who pursue divine wishes..Who possess the sort of patience required to graft lemon trees and orange trees and make a new and sour crop (p. 5-6).

The men are frustrated and exhausted. Though their labour is exploited, they cannot quit because they work under surveillance of the colonial authority. They are subjugated men, men without honour and dignity. The men are afraid of the public eye. They hide their indignation at the mines and under streetlights. They make love to women not out of love but to bury their hurt, to make them dominate and feel powerful. They use women for their selfish desires and hurt them in the process.

Like the labourers, men who fought at the war are equally dehumanized and subjugated. Their subjugation to authority forms act as catalysts to women's oppression and domination. In her own subtle way, Vera discusses the theme of male damage. She talks of war damaged men around Thandabantu stores, who wear lonely and lost looks, and guard their loneliness, remaining psychologically untouchable by the women who in their naivety, surround them to feel important. The hurt of these men is so deep that the women cannot reach. They are unaware of the deep wounds harbored by these men. They are also not aware that their love making is simply physical, choreographed to revamp these frustrated men with power over, to control and conquer.

The absolute reality about these men downs on the women after committing themselves into relationships with the men. The involvement gives the women opportunity to know the men better. In the Stone Virgins, we learn that the women are able to watch these men in their troubled sleep and witness their fights with people who are only real in their dream worlds. Out of empathy, the women find themselves staying with these men longer than their initial expectations because they feel guilty leaving them to their haunted dreams.

Nonetheless, the women get frightened and destroyed because they sacrifice their freedom for the relationships. They realize that they can neither cure the loneliness that lurks in the men's eyes nor exorcise their past actions that haunt their sleep, but they stick with them in honour of their cultural orientations to please men no matter what.

These ex-soldiers are victims of a continent torn by war. They are deeply troubled and plagued by recurring war nightmares. They are political dissenters. One of them is Sibaso, a man whose narrative is given in retrospective fragments. Sibaso confesses that he can accumulate "forty thousand years....in memory and travel four hundred years, then ten thousand years, then twenty more" (p. 104).

What Sibaso experiences as an exhilarating freedom based on isolation and absence of authority is in actual sense the expression of a static version of history that becomes a form of confinement:

"On the rocks, history is steady; it cannot be tilted forward or backward" History has a "ceiling" under which the soldier crouches, unable to raise himself fully, and he becomes an "embodiment of time" from which he cannot escape (p. 83).

Men like Sibaso are trapped in a history that is hurtful. In their service under the powerful authority of the colonial rule, they are not able to revert to the patriarchal self in conformity to the patriarchal cultures. Sibaso's personality and behavior are depictions of male subjugation to authority forms. His aggression is the vehicle through which the authority structure that contains confines and silences women is perpetuated. The woman becomes the perfect object of men's aggression. Sibaso's scalded mind leads him to Thenjiwe and Nonceba, two sisters whom he intends to

violently subjugate as a remedy to his subjugation and domination by the instruments of colonial administration, including the war for independence.

How Sibaso executes his rape and murder events is excruciatingly inhuman. As he continues with his search for something in her body that he can break, Nonceba's protest in mind is infinite:

Between them is an absence measured by pauses and suspicious silences. Perhaps, in one of these absences, he may recover and feel something a kin to kindness, not pity. It is remote, pity, in a man like this. He may forget why he is here, why she is with him, who she is. He too, may be stunned by his own dramatic presence (p. 67).

Sibaso is a sick man psychologically. In his sickness, determination to complete his ordeal is high and has no room for change of mind. Instead, he commands her, "sit here, on my knee". He moves away briefly, carefully, and then returns his touch to her body. He returns his touch as though it was something he has taken away without permission, guiltily, yet like a kind act (p.68).

Sibaso's tortured mind, which carries the heaviness of history's contradictions, claims its focus upon Nonceba's body. In his confused state of mind, he perceives his behavior as an act of kindness. The power of his masculinity over her femininity is manifested as he mercilessly enters her body like a vacuum. She can do nothing to save herself from his brutality.

Nonceba regains her stance only to find herself in a deep stupor. She feels she is nothing to him, just an aftermath to his desire. Like a zombie, Nonceba follows his commands. She tastes him through a forced kiss. Coming face to face with her present reality, that escape from the man is an illusion; she plays along to not provoke his anger further. She uses this as a strategy to learn his moves and to weigh her escape

options. She learns that Sibaso has a derailed mind. He seems to possess some form of bitterness that makes him see her as an object he can just manipulate.

Sibaso takes pleasure in bullying Nonceba, treating her like a useless object, torturing and humiliating her. He is exercising a form of power over Nonceba; the kind of power, which according to Michel Foucault, is power that subjugates, controls and makes subject to (p.781). Sibaso is trying to clean his own 'wound' and heal his conscience to command respect in the society. This event of rape is torturing and tormenting. While Sibaso behaves with utmost ruthlessness intended for her destruction, Nonceba is completely at his mercy, feeling destroyed and psychologically dead. When she discovers that Sibaso has murdered her sister Thenjiwe, Nonceba gets horrified. The beheading of Thenjiwe is described from her point of view thus:

His head is behind Thenjiwe, where Thenjiwe was before, floating in her body; he is in her body. He is floating like a flash of lightning. Thenjiwe's body remains upright while this man's head emerges behind hers, inside it, replacing each of her moments, taking her position in the azure of the sky. He is absorbing Thenjiwe's motion into his own body, existing where Thenjiwe was, moving into the spaces she has occupied (p. 73).

Nonceba passes out after the rape and mutilation of her lips. Though her aunt and uncle take her to the hospital, Nonceba's shocked and wounded state push the boundaries of her psyche to near collapse, and she vividly imagines her sister's presence and incorporates the voices of fellow patients, imagining their horrors.

Sibaso's action is in dialogue with his earlier despair, which succeeded in compliance with commanders' orders. In his mind, he "thinks" of scars inflicted before dying, betrayals before a war, after a war and declares, "Everything I fear has already

happened”, while at independence he feels nothing but the sensation. “I walk. Nothing matters” (p. 108).

How Sibaso has murdered Thenjiwe and violated Nonceba is from his perspective described as a ‘natural’ pattern of action provoked by the war. During the war Sibaso has lost a significant part of his being, his name and he has become a lifeless envoy of destruction of sensibilities of life. Looked at from this perspective, his murder of Thenjiwe and rape of Nonceba appear as the outcome of a world that is inhumanly torn by wars. His name, Sibaso, is a testimony to his orientation as a soldier during the war:

He has been instrumentalised and dehumanized to serve a destructive purpose of the war. Sibaso perceives himself as an instrument of war that has lost even the sight of pity, to both him and other human beings. He is a dissident hunted by the government forces and feared by the civilians. He is in hiding as he tries to restore his world view which has been distorted by the war and social chaos of Gukurahundi (p. 94-95).

With his subsequent actions, Sibaso displays evidence of split personality. After subjecting Nonceba to torture, desperation and humiliation, he offers her a shoulder to lean on. He has demonstrated this through his child-like treatment of Nonceba. He realizes that her vulnerability requires some softness.

He cradles her like a wounded child. Nonceba almost believes him, in him, almost removes him and his lullaby from this scene, almost. He offers words that could heal. He closes his eyes and moves his lips against her neck. His words flood her earlobes, slip between her legs, where her blood falls like burnt water. She feels it. He could heal her, shield her with his body. He just could (p. 71).

The image of Sibaso cradling Nonceba like a wounded child soon after a cruel act of damaging and invading her being is a reflection of his inner craving for affection and

family that he never had. His mother died in childbirth (p. 107). Sibaso who was only around eighteen or nineteen years when the war started, became very lonely after fourteen years. He cannot find the father he goes back to seek, instead he obtains only confusing information that his father possibly died in prison where he was detained because he (Sibaso) had joined the liberation forces.

4.6 Conclusion

An examination of Vera's presentation of men's actions against the colonial and patriarchal systems reveal that these systems, in her novels, participate in the creation of power paradox and the thematic structure that her fiction discusses. Due to the nostalgic dilemma which her male characters experience while under the colonial systems, trying to adjust to their new life, Vera suggests that life away from the patriarchal security is frustrating. They can hardly cope with the traumatic experience of being disempowered in their home land and culturally becoming disoriented. This condition of hardships and powerlessness motivate the men to appropriate power through social deviant acts in an attempt to reverse their circumstances. The men's nostalgia for the lost patriarchal glory that Vera brings into her narratives is important for understanding the discourse responsible for the way they treat women. The study realized that the strategies deployed by men are egocentric projections meant to bring some power satisfaction and healing. The study found out that these attempts failed to achieve their intended goals. The strategies ironically destroyed them, exposing the elusive nature of power referred to in this research as the paradox of power.

CHAPTER 5 FIVE

POWER AS A PARADOX

5.1 Introduction

Demystification of the concept of power

To demystify and explain power as a paradox in this chapter, the study appropriates Michel Foucault's perspective on power. In his *Genealogist* work (1992), Foucault views power at two levels: power over bodies and power of body. He discusses power as having a direct focus on the body as the principal target. For him, power relation has an immediate hold upon the body to invest it, torture it, and force it to carry out tasks to produce desired results. However, this form of power can also meet resistance from the body's power which emanates from the body's own Will (p.25). Foucault's claim is depicted through Vera's novels where power discourse centers primarily on the problematic issues of power manipulations through the characters subversive narratives. Vera utilizes diverse forms of power, for instance, coercion, force, authority to reveal various forms of oppression that stifle the living conditions of human beings in the world of her fiction. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, characters in Vera's fiction appropriated power through various actions that subvert the norms of the society in which they lived. This study refers to the actions as subversive power narratives due to their sequential consistencies across the five novels which form a larger narrative structure. This study has noticed that the subversive narratives through which power is exercised usually generate a contradictory outcome of a short-lived gratification as a prelude to ensuing destruction of the character responsible for exercising power. This research refers to

this elusive nature of power where an outcome of a power action contradicts that which is logically expected as a paradox.

The term paradox is derived from the Greek word “paradoxon” meaning contrary to expectation, existing beliefs or perceived opinion. The term has often been used in fiction due to its efficacy to summarize major themes of the work it explicates. This fact is demonstrated by a number of literary scholars like George Orwell (1945), William Shakespeare (1602) and Bernth Lindfors (1979) among others. In his novel *Animal Farm*, Orwell uses a paradoxical statement to summarize the political biasness of the government of the day. “...all animals are equal but some are more equal than others...” summarizes a political truth of the government of the day. The argument here is that the government claims the equality of her citizens yet she has never treated them equally. Orwell has used the concept of equality to portray the opposite to the common belief of equality. In other words it is the concept of equality stated in this paradox which is opposite to the common belief of equality.

In his play *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare uses the character of Hamlet to speak words that are paradoxical in meaning. Hamlet says “I must be cruel to be kind” (p. 174). The implication here is that Hamlet’s mother plans to kill her second husband Claudius to avenge his father’s death. He imagines that this act will bring the virtue of kindness in the mother and ensure her enjoyment of rewards associated to the virtue. Hamlet never expected the reversal impact of the action of the mother to turn tragic for her hence the outcome was the opposite of the intended.

Bernth Lindfors (1979) also defines the term paradox as the reverse of the expected. In his work *Politics, Culture and Literary Form in Black Africa*, he points out the irony of African writing. He claims that African Literary scholars are much

disadvantaged when they write in mother tongue because they reach a smaller, younger and less heterogeneous audience and meet open literary expression inhibitions from the church and state or school. The first groups to prove this point were the Negritude writers. Among the writers is a Francophone African poet Leopold Sedar Senghor. He justifies his writing in a colonial language thus:

Because we are cultural half casts, because, although we feel as Africans, we express ourselves as French men, because French is a language with a universal vocation, because our message is addressed to the Frenchmen of France as well as to other men, because French is a language of the gods. Listen to Corneille, LaFontaine, Rimbaud, Peguy and Claudel! Listen to the great Hugo. The French language is a mighty organ capable of all tones of all effects, from the softest mildness to the fulgurations of the storm. It is one by one, or all together, flute and oboe, trumpet and canon. Again, French has given us the gift of its abstract words, so rare in our mother tongues, by which tears turn into precious stones. With us, words are naturally surrounded by an aura of sap and blood. French words are radiant with a thousand fires, like diamonds. Flares lighting up our night (p. 241).

The usual expectation would be that a writer has more liberty and fluency of expression in his own mother tongue, and that he would reach a larger audience at home. Lindfors argues that this is not always so, the reverse is usually the reality. Lindfors' reality is a common phenomenon in the African continent where writers like Yvonne Vera, writing about the experiences of her people, would have been expected to write in her native language to reach a large audience at home but instead has chosen to write in foreign language to communicate with a larger audience overseas.

In the context of the above definitions, this study reads the nature of power as something paradoxical. This assumption is premised on the fact that the word power presupposes progressive transformation rather than retrogressive degeneration. Yet, more often than not, the reverse prevails due to the reversal impact of its exercising. In social, political, economic, and other forms of relations, individuals and groups

engage in the quest for power to propel them from an inferior to superior or bad to a better situation. This perception on the functionality of power validates the fact that power resides in people and that its exercising is accepted as central to their lives as social beings whose lives are regulated by some form of power.

Vera reiterates the centrality of power in human relationships and interactions in her presentation of her characters' life situations. Due to the pervasive nature of power and its influence in relationships, the word power requires a deeper understanding. This has provoked many definitions from scholars who have tended to define the word according to the context in which it is used. Max Weber (1975) in his work, *In the Context of Social Sciences*, define power as the ability to control others, events or resources; to make happen what one wants to happen despite obstacles, resistance or opposition (p.186). Robert Greene (1998) in his book, *The 48 Laws of Power*, defines power as the measure of the degree of control you have over circumstances in your life and the actions of the people around you (p.78). A common factor in the sampled definitions reveals that power entails force, control and influence over others. It portrays the perception of absolute authority. Individuals or groups of people exercise power to force, control or influence depending on various circumstances. The intentions are always to receive some form of reward for one's power actions. Often, the individual or group exercising power may interpret the results of their actions as quality as long as it suits them regardless of the accompanying destructive effects. This study understands the implications of power to mean that every individual can use their power to bring quality to their lives. However, this largely depends on the type of power, for instance, coercion, expert, reward or authority, its motivating factors and the strategies used to secure and solidify it.

Power in a work of fiction plays a significant role in the characters' relational social mechanism. This claim is premised on the fact that some form of power regulates relationship of characters. Vera's choice of power dynamics reveals an existence of connectedness between characters' power exercising and power quests in their social relationships due to societal power disequilibrium. According to Robert Dahl (1957), the power imbalance has provoked characters to exercise power in its various forms including the Machiavelli's and Weber's forms which involve force and coercion without any considerations of the possibilities of a reverse outcome. In Vera's world of fiction, just like in the real world, the main concern arguably is that the dominant group continually exerts power to maintain status quo or get more excesses of power while the dominated exerts power to put up resistance and propel them forward.

Pierre Bourdieu (1995) considers power as a reflection of the relational character between agents or institutions. He claims that:

The field of power is the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (p. 215).

Looking at the concept of power especially from its end result perspective, Bertrand and Russell (1986) views power as "the production of intended effects". Russell's view suggests that individuals or groups of people who need to gain power, appropriate power actions to achieve their desired goals. Such people or institutions are influenced by specific passion for power to enable them reach certain goals.

In this chapter, the study argues that power appropriation hardly realizes its goals without certain contradictions and subsequent destructions in the process of its exercising. Michel Foucault's thoughts on power amplifies this position in his journal, *The Subject and Power* (1982). Foucault describes what constitutes the nature of

power as elusive because it is not a concrete object that can be seen or assumed to exist independently. Rather it is an abstraction that exists universally in its diffused form and can only be seen in relationships through action where an act assumes to modify another action for its own sake. He further says that what defines a power relationship is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions; action upon action on existing actions, or those that may arise in the present or future. A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, bends, breaks on the wheel, destroys, or closes the door on all possibilities (p.789).

In his argument, Foucault explains the endemic nature of power and how it is executed through actions that entail force to acquire consent or realize the intended goal. This is the form of power that Foucault also refers to as power over bodies. It is power that manifests itself through abusive actions that violate individual's human rights and tortures the body and forces it into subjugation and submission. However, Foucault claims that the power over bodies is usually antagonized and countered by power of bodies exercised by those considered less powerful. The power is exercised against the dominating power or power over as a means of resistance and liberation (p. 156).

Power in the context of the subversive narratives

The power discourse in Vera's novels are concretized and made visible through the actions of her characters. Individual characters exercise power through actions they assume to modify others for the realization of their desired goals. Actions such as those used by these characters are referred to in this research as subversive narratives. It is through these narratives that the impact of power is depicted to validate the

outcome of the power exercising. The study endeavors to explain how the subversive narratives of Vera's characters are modes of power exercising whose impact creates an integrative effects that largely contradicts the envisaged outcome. The study explores the narrative juxtaposition of characters' contrastive actions, which result in forms of power that largely destroy rather than produce the desired goal. In the context of Vera's novels, the research examines these modes of power in three different dimensions; the colonial, patriarchal and the women's resistance modes.

Leaning on Foucault's perception of power which presupposes some definite outcome, this research deviates from that perception. It reads power as a complex entity characterized by an elusive nature that contradicts the assumed logic of its exercising as paradoxical due to its reversal impact on the instigator. Power whether over bodies or of bodies is anchored on the assumption that it provides some progressive form of liberation or gain, however, this study argues that this assumption does not take into consideration the reversal impact it has on the instigator. The individuals or groups wielding power hope to achieve their goals eventually. However, this study argues that exercising power, whether of bodies or over bodies, does not necessarily conform to the logical expectation since the reversal impact is usually contradictory, hence the paradox.

5.2 The Challenge of Traditional Power Centers

The colonial authority as embodied in the Queen of Britain's treaty and exercised by her government's agents like Mr. Browning and Mr. Smith was exercised over the natives of Zimbabwe through force, coercion and exploitation. The focus was to colonize the Africans regardless of their sex and positions held. The white man's task was to displace the patriarchal authority in Zimbabwe and replace it with his own in

the form of a colony within which power was to be exercised through various means. The colonial power met formidable resistance from the native army under the leadership of Nehanda. With their inferior weapons the native army killed a number of the colonial soldiers, many who were black men conscripted to fight for them. The worst loss for the white man came when Mr. Smith and twelve other white men got killed. Mr. Browning, who is in command of the superior forces, feels cheated by the seemingly calm nature of the natives. He had looked down upon them as people incapable of exercising any power of resistance. This argument is grounded in the following words:

Who would have thought these calm placid people would revolt... the only certain thing is never to trust the natives, no matter how well behaved they seem... the natives have already killed twelve white men at Nduroma Station...The rebellion has claimed many lives (p.76).

The fact that the native army was able to abduct, kill and tie Smith's body on a fig tree in the middle of the forest without being apprehended by the superior colonial forces demonstrates that even in their calm placid nature, using very inferior traditional weapons like spears and shields, they can assert themselves against the superior colonial forces. Capturing and killing one of the leaders of the colonial administration would not have been expected of the already weakened natives. This turn of events is a rare occurrence that contradicts the logic of the usual expectation. It depicts the paradox nature of power where the expected effect is reversed illogically. This nature of power is further grounded by the fact that the society experienced a paradigm shift of power centers, first to the legendary woman Nehanda who was believed to house within her body, the spirit of Mboya Nehanda (an ancestral old woman believed to possess the power of leadership) and not to the patriarchal chiefdoms as per the stipulated patriarchal ideology.

The capture and killing of Mr. Smith under Nehanda's leadership came as a challenge to the patriarchal authority that upholds man and his actions above the woman and who is believed to have the absolute power in a society where men hold power and women are largely excluded. Men like Kaguvi and other elders who symbolize wisdom and leadership in Zimbabwe are shaken by the unusual circumstances brought about by the colonial authority. This situation has compromised the power bestowed upon them by patriarchy and the knowledge they have of the terrain of their country. The colonial authority intensified her power over the native leadership. They treated the native elders with disrespect and desisted from listening to what they had to say. The narrator explains the elders' discontent thus:

The elders delivered our message well. The white man treated our elders with contempt. He had no respect for what we had to say. The stranger was told that our ancestors were not pleased with their presence. He laughed at our elders and our beliefs (p. 38).

In this engagement, the study identifies a depiction of power play between the Whiteman and the natives through the custodians of their power. The power contest is informed by the fact that each party believes in their power supremacy, nevertheless, the native leadership is taken aback and angered by the white man's power confidence and intentions. Their naivety has hindered them from understanding the white man's power machinations and his disregard for their beliefs. Most importantly, they don't understand why the white man wants to take their land and replace their practices and beliefs with his own.

Their plea with the Whiteman to depart from their land was met with scorn and justification of the Whiteman's presence in their land. Instead of getting pacified by the power of their plea the Whiteman got provoked and reiterated with the power of coercion to subdue them so that they hand over their possessions to them. This study

stakes a claim that the strategy used by the elders, the power plea, elicited an outright contradiction to the native's expectations. The coercion into giving up their land is a reversal and a contradiction to the natives' desires.

The study reiterates that the Whiteman's concept of wealth and happiness being realized through destruction by the gun is as paradoxical as it is strange and appalling to the ears of the native elders since it contradicts the logic of popular belief which associates wealth and happiness with peace. Perhaps they cannot fathom the link between a powerful god, peace, wealth and happiness on one hand and the destruction by the gun on the other hand, and the irony that they are supposedly working for the good of the people. The notion of attaining power through the killing of other people to have wealth, peace, and happiness is strange and paradoxical in the world of fiction and in life as lived by real people.

The power strategies employed by the Whiteman in their quest for power have provoked in the elders anger and a realization that they must force the Whiteman out of their land if they have to regain their authority over their people. Ignoring their ambivalent nuances, the Whiteman makes a move to affirm his authority over their land. He is ready to conduct a treaty signing ceremony to transfer authority over their people, and legitimate ownership of the land with its rich resources. The white man holds out a piece of paper saying:

I shall read everything to you and you will see that it is very clear. I am a messenger of the queen. The queen is like your Mwari. She protects and wishes to extend her protection over you. I shall give you guns with which to fight your enemies. In return my people will be allowed to search for gold. You can trust me (p. 39).

Through coercion, the Whiteman is leading the natives to the path of domination and subjugation. Michel Foucault in *Subject and Power* refers to as a form of power that

makes individuals subject to someone else's control through control and dependence so that he is subjugated and dominated (p.781). The Whiteman uses the queen's authority and coercion to control the natives so that he can strip them off all forms of power that they held previously, make them subjects, and dominate them.

While the Whiteman uses paper, pen and the gun as his symbols of power, the natives use the spoken word, tattoos, paints and animal symbols. As the chief ponders over the Whiteman's power machinations, he observes that, "our people know the power of words. It is because of this that they desire to have words continuously spoken and kept alive ...words are as malleable as the minds of the people who create them" (p. 40). The chief also acknowledges the marks on his own body as signs of power that sets him apart from the rest. Yet, that very power cannot deliver them from the cruel engagements with the Whiteman and the power he represents. This is arguably paradoxical as it contradicts the functionality of the very power they have always trusted to protect them from such harm.

The natives prefer to keep their power codes because they consider them sacred just the same way they look at their land. They believe the land belongs to their ancestors. It therefore can neither be owned and nor given to the stranger. In their meeting to discuss the Whiteman's demands, they resolve that they allow him to explore their mines for gold, but he does not claim the land to be under his ownership because the ancestors already own it, it does not belong to those still alive.

Despite their protests through the invocation of their traditional power codes, the Whiteman's coercion through pen and paper has subdued the elders into bowing to their demands. Allowing the Whiteman to dig up gold is a way of giving away the source of their wealth which is the backbone of their society. Though the natives gave

up their resources to have peace, the white man has kept exploiting them as dominated subjects though without total control over them.

As subjects of the colonial authority, the natives have allowed themselves to be redefined by the Whiteman. This fact is demonstrated by a black man, Mr. Mashoko, who has not only allowed the Whiteman to christen him 'Moses', a Whiteman's name, but also changed his societal birth assigned roles and accepting to take up a woman's chores such as cooking, doing laundry and serving the white man in many ways. Though Moses finds himself in this situation, he is not happy. He is constantly looking for a way to go back to his normal life 'I am proud of my people, I am going back to the wisdom of my people (p.74).

Mr. Browning, the representative of the queen's authority, is happy with the progress of his work. He uses the natives' weaknesses to advance his agenda. He is elated that the natives will still work for them to sustain their livelihoods because they can neither say no directly nor go home to die of hunger. He also exploits the hatred among the natives and the black policemen to fortify their position among the natives.

The Whiteman is more determined than ever to colonize the black men (Natives). His focus which is to dominate the natives seems to be working for him. His power machinations such as the church and taxes make claims on the natives' individualities, categorize them, and attach them to their own identities. A man like Moses does not subscribe to the white man's ideologies but feel trapped by the taxes he has to pay. Though his labor is exploited and the environment he works in is abusive, he shamefully perseveres to pay his taxes lest he loses his cattle. The narrator observes that:

Mashoko (Moses) does not find his work interesting; in fact when he is in his village he feels ashamed of it. If it were not for the hut taxes that he is being made to pay, he would not accept the work. His cattle will be confiscated if he fails to pay the money asked of him (p.45).

The forgoing discussion demonstrates the paradox nature of power. The colonial authority has manipulated power to subdue the natives. They have used a form of power that Foucault claims applies to immediate everyday life, which ends up categorizing the individual and imposing on him a law of 'truth' that regulates his individuality and makes him subject to their authority (p.782). The natives are desperate and the men can no longer protect their families, communities and themselves from the dominating powers of the white man. They need another source of power to re-energize them in order to put up resistance against the white man's power. The alternative source of power is identified and confirmed by the village diviner who is referred to by the villagers as the Nanga. After performing the required rituals, the Nanga announces that "a spirit intends to manifest itself in Nehanda, it is a good spirit that should be welcomed with a feast. The spirit will be a great help to people" (p. 50).

Nehanda is commissioned for the leadership task ahead of her after the village feast. There is a visible physical and emotional transformation soon after. Through her revelation, the people realized that they were surrounded by the colonial army which consisted of white and black men. Under the command of Nehanda, the natives gather to strategize their resistance against the Whiteman's army. They take vows to drive away the army with their traditional regalia as a ritualistic means to appease their ancestors. Superstitiously, they interpret their invasion by the foreign powers due to their abandonment and betrayal of their ancestors.

Despite a good spirited war, Nehanda's army thinned down by day. Eventually their chief commander, a man believed to possess the spirit and strength, Mr. Kaguvi got captured. It is said that "the lion is his great ancestor bearing in the strength of the right leg all the power of Kaguvi prophecies. All Kaguvi has been given is the strength in one of his legs" (p. 108).

Africans marveled at the strength of a lion. A man whose strength was metaphorically likened to that of a lion must have been quite powerful. This explains why Kaguvi was a leader at the battle front and his people believed in him for protection. When the all-powerful colonial administration subdued this great strength, the people found it hard to comprehend. Though his arrest was symbolically devastating to him and the Africans, the departing of the spirit that was his power was not just devastating but torturously painful. The spirit of the lion in him turned against him rather than gave him protection from the colonial forces. The narrator describes the occurrence thus:

The spirit departs in regretful spasm that sends Kaguvi crawling from one corner of the room to the next. The blood feeding spirit roars as it leaves him. Kaguvi's forehead streams with water. His ears sung with deafening, pulsating blood. After the ceaseless pounding in his head, and the burning in his stomach, Kaguvi understood. His name will latterly destroy him...Kaguvi weeps (p. 108).

Kaguvi's torture and pain that emanates from his own power that was bequeathed to him by his own ancestors is more devastating to him than the colonial action upon him. This knowledge torments him and eventually breaks his fighting spirit, "his name will utterly destroy him". In his subjugation, he weeps; an act of weakness that is associated with women by patriarchy. This experience brings Kaguvi face to face with the paradox nature of power. Instead of protecting him, his power has occasioned his destruction.

The arrest of Kaguvi, for instance, and the killing of his colleague soldiers is part of his destruction process. He awaits his death in his cell. The colonial administration views Kaguvi as one of the key obstacles to their conquest of the land and full establishment of the queen's authority. According to Foucault, an attack on him is expected to provoke resistance, which is the other way of power; the exercising of power of bodies to resist and elicit revolution (p.156). Contrary to this logical expectation, Kaguvi faces the wrath of his own power in his prison cell. The study argues that the workings of power do not always fulfill the desires of those who exercise it due to its reversal impact. The traditional patriarchal leadership form of power that Kaguvi possessed, turned out to be an agent of his final destruction and death. In his vulnerable condition, the colonial power appropriates the opportunity and hangs Kaguvi.

Though the Whiteman has managed to kill Kaguvi and others with his superior weapons and the assistance of the African soldiers, he lost the services of Moses. The latter decided to join the native army. The army also killed the missionary leader, Mr. Smith and "tied his body to a fig tree in the middle of the forest" (p.76).

The Whiteman's god and his superior weapons could not protect one of their leaders after all. These losses show that the colonial authority is challengeable with better leadership. Nehanda's supernatural, political leadership has been able to provide some resistance against the colonial administration. However, her arrest and subsequent death has left the Africans politically exposed. These actions and their outcomes demonstrate that even supernatural power cannot be relied upon to yield the desired goals.

In Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, we are exposed to desperate power games that hardly bring forth the intended goals. The oppressive power actions experienced by the blacks under colonial rule do not bring the civilization of the natives as purported by the colonialists. In their perspective, the civilization required by the Africans is building churches and preaching Christ, building schools and teaching arithmetic, reading and writing, and introducing order and culture, all of which is meant to improve the lives of the natives. If done, it should improve the relationship between the blacks and the Whiteman for a peaceful co-existence. They need to be appreciative of each other. Contrary to this popular belief, the engagement of the colonizers and the natives is one of exploitation and mistrust that breeds hatred, desperation and destruction. This is explained by the way the Whiteman treats the natives and the response he gets. The black men are kept under surveillance so that they don't trespass on the forbidden grounds.

Having used the skills and hard labor of the black men to build cities like Bulawayo, one would expect the colonial administration to appreciate the builders and allow them to use the grounds freely. Against this observation, the study argues that the contradictions depictions of the power impact on the player's actions. To survive this impact, the laborers have drafted techniques that allow them to move without attracting the attentions of the authority. The narrator reports that:

The idea is to live within the cracks. Unnoticed and unnoticeable, offering every service but with the capacity to vanish when the tasks required is accomplished. So the black people learn how to move through the city with speed and due attention, to bow their heads down and slide past walls, to walk without making the shadow move. It means leaning against some masking reality-they lean on walls, on lies on music (p. 6).

The new strategy they have adopted does not just affect them physically but also affects them psychologically to lose their human dignity. This has seen them assume

the lowest identity associated to their powerlessness. The men can neither help their women nor themselves. They have masked their patriarchal realities to get by in a system that only recognizes them as far as their labor and services to the white man are concerned. Men who work at the construction sites are so oppressed with exploited hard labor that they cannot even afford decent places to sleep in. With heavy smell of cement and littered with construction materials, their construction work places suffice for their bedrooms at night. This is demonstrated by Fumbatha who is circumstantially forced to sleep beneath the debris and rubble at a construction site where he works. His health is affected by the deplorable conditions of the site as a “bedroom” where all the working tools are scattered all over the space and the smell of cement saturates the air. Cold nights are particularly unbearable to Fumbatha who occasionally is forced to creep under the safety of a lorry’s large wheels, covering his tired sick body with plastic. This and many other forms of hard labor constitute what the black men endured if they were lucky to be home and alive. The unlucky men like Fumbatha’s father are tortured and hanged for going against the dictates of the colonial authority. They are flogged in public places; to torture even the living to instill fear and docility especially among the workers who would put up forms of resistance and the native fighters to give up the war.

The harsh treatment that the native men are forced to endure is what Foucault refers to in *Discipline and Punish* as a way of doing away with any popular resistance against the authority in power. The custodian of the power exercises it through spectacles of punishment and terror to crush those putting up resistance and as a deterrent measure to stop any would be resistance. This not only weakened the work force but also infuriated the natives and made the colonial administration unpopular among the people. Instead of achieving civilization for the people, they are constantly fighting

uprisings like the Chimurenga. This made the colonial work difficult and derailed their systemic objectives. This is a clear indication that though the colonial authority had the domination power and exercised it to silence the natives, she failed to triumph over them as per their expectations and envisaged objectives. The study observes this as another depiction of power as a paradox.

Though Fumbatha did not witness the torture and death of his father, his mind is infiltrated and tortured by stories told to him by his mother. Fumbatha is a man under siege, a captive of the present power abuse of the white man's administration and the yester power manipulations that claimed the lives of his countrymen, including his father. His desire is to liberate himself and live a normal fulfilled life. The appearance of Phephelaphi at his feet at the Umguza River transformed his desire into a male power that he hoped to use to conquer her. His strategy was to coerce her into being his woman in conformity with patriarchal socialization. He quietly conceived a sense of responsibility and wanted to possess and own her and protect her from the world of the white man with its foreign ideologies. He made a promise to himself:

He could never free her, even if she rose and disappeared once more into the water. He would remember her. He would hold her. He had never wanted to possess anything before, except the land. He wanted her like the land beneath his feet from which birth had severed him (p. 28-29).

He must therefore exercise his male power towards the possession of Phephelaphi and get refuge in her. His power strategies included coming up with appropriate words that he would use to hold her and keep her still. Secondly, he had to understand his true identity. Thirdly he hoped that neither of them committed love that they would always be together, side by side, and finally, that he will always protect her. Far from working in his favour, the strategies begun to destroy him, first by inflicting in him

doubts about his worth as a man for her and secondly, the fear of leaving her exposed when he goes to work.

Despite acting upon the promises, Fumbatha was never sure that she would be with him forever. He felt frightened whenever he left her alone to go to work. He often felt unworthy of her. Her strong personality and beauty that made him attracted to her instantly turned into a source of insecurity and intimidation. Fumbatha's current predicament attests to the fact that the power strategies he embraced to conquer Phephelaphi failed and robbed him of the little confidence he had gained after meeting her. This counterproductive effect of power is an indication of power as a paradox. Realizing that his initial strategies were not working for him, he decided to withstand the exploitative hard labour to fully provide for Phephelaphi so that he could keep her safe from the outside world. He is constantly searching for work and sometimes forced to endure standing in a long queue beside a truck waiting for his turn to pass a brick going up the hill where the construction site is located. The work is tedious and exhausting so they employ a singing strategy to keep them going.

Living true to his promise, Fumbatha gets a shelter for the two of them. It is a one room made of asbestos sheet. To make it more secure and demonstrate his capability to take care of her, Fumbatha uses his experience from the construction sites to make the structure more habitable. Due to lack of resources to enable him improve it, the structure remains a health threat but they put up in it for lack of anything better.

Though the structure spells out the abject poverty that Fumbatha and Phephelaphi live in, it is the best that Fumbatha can afford with his meager wages. Fumbatha's attempts to make the room more habitable and secure do not seem to translate into meaningful improvement. The shelter has been propped out precariously and

therefore far from being safe for human habitation. It is in this shelter that the two try to enjoy each other's company. But Phephelaphi has realized that what they have is not enough for her. She has also realized that whatever exists between a man and a woman can easily be forgotten. She wants something more and lasting so she decides to disengage from Fumbatha.

While Fumbatha has consciously planned strategies he needs to execute to own, control and exercise his power over Phephelaphi, Phephelaphi herself is thinking beyond those strategies; she wants to find her true identity and self-worth. She wants more than obligations, not a fleeting excitement among male strangers with enticing tongues and a flirtatious oneness. She wanted a birth of her own. Phephelaphi understood that not Fumbatha or any other man could give her what she wanted. She understood too, that it was only within her power that she could find what she was looking for. Phephelaphi's needs and wants are a direct contestation of Fumbatha's power and control over her. He gets very hurt when his power is challenged and fails to secure Phephelaphi for him. He emotionally gets destroyed when Phephelaphi terminates the growth of the two fetuses in her womb which ends up killing her. Fumbatha has eventually realized that in his quest to conquer and own Phephelaphi, his power strategies have destroyed him and his would-be two children and the woman he cared for.

5.3 Power Struggle for Self Vindication

Phephelaphi takes the initiative towards her quest by applying for a nursing course, a move that threatens the continuity of a relationship Fumbatha has worked very hard to build. He is aware and worried of the predicament. Losing Phephelaphi means failure for him as a patriarchal man. It threatens the little security and respect he had begun to

enjoy. This affects him so much that instead of concentrating at work he is thinking of keeping Phephelaphi closer under his surveillance. The realization that Phephelaphi needs something more makes him uncomfortable, so he almost faints when she blurts out that she wants to apply for a nursing course.

Fumbatha is fighting hard to keep Phephelaphi under his power, to control and patronize her. However, he knows he is losing the fight because his strategies are not in tandem with Phephelaphi's quest. Phephelaphi's power of education and a strong will give her the confidence to understand her present status and move on to a higher level. With her admission letter in hand, she expresses her optimism. She says that she would soon transform her identity from being nothing to something. She wants respect, dignity and power of her own. Focusing on the window of opportunity that has presented itself through her admission into the nursing training school, Phephelaphi plans to rid herself of what she perceives as the obstacles on her way to achieve her dream. The study observes that while working towards eliminating obstacles in her life, Phephelaphi was unconsciously erecting lethal strategies through which the counterproductive nature of power was able to destroy her. Through Phephelaphi's actions, Vera depicts power as a paradox.

Though Fumbatha claims to understand what Phephelaphi wants, his desire for what he wants blinds him so that he unscrupulously discourages Phephelaphi from her quest. He reminds her of their lives together as if she does not know it, shares it or even lives it. He tells her that "We are happy together. I work. I take care of you. It is not necessary for you to find something else" (p. 70).

While Fumbatha terms their life together as a happy one just because he works and provides for her, Phephelaphi dreads it because it makes her feel she is nothing.

Blinded by the dictates of patriarchy that views a woman as a weaker person who needs to be taken care of even if that care is below the threshold of her needs, Fumbatha insists on her total loyalty to him. He does not want to apply for the nursing course simply because they have their lives together. Discouraged by each other's stubborn positions, the two shares a silence that seems to be the final straw in their relationship. While Phephelaphi hopes never to share such a gnawing silence with him again, Fumbatha is certain that he can never endure such a silence again without suffocating. He breaks down when Phephelaphi kills their child who was growing in her womb to go to college. He interprets this move as her rejection of him; of his man hood and authority over her while Phephelaphi terms it as getting rid of an obstacle to her reality.

Just like the obsession Fumbatha has had of her, to conquer her and make her his own possession in order to regain his "manhood", Phephelaphi is so possessed by the quest for her reality that her main concern is how the end justifies the means and no other way round. Her second abortion is executed in the most cruel and torturous manner. Still possessed by the desire for self-transformation and success on her reality, Phephelaphi objectified the child in her womb and totally disregarded its life as anything useful. She prioritized her own gains over her child without considering any possible harm to her own life. She tackles her perceived obstacles through power strategies that eventually destroy her. Her choice to disregard Fumbatha's counsel and to procure abortion twice as a means of freeing herself to take up the nursing training turns out to be counterproductive to her dreams. The effect of the power strategy that she had chosen turns against her so that she dies in the process of getting "free" through her last abortion. The freedom Phephelaphi so yearned for has turned out to

be her end due to the reversal power impact on her action, again it is the power paradox.

In the text *Under the Tongue*, Vera exposes the power paradox to her readership through a character she calls Muroiywa, a man who cheated death as a child only to be a Whiteman's exploited labourer, an absent husband and father. She chooses to explain to her readers the paradox nature of power through the subversive actions of Muroywa, Zhizha and Runyararo. Using Zhizha, a young daughter of Muroyiwa and Runyararo, Vera anchors a discussion on power discourse that depicts an environment riddled with power appropriation and manipulations for desired goals. Muroyiwa's exploitative daunting work of digging out gold from rocks beneath the earth filled him with constant fear of accident. Despite the difficulties and the looming danger involved in working in the mines, Muroyiwa endured the hard labor and mistreatment from the colonial administration which ensured their subjugation. He tolerated the work not just for the money to support his family but also because of his proximity to the mountain where his brother Tachiveyi was fighting among the natives' army for their freedom. Though the road to the mountain had been closed and named the road of death due to the large number of people who had been killed there, Muroyiwa leaned on the hope that his brother was still alive and that one day he would be able to visit him before he eventually returned after the war.

The waiting for the end of the war became unbearable for Muroyiwa. As he searched for a distraction to his long waiting, he allowed himself to be haunted by the beauty and loving, and the symmetry of mats, which lessened the impact of war for him, and gave him an alternative focus to his freedom. He calls it a strategy to fight against the

waiting. The choice of the form of power he makes brings him face to face with incest; an act that is considered a taboo in his society.

Though he is married to Runyararo, the woman Muroyiwa desires is not her. He wants to conquer a fresh woman to make him satiate the male power in him, to give him freedom. He refers to it as “freedom from the anxiety of living” (p. 129), Muroyiwa’s desire eventually puts a claim on his young daughter, Zhizha. To vindicate himself, Muroyiwa repeatedly rapes her. This terrible act, which supposedly is Muroyiwa’s power strategy to his freedom as a man, has not only compromised his dignity as a man but also ruined his entire family. His hope to witness the end of the war and perhaps meet his brother Tachiveyi will never be realized because he is murdered long before the proclamation of the ceasefire. The realization of the unintended in this incident is a reflection of the paradox nature of power.

Provoked by the magnitude of Muroyiwa’s act of their daughter’s rape, Runyararo kills her husband Muroyiwa. Her trauma is more than she can bear. She is traumatized by her daughter’s pain and the moral weight of what Muroyiwa has done. Her compassion as a mother drives her to eliminate her daughter’s rapist without a second thought. Her concern is to Muroyiwa to cleanse both her daughter and herself of the stigma associated with incestuous rape. Though it would seem like Runyararo has achieved her objective, to some extent this research argues that her action has exposed her to more problems. Serving an endless jail term, for instance, is detrimental to her as a mother and to Zhizha as a daughter. Runyararo cannot play her role as a mother to Zhizha while in jail. She can no longer live up to her cultural socialization that requires a mother to nurture and mentor a daughter as she grows up

into womanhood. She would suffer from her absence as a mother. She has broken the traditional taboo of silence through her actions and speech.

Runyararo, just like her mother, would have liked to see her daughter's safe transition into adulthood and motherhood. Runyararo's act of murder as a power strategy has also exposed her daughter to more problems as a traumatized child. Likewise Zhizha needs the comfort and nurturing of her mother. This is validated by Zhizha's dream when her mother is in prison. She says:

I cry with a delicate longing. I climb up the tree filled with thick green leaves and thorns where I hide. When I come down my mother is gone. An empty wave steals into my thought and I grow dizzy with my emptiness, grow hollow with the memory of my mother's mothering grace and her giving. I long for mother (p. 216-217).

Despite the availability of Zhizha's grandmother, Zhizha still feels an emptiness that only a mother can fill. This further validates the importance of a mother in a child's life. This fact has been undermined by Runyararo's absence from the space of motherhood as a consequence of her act of murder as a strategy of ventilation and a cure to her daughter's suffering

The intense anger and frustration that Runyararo experienced when her husband, Muroyiwa raped their daughter, strongly influenced her desire for revenge. Her strategy to avenge her daughter's rape through the murder of her husband has had irreversible effect not only in her life but also in Zhizha's. While she loses a mother's presence in a daughter's life to provide her with psychological and physical needs, Zhizha loses the love and upbringing of a mother. Runyararo loses her freedom when she is arrested and confined. The paradox of power in her power appropriation is depicted through the consequence which is her pain rather than happiness and freedom. The repeated depiction of paradox as occasioned by power appropriation

and its manipulations on a woman's body through the act of rape reveals Vera's deep concern about this heinous act that is suffered by less suspecting innocent women in the hands of war-battered men.

Mazvita in *Without a Name* just like Zhizha in *Under The Tongue*, has suffered, not just the loss of her parents and a home through a maliciously orchestrated inferno by a black soldier who is an officer in the colonial army, but she has also undergone a very cruel form of rape by the same soldier who seem to be sinking further in the abyss of power. To fulfil the substance of her hope, Mazvita realized that she must be brave enough to plan her moves and assert herself.

Mazvita's vision is that of self-transformation into a significant, respected and independent woman who possesses her power. A vision that blends with Simone de Beauvoir's claim holds that being female is not being subordinate to male and does not give male the authority to define a woman. She faces several challenges in her newly perceived trajectory. The painful challenges provide her with the necessary awareness of her predicaments and the future she will likely experience. She knows she has to adopt strategies that would lead her to the realization of her objectives. This enlightenment and the desire for success urge her to employ varied strategies even those with unpredictable effects.

Her quest for power brings her to Bulawayo where she meets Nyenyedzi. Nyenyedzi works on the Whiteman's tobacco firm. He is among the natives whose labor is exploited for very little pay. The work is tedious and the conditions are unfavorable. Nyenyedzi is a man under the colonial authority and works under surveillance. He too is looking for freedom and power. Both Mazvita and Nyenyedzi are on power quest but with different strategies. The magnitude of their needs blind them to other

possibilities of their outcome other than success. Underestimating Mazvita's needs, Nyenyedzi assumes that Mazvita is in search of a companionship as a means to an end. He imagines that Mazvita is a woman whose life is regulated by cultural norms where a woman's goal in life is to get married and bear children. He clings to Mazvita and suggests that they live together. He discourages her from pursuing her power interests in the city. He tells her that "We should live together and cook together. This is a good place for us to live" (p. 30).

Nyenyedzi is determined to have Mazvita live with him. The study views this obsession as a desire to acquire power of control over her. He instills fear in her to discourage her from going to the city. He tells her that the city would swallow them up and they would even lose one another. Nyenyedzi wants to impose his patriarchal authority over Mazvita. He wants her to obey him and do as per his wish. He has already proved this fact when, ignoring her protest, he forced her to discard the mushroom she had found and got delighted at their softness. He ruthlessly snatched the mushroom from her hand and crushed them under the pretext that they could be poisonous. Feeling misunderstood Mazvita puts up a resistance saying, "I wasn't going to eat it; I only wanted to touch it. It felt so good to hold it. Why did you crash it?" (p. 12).

This is a gendered power contest which pitched the dominator against the dominated. Mazvita was hurt by his ruthless action which did not consider her feelings. Fighting for her space, she protectively held the crushed mushroom in her hand and was grateful that its neck had escaped Nyenyedzi's cruel action. Ignoring her hurtful feelings, Nyenyedzi unscrupulously made sexual advances on her body; naming her, giving her a new identity that defines her according to his rating of her. He calls her

“Howa” a move that irritates her but makes him happy because it affirms his power. As a further proof of the little value he attaches to her existence as a woman, he gives her a soft dying mushroom which is among the ones she had discarded. Nyenyedzi’s power strategies to win Mazvita for a wife are not yielding the desired results. Instead they seem to push Mazvita away from him. Rather than help her heal and probably warm up to a healthy relationship, Nyenyedzi is selfishly pursuing her young sensual body.

Nyenyedzi’s action seems to be modeled on what Simone de Beauvoir terms as the defining of women by men. She believes that, “men define what it means to be human including what it means to be female” (p.79). Beauvoir’s argument denounces such intimidating actions and encourages women to reject them and instead give themselves definitions that they can celebrate as women.

5.4 The Power of Self Determination

Though there is war everywhere including the city of Harare, Mazvita is determined to go there. She wants to work and earn money that will enable her to buy a bus ticket to Harare. Her determination is so strong that Nyenyedzi’s strategies for discouraging her don’t seem to work. For example, Nyenyedzi tells her he could not go to Harare because he liked the lands where he was and that the city was a bad place where robbers were so ruthless to even kill their parents. Mazvita, not convinced, decided to challenge his view of the city by insisting that she would rather confirm herself. This stance demonstrates that Mazvita is a woman who is capable of thinking and making her own decisions. Just like Mazvita’s strong determination to move on, Nyenyedzi is equally strongly determined to keep Mazvita to himself and away from the city. He tells her:

No, I cannot go there. I have worked here for two years now, and I know this place better than you do. I was born not far from here. You have not lived here for long and say you are leaving. If you stayed a year we could make decisions. We could go to Mubaira first and meet your parents. The city will bury us (p. 31).

In spite of Nyenyedzi's coercion which includes a proposal to visit Mazvita's parents to persuade her to stay, Mazvita's determination is not wavering. She insists on moving on with her plans. This is what Beauvoir would herald as breaking the bonds of patriarchy and rejecting generic labeling of a woman by man. The woman she has become is conscious of who she is and what she wants. Mazvita strongly desires to unburden herself from fear, from the war, from the dirt of rape and from everything that makes her insignificant as a human being. She therefore rejects Nyenyedzi's offer which she views as a draw back to her plan. She has realized that she cannot use Nyenyedzi as a strategy to propel her forward because his cultural socialization about land is unchangeable even if it does not better his predicament.

Nyenyedzi is tied down by the dictates of patriarchy and feels he must remain faithful to the land because it is his link to his ancestors. His consolation is that he works on his ancestors' land even if the work is not his. Nyenyedzi's loyalty to his land and his ancestors has become a source of frustration because the land has enslaved him and curtailed his freedom to win Mazvita. He realizes his failure and painfully admits the vulnerability of his present predicament under the colonial authority. Regretfully he accepts the reality of his situation as a black man under the colonial regime. He is aware that he has no rights over the land and his labour, and from his brothers fighting to defend his country.

Nyenyedzi seems to have lost his birth right to the colonial masters. In despair, he has accepted it and knows that there is nothing much he can do to change the situation.

However, he hopes that conquering Mazvita and making her stay will rejuvenate his male power and give him the patriarchal authority of control and responsibility. Nyenyedzi accuses Mazvita of lack of patience. He wants her to get their lives back. He likens her to the colonial administration which wants things to belong to her because he does not understand her desire. In the preceding discussion, Vera argues that because Nyenyedzi does not understand Mazvita's intentions, he cannot surmount appropriate power strategies. His patriarchal power approach that celebrates dominance of the female gender has blinded his view of what Mazvita wants. Even as he comes up with action after another, they are not working for him. His final pleas with Mazvita as she serves their last meal fall on deaf ears.

Despite mending his strategies of persuading Mazvita to stay with him, the study argues that Nyenyedzi has lost the fight because of his earlier strategies and that he is not ready for change. He has not been able to stop Mazvita. Mazvita has understood Nyenyedzi's fears and she is not ready to be part of it. She has realized that she has no chance of realizing her destiny with Nyenyedzi but refuses to be deterred by this failure. She has made her decision, and is moving on to find herself an action favorable to her quest.

Mazvita's next anchor is Joel who takes her in on her arrival to Harare. The readiness by Joel to give her shelter in the city is an aspect of her potential freedom. This is a beacon of hope that she looks forward to exploit to her advantage. She possesses the power to change and to adopt any situation that would propel her closer to her reality. In her naivety, she is grateful to Joel without knowing his intentions for her. Joel is a man trying to make a living in the city of Harare. Like a commodity, he evaluates Mazvita's body to decide whether or not she appeals to his sexual appetite to exploit

her innocence. Joel views Mazvita as a cheap inexperienced new sex toy that he should possess for his exclusive use till he is satiated. He is ready to use her body for his sexual satisfaction and then discard her. Since he was already sure of the availability of what he desired, Joel never bothered to make inquiries or discuss their terms of staying together. Though she has gained shelter as part of her power strategy she has gotten into a bargain already lost because Joel perceives her as a sex object.

The study views this exploitative living arrangement as one of the instances that unknowingly contributed to each of the partners appropriating whatever power they could from the other. This is especially depicted by the fact that they did not bother to put down any rules to regulate the arrangement. They just met and stayed for convenience. Though she finds it strange, Mazvita does not question anything because her true interest was not in Joel as a man or anything else. She was grateful that he offered her shelter and food in the city as she pursued her quest. This was of essence for Mazvita. As soon as she arrived in Harare, Mazvita was ready to claim her freedom. She felt secure and protected from the memories just as she felt encouraged and hopeful. She had a strong desire to grow and was almost sure of the future. She says that:

She had faith in untried realities because she trusted her own power for change and adaptation. She welcomed each day with strange sense of her desire and ability to begin, of her belonging. She had proud belief in her own reality, in the transformation of new geographies, promised and allowed that Harare's particular strangeness released and encouraged (p.64).

The new environment has filled Mazvita with hope rather than anxieties and fear. Her conviction of success is more alive in her than before. She detests the days she spends with Joel because she needs time to secure her freedom. She feels that each day she is without employment draws her closer to Joel and emphasizes her dependability. She

hopes to recover the time...for herself, for her growth. She does not share in the belief that time is continuous and endless, that what she has not accomplished today is easily recoverable (p 65). Mazvita longs for a future where she would look back and feel fulfilled. To her, success could only be measured against the future, a future where she locates herself beyond the moment. She would use Joel as a spring board to her envisaged future success where her reality awaits her. Mazvita views Harare as the key to her freedom just like the African nursing school was to be the key to Phephelaphi's freedom.

The next power strategy in Mazvita's quest is a change in her personality; donning a mature confident look instead of the uncertain immature one that would betray her. She believes that she can only find a job in Harare if she is more mature and confident about herself and what she wants. She has also decided to find a new voice that would enable her to speak without hiding from herself. This would give her a sure trajectory to re define herself and succeed in her power quest for freedom. Mazvita's sentiments about her transformation echo's the claims of Simone de Beauvoir's belief that women must break the bonds of their patriarchal society and define themselves if they wish to become significant human beings in their rights (p173).

Just like Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning*, Mazvita wishes to be a significant human being in her terms. She must start by getting a job to cater for her needs because she hates to ask for money from anyone including Joel. She has decided not to allow Joel in her own thoughts even as he snores beside her. Her concentration is directed to planning on how to get a job. Vera tells us that Mazvita's self-confident strategy and treating Joel with a nonexistent attitude as she looks for a job never materialized. She failed to visit offices to look for a job and interact with people to exercise her newly

found power of confidence and maturity. This strategy has remained a mirage, confirming the nature of power as a paradox. Coming to terms with this failure and the suspicion that she is pregnant, Mazvita breaks into a confused weeping mingled with laughter of frustration. The pain from her failure was is strong and confusing that she reflexively breaks into weeping and laughing.

Though Mazvita didn't quite understand the bout of crying and laughing that seized her, this research understands the cry as a premonition to the discovery of her pregnancy. It was a cry full of meaning. Her plans would have to change when the baby comes. The cry mixed with laughter symbolizes the confusion that was to occupy Mazvita's mind. On the other hand, the laughter could truly have been directed to Joel. Mazvita was aware that Joel had no place in her life that she did not even desire sex with him anymore, yet he held her tightly close to his body as if they shared that intimate space. This is a mockery of a well-intended act of empathy which Mazvita indifferently rejects. Joel, therefore, becomes the focal point of her ambivalent reaction and an object of her derisive laughter.

Mazvita felt betrayed by her pregnancy. She viewed it as an obstacle that had intruded into her life to steal her reality. She rejected it even before it was born. She even blamed her body for allowing the baby to penetrate it. In her bitterness, she closed the thought of the baby away, convincing herself that it was okay not to think of the baby since it had intruded into their lives. She felt justified to reject the baby the same way Joel had rejected it. Mazvita's bitterness about the baby and uncertainties about the future were so intense that she could not function normally. She then focused on the waiting that would see her separate from the baby, both at birth and in life. Mazvita's position is informed by her patriarchal experience that ties women to child bearing

and rearing. This view is validated by Adrienne Rich. In her book *Of Woman Born*, Rich is of the view that biological motherhood as institutionalized under patriarchy is restrictive to women as it denies them access to the public space. She suggests that women should liberate from such models of motherhood (p. 87).

Mazvita loses her dream of attaining her own power when she leaves Harare to bury her child in her village of Mubaira. She has lost her space in the city where she was to get a job, a strategy that was to move her closer to achieving her own power. Infuriated by the presence of the baby and the manner in which Mazvita handled the issue with him, Joel literally forced Mazvita out of his house, his life and of course her dream for progressive power. The narrator tells us that:

Joel ignored the baby. It was not his. He wanted the baby to disappear. Mazvita had deceived him. Her deception was final and inexcusable. He had no doubt that she knew about the baby, hid the fact from him, because she was desperate. He forgotten all about the innocence he celebrated in her. She was like any other woman. He saw her pretending to fall off the bicycle when they first met. She had been so clever. The baby arrived seven months after they had met. Joel did not believe that Mazvita had not known anything about the baby (p. 84).

Though Joel accuses Mazvita, his way of relating with her hardly gave her chance to a conversation that would lead to self-disclosure. His assumptions and wanting things done his way have caused him to lose a woman who gave him the taste of male normalcy under patriarchal definitions. Mazvita's presence meant responsibility for Joel. Like a true patriarch, he provided for her, gave her shelter and security. He exercised his authority over her while she provided service and was loyal to him.

As they parted ways, each hurting from counter effects of their power quest strategies, Joel and Mazvita once again journeyed back to their hopeless war tormented lives. Only that this time, they are more hurt and destroyed. This destruction is occasioned by their own power actions that gave them little short-lived gain to eventually destroy them. This is the integrative effect of power which the research refers to as the paradox of power. The study argues that the structures inform the loss and hurt experienced by both Joel and Mazvita of their power quest strategies that are self-centered and hardly give considerations to the plight of the other. People like Mazvita and Joel didn't find much meaning of the cease fire when it eventually came. This is because it brought more confusion rather than liberation to the people whose intense sufferings of the war had already transformed both their psychological and physical worlds. The narrator states that:

The war made them strangers to words. They shaped any truth which comforted them. The war changed everything, even the idea of their own humanity. They were shocked at what they witnessed and lived through, what they were capable of enduring, the sights they witnessed. They welcomed silence. If they spoke with energy and abandon, it was to fill the empty spaces left by those who had died marvelous deaths, who had vanished in the midst of their journeying. The war made the people willing accomplices to distortions-distortions solitary and consoling (p. 88).

The war was a display of the Whiteman's authority and a contest of supremacy of power over the natives. The subjugation of the natives is evident through their present selves. The war gave birth to People who have lost their identities and struggled to endure life at its worst.

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera presents to us men who have not only lost their identities but who endure their subjugated lives through exploited hard labor. They are living in the shadows of their former selves due to power appropriation and manipulations on their bodies by the colonial regime. Operating between Bulawayo and Johannesburg,

they work tirelessly in the mines of Johannesburg. The narrator describes their jobs thus:

They have been dipped deep in the gold mines, helmeted, torch lit, plummeted, digging for that precious gold which is not theirs; Not at all. They are not only black, they are outsiders. They make no claim. This is paid work so they do it (p. 5).

The natives have to work in the mines to get whatever amount of money they are paid to purchase the basic needs for their survival. Though the gold is supposed to be theirs and the land, they cannot put any claim to them because the colonial authority appropriated it all for their benefit. The men have resigned to their fate. They submit to the colonial authority and obey her commands.

5.5 Momentary Survival

The men initiate strategies that would rejuvenate their male power. They sing with scorn at what they hate. They dress uniquely to give them some sort of identity and to be appealing to women. To bury their hurt, they make love to new women with no accompanying promises. The men do whatever they can to live for the moment. Though they desire a future that would give them freedom and independence, they are not sure of when such a future will be realized. With the superior airs they assume when they get home in Bulawayo, they command attention from the neighbors which give them a sense of self importance. The narrator says that:

Neighbors give them way and let them pass, and they enjoy suddenly being regarded as strangers in their own town, where everyone listens intently to their sun-dried whispers, examines their indolence and scorn, respects their well-decorated idleness, their cobra skin belts and elephant skin hats, eloquent, topped with their exciting lay about tones, why not, what with their cross-belts pulling their waistlines up when it suites them, on an afternoon when they attend soccer matches... in their expensive shirts, which they fold carelessly up to the elbow, and their slim Jim ties dangle all the way to the waist (p.6-7).

These men appropriate power to make up for the inferiority complex they suffer at the mines. They dance to alleviate their depressed souls. Their gumboots, dance, dressing code and mannerism endear them to women on their dance floors in half-lit bars of Bulawayo. Their power over women disappear as soon as they leave the bars and the dancing floors, just like their power over the neighbours fade away with their disappearance to Johannesburg where they work the mines. Everything including their lives is temporal, they are lucky if they survive the harsh working conditions and the war.

Even women and children are caught in the complex matrix of war and patriarchy. Children hunger for transformation through education. For instance, boys use any kind of paper to write on, as they create mobile classrooms even by the river banks.

The narrator describes the conditions thus:

They sit down on the edge of the dry river with Madeleine razors held tightly between their fingers and sharpen their pencils, rapidly spreading fume lead onto their knees. Sometimes the sharp blade of the razor slips, grazing a finger and slivering the skin off, and the boys, brave, choose to ignore that minor hurt and proceed, instead, to write at the back of their torn notebooks whatever comes easily to the minds (p.21).

The education system does not seem to give ample space to the children whose hunger for education is unmistakable. Poverty is depicted all over and has become the norm of the people's daily lives. The notion of the family as an institution for safety, love and nurturing, has almost become alien as women take to prostitution, men exiled to their places of work if not dead or healing from the war, and children left to fend for themselves on the streets.

To those concerned, these are survival power strategies. Like Muroyiwa, men seem to believe that conquering a woman sexually rejuvenates male power of control and

authority. Men in Vera's novels tend to give preference to single women. Women on the other hand are looking for power and freedom without family entanglements and male domination. This stance is amplified by Kate Millett's (1970) observation of sex in the society. For her, sex is political primarily because the male- female relationship is the paradigm for all power relations. It is within such relations that most of societal power play is depicted.

In *Butterfly Burning*, Vera discusses the paradox nature of power through actions of women like Zandile who gave up her baby at child birth because she viewed her as a hindrance to her independence and freedom which she had hoped to achieve through her occupation of prostitution. Zandile wants power even if that power is a "Temporary sort of self- love" (p. 37). She also wants to recede the space of 'Otherness' occupied by women to be significant in her own right. She views the patriarchal norms and the colonial laws as agents of mortality that must be done away with if people like her are free. Prostitution is her key strategy for the elimination of the said agents. Through her sexuality, the prostitute possesses a way of power over the men as they are drawn to her body by the lure of her sensual body. Through prostitution, Vera locates sex as a space of power in a woman's body. Pierre Bourdieu (1993), associates power to 'relations of force between agents or institutions with common possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (p.156).

Zandile is aware of the power she possesses as a prostitute, which is why she desires to control the men who are presumably the agents of power in both patriarchy and colonial authority. When subdued by the power of female sexuality, the men become the victims of this power. In contrast, the women become the agents of power so that

in this game, power is appropriated and depleted almost at the same level. Zandile is confident that men would purchase passion from her so she revamps her personal aesthetics to enhance her attraction capabilities. The narrator describes her thus:

Dazed by her own capacity for a swaying, knee-high love, Zandile folds and pins her collar down inside her dress and allows the sun to beat on her shoulders and for coy whistles to curl over her neck like a noose. Then she does what is obvious and ordinary, she raises the hem of her skirt even higher and wears high heels and hides her own tender soles from harm (p. 38).

In her presentation of a character like Zandile, Vera communicates to her readers that prostitutes can adorn themselves to enhance their charms to appeal to the lust of men and ensure that they operate within the confines of their powers. Zandile inspects and confirms that everything she has used to adorn herself is in the right place. She sleeps with both black and white men as long as they are willing to purchase her passion. Nevertheless, her preference lies with black men because she can snuggle in their arms till morning unlike the white men who mistreats her and forces her out of the room before the break of dawn. To compensate for this harassment Zandile steals cigarettes and handkerchiefs from them. She then discards the cigarettes but keeps the handkerchiefs to use them later for show-offs in public places because they are made of fine linen.

Through the prostitution power struggle Vera exposes her readers to the workings of power paradox. This is explained in the power struggles that have seen the prostitutes gain power over the men only to realize the gain is very short-lived as it is soon overtaken by a more destructive impact of the same power. For instance, as the prostitute strives to please the man to completely subdue him sexually, she becomes a service provider and a slave for the man's sexual satisfaction; an act that depletes her resources as a woman and robs her of her much desired independence and freedom.

This is what Juliet Mitchell (1971) cautions women in similar predicament as the prostitutes about:

A woman's interior world (her psyche) must be equally transformed because without such, improvement in her exterior world will not liberate her from the patriarchal oppression that undermines her confidence (p.414-15).

While women believe that they exploit their men's power and take control of them through the act of physical prostitution, that is physically engaging the men, Mitchell warns that this cannot give them the liberation they so yearn for unless the psyche is involved. Otherwise the men will continue to view prostitutes as objects of sex that they are supposed to use for sexual satisfaction and discard once they have their fill. Mitchell's thoughts can therefore be understood as a special way of provoking women's consciousness towards progressive trajectory.

In a move that would look like reinforcing a woman's position and exonerating her from the prostitution blame, Andrea Dworkin, (1989) claims that:

Men get women under their control through alcohol, drugs, hunger, desperation and manipulation. They are made to depend on men not simply for their livelihood but also for their very survival. Prostitutes hand over their bodies to men who literally use them up or waste them (p.81).

Leaning on Dworkin's claim, this study explains the actions of women prostitutes in Vera's fiction as provoked by their desperation to vacate their oppressive spaces of 'otherness' and their quest for power to empower themselves. They feel useful and powerful when men allow themselves to be lured sexually to them. If the man is one of the downtrodden labourers with cracked dirty nails and rough cracked hands, or those who have returned from the battle front with scarred hearts, tortured minds and scarred bodies, the prostitutes, like Zandile, not only give them sexual satisfaction but also empathize with them and make them feel purged and important.

Zandile, like other prostitutes presented to us by Vera, is not forced directly by men rather, she is forced by circumstances in which she lives and her own desire to be of use and exercise her own power over the men. Zandile is oblivious to the fact that she is actually giving away her own power to the man as she inadvertently assumes the role of a service provider for the comfort of her master. She eventually depletes her prostitution power, and hungers for a life with just one man whom “She can own”.

Though Zandile gives up her many customers, she remains a prostitute keeping a man and owning him. Her desire for power and quest for it continues. The irony of it all is that her prostitution strategy is slowly destroying her instead of liberating her. She is physically exhausted and psychologically traumatized by the misfortunes that have befallen her colleague prostitutes. She especially recalls the painful degrading manner in which Getrude met her death. The thought gives her shivers of fears especially because she lacks the moral courage to face her daughter, Phephelaphi, and disclose to her, her true paternity now that Getrude whom Phephelaphi had believed to be her mother is dead. Getrude, whose beauty as a woman, and power as a prostitute towered above all the others, mothered Zandile’s baby whom she had wanted to do away with. Getrude had her life destroyed by the same men she believed to have power over.

A white policeman, who was also one of her men, knocked on her door one day at midnight and cut off her arm. The man carried her away only to bring back her dress with a note bearing a different name, Emelda. Phephelaphi, who had lived with Getrude and thought of her as her biological mother, grieved for her and detested how the policeman disappeared with her only to bring back the dress bearing a wrong name without bothering to find out Getrude’s true name from her. As a prostitute,

Gertrude's power which was enhanced by the full miracle of her body and a hugging dress which is described as "pronounced the ooze and flow of her all energy" was a web net that was irresistible not only to men but also everyone who came into contact with her.

Getrude was a captivating woman whose charms made men, both white and black, get attracted to her from all walks of life. Phephelaphi was not only attracted to Getrude as a mother but she found her not easy to forget. Gertrude's power of beauty made her stand out and unforgettable. Men gloated over her beauty and sexuality and appropriated whatever they could from her. While she believed that she could exercise this miraculous power of her body over the men, and get freed from the norms and laws that oppress the woman, she became a victim of that very power and lost everything including her own life. Through the tragic depiction of characters like Getrude and Zandile, Vera indicates the impossibility of achieving one's goal through actions of power manipulations for the self. She suggests that there could be other possibilities through which the impact of power can be experienced.

Men in Vera's novels not only follow the prostitutes but also innocent young women going about their errands. An idle man sitting alone at the edge of the stoop of Thanderbantu stores provokes the attention of Thenjiwe who is on her own errands. Manipulating his stares and gestures provocatively, the man catches Thenjiwe's attention and initiates a sensual relationship with her. Her own desire to be loved betrays her mind which wants to resist. She claims that the man makes her feel dizzy with desire and makes her reconsider each action as though he has power to perform an opinion of her. She is nursing a sensual temptation that eventually amplifies an inner push for sexual power. Thenjiwe's sensual desire responds to the man's sexual

innuendos. Surrendering to his lustful power, Thenjiwe takes the nameless man to her dwelling place. This move contravenes the societal cultural socialization norm that requires a man to take a woman to his house for sexual overtures. At the moment, Thenjiwe's focus is on how to use the man to satisfy her sexual needs. By taking the man to her own aboard, Thenjiwe is placing herself at a position to gain power over the man and make him hers for her sexual satisfaction. This is what Nietzsche (1968) refers to in *The Will to Power* when presenting his structural vision of Machiavellian power. He claims that:

The will to power also appears in sexual love or desire because it compels one to give direction as a desire to over-power, to take possession and it appears as self-surrender. Fundamentally, it is only the one love of one's 'instrument', of one's 'steed', the conviction that this or that belongs to one because one is in a position to use it"(p. 407).

With her attractive sensual body as an instrument of love, Thenjiwe's wish is to overpower the man sexually and surrender to his love making. She believes she can use her body to achieve her goal to spend her life with a man who loves her. She is oblivious of the harm she is courting from this man and others. This is a foreshadowing style that Vera has used to give insight into what will happen to Thenjiwe. Her sexual youthful power that endears her to men is what is bent at bringing her destruction. Since she is oblivious to what the future has in store for her, she lives for the moment. She desires the man just as much as he desires her body. She does not want to go through life without a man to share it with. She believes that the presence of a man in her life will give her some form of fulfillment even as she looks for her reality.

Thenjiwe feels that the man has followed her because of her power of sexual attraction. Like a helpless child the man needs help, from her, sleep with her to make

him feel whole and satisfied. She feels obligated to feed this man with her sexuality as she draws her own pleasure from him. She is ready to shelter him as he performs the delicate task of giving her his sexual pleasure as he takes his in return. It is at this point that Thenjiwe's sexual power over the man begins to work against her. Realizing that he has gained the trust of his target, the nameless man quickly settles on a trajectory to make her his prey. With a deliberate move to cast his "lust spell" over her, he calculatively and sensuously explained to her his feelings about different parts of her body that forms one whole. He claimed that:

He loves her finger nails. He loves each of her bones, from her wrist to her ankle, the blood flowing under her skin. Does she know that tears are flowing under her eyes even if she is not crying, flowing inside her eyes before her own entry into her own truth? He loves her bones, the harmony of her fingers. He loves most the bone branching along her hips. The sliding silence of each motion, tendons expand in...this is a beautiful one (p. 37).

One by one, and through sensual touch and poetic language, he describes them. Through the power of his description, he overpowers Thenjiwe sensually and creates in her, a goddess body and immortal being. Thenjiwe gets intoxicated with desire for the man who makes her feel much loved. She surrenders her body to him and wishes to conceive a child with him. Her desire for this man is so intense that she does not even know the man's name and doesn't want to be reminded of it till he tires of her and leaves. For now, it is erotic pleasure with no ties. They make love in silence because they presume to know each other's needs and it is that need that they try to fulfill.

Thenjiwe is aware that eventually this man will discard her when he is tired of her yet she encourages it because she only cares for the moment and what she can get from him. The man wants to exploit her sexuality, suck in what he can and leave her depleted of the power of her youth. He tells her that he wants to preserve her in his

body. He too is aware that he would eventually leave, having given Thenjiwe his sexual power to its fullest.

The two sex mates are engaged in power quest that enriches neither of them. Though she made the man stay with her in her house, Thenjiwe eventually realizes the futility of their engagement. Her mind and heart are no longer with him. She is desperate for more, like Mazvita and Phephelaphi; she is hungering for her power; to be in control. Her wishes to get involved with a man who would love her sincerely and take her in for a wife with equal rights got terminated when the man left and came back to kill her. The man had realized that the sensual manipulations he exerted upon her had lost their magical wonders on her. Feeling disappointed and hurt, he took his leave without alerting her, leaving her with a longing for him to have stayed longer to meet her sister Nonceba. But he is determined to leave, allegedly to give her time for her dream:

He does not hear her silent song and leaves to protect her own truthful search, which he dares not understand nor disturb, certainly not to defend him or escape from her, but to respect what he has interrupted... In leaving her, he feels the earth open and swallow him whole... he leaves her and loves her still. The best love is brief and intense (p. 48-49).

Though the man has left, claiming to give her time and space to pursue her dream, he is hurt and does not wish to live without her. He is like a man whose life has come to an end while still in love. The concoction of love and hurt in his system pushes him to come back to Thenjiwe's house to bring an end to her life. This time, rather than exert the passion of love upon Thenjiwe, he has exerted upon her the passion of his mixed concoction whose result is death. In this presentation, Vera is bringing the attention of her readers to the elusive nature of power. She is pointing out the fallacy that power always begets the intended hence suggesting of other possibilities of understanding

the concept of power. It is this possibility of an integrated impact of power that this research refers to as the paradox. While Thenjiwe's sensual power got her a man to quench her immediate sexual desire, it is the same power that brought about her destruction and eventual death rather than propel her to her intended goal.

Thenjiwe wants something beyond a temporal sexual relationship of man and woman. She longs for something tangible and everlasting; something that would make her forget the present and cherish the future. Like the other women presented in Vera's fiction, Thenjiwe wants a fulfillment that gives her value as a woman and a human being. The man leaves despite wanting to stay a little longer to tell her again how he desires to wake, to die and to be reborn in what he refers to as her graceful arms. Though this man leaves Thenjiwe, she still dies in the line of sex; an instrument she had hoped to use to deliver to her the attainment of her intentions.

Like Thenjiwe, women in Bulawayo have welcomed their new freedom. The country has achieved its independence and everyone wants a new beginning. They discard their old lovers most of whom are their age mates and go after the returned Soldiers because they want to experience something new even if it touches their bodies. They appreciate the change and are determined to bury the past and start anew because they believe this would lead them to what they want. Like Thenjiwe before them, the girls have adopted the strategy of sexual power as a means to their realities. They defy their bodies freely and willingly on the old ex-soldiers, ensuring body contact to tantalize the sexuality and arouse desire in them. The soldiers' personalities and deep unfathomable faraway look that provoke both fear and excitement in them make them feel brave and powerful:

They are ready to take risks with the indifferent soldiers and conquer them. The girls have no desire to be owned, hedged in, claimed but to be appreciated, to be loved till entire sun sets, to be adored like doves. They want to overpower the soldiers, take possession of their sexual desires so that when they surrender their bodies to them, they remain in control and direct how they want to be loved (p.54).

These women want to have meaningful independence where they enjoy their rights as equal beings with men so that their value is felt and respected. They imagine that the men who have had war exposure and managed to come back possess something that would help them in their quest. The men respond to the women through coercion. Most of the ex-soldiers give women gifts and hire them, making them think they are valued. The girls give in to their sexual demands only to learn from the men's dreams that they are tormented victims of the white man's war, who need healing before they can revert to their old selves. Disappointedly, the girls' dreams are shattered. Rather than achieving the object of their quests, they are turned into sympathizers who empathize with their own loss and that of the ex- soldiers from the battlefield. They end up sinking lower than their old selves as service givers to tormented soldiers thus experiencing the nature of power as paradox.

The women who have tested power like men at the battlefield are more confident, comparatively. They carry around airs of superiority. The narrator says that:

The women who return from the bush arrive with superior claim of their own. They define the world differently. They are fighters, simply, who pulled down every barrier and entered the bush, yes, and like men...They do not apologies for their courage and long absence nor hide or return away from the footpath (p.56).

The women, unlike their men counterparts feel it was a privilege to participate in the war. They feel that they proved that they should be valued as individuals and not as women. Their engagement with their fellow ex-soldier men is that of power contest as they demonstrate to other women, through their complex behaviors, that they are

superior. The women from the bush are not ordinary women. Though they behave more confidently and less frightened than the ex-soldier men, they too had a share of their loss. They offer challenge to their colleagues and they are a mystery to ordinary men. The narrator tells us that:

The men keep their distance, lean even farther away from these women, from their penetrating gazes, unsure of words, the tone of voice necessary to be tolerated, to be indulged, to gain the response of these mighty and serene women whom nothing seems to disturb (p. 61).

The men's experiences at the battlefield have redefined them to complex beings. This is depicted in their silence and hard penetrating gazes. Like the men, they suffered losses rather than gains. They got destroyed by their power actions that were intended to liberate them. This unexpected outcome authenticates the nature of power as paradox.

Though the two groups of soldiers suffered at the battlefield and got destroyed by the same power actions they hoped to liberate them and those they defended, Vera in character representation depicts contrasting behavior that seems to celebrate a woman's strength under similar circumstances with men. The women have acquired different personality and behaviors' because of the training and hardship they endured in the forest. The same training, torture, and hardships turned the men ex-soldiers into complex beings who suffered nightmares in their sleep. It is this type of suffering whose cause is discussed by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*.

Foucault discusses power as directly related to bodies. His emphasis is on power relations whereby the direct relation between power and bodies operate in two ways. First is the way of power over bodies whereby the power relations have an immediate

hold upon the body, they invest it, mask it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies and to emits signs.

Appropriating Foucault's ideas of power over bodies, the study views the ex-soldiers as subjected to harsh treatment that made them submit to the Whiteman's conscription into the army. The soldiers were tortured and trained to carry out tasks as per the colonial penal codes. They became instruments of war, a task that destroyed them psychologically and emotionally. Now that the war is over, they have to devise strategies of managing their lives. While some soldiers have decided to execute actions in their subconscious through nightmares, others have chosen to continue subconsciously and physically in various forms. This explains the sicknesses experienced by the ex- soldiers in their minds to have nightmares even in broad day light.

Through ex-soldiers like Sibaso, Vera highlights the dangers of the impact of power on individual actions. She depicts Sibaso as a man destroyed by his actions he executed at the battle front. As he killed people and destroyed property mercilessly to enforce the queen's power over the locals, the reverse effects of power destroyed him psychologically and emotionally. He is now an empty shell of a human being who thrives in punishing and destroying his victims. His encounter with Nonceba and Thenjiwe leads to a view that his mind is sick. He intends to destroy Nonceba so he rapes her in the most heinous manner. Sibaso uses Machiavellian kind of power to punish her through rape. Feeling cornered and subdued, she refrains from looking at him. He provokes her to speech through questions she cannot answer. As if gripped with emotions of empathy after the cruel act of rape on Nonceba, Sibaso cradles her

like a wounded baby being comforted, with lullabies and words that could heal under different circumstances.

The act of empathy that sharply contradicts an earlier act of rape depicts the magnitude of the brain damage Sibaso obtained from the war. He has exercised his male power over Noncebas' body as a way of affirming his power of domination over her. He also murders and mutilates Thenjiwe's body then holds it at an upright position alongside that of Nonceba, to live up to his soldier training "to take things by force and destroy those that resist by maiming and killing" (78). He has punished Thenjiwe for not loving him enough to satisfy his ego. Hallucinately, Sibaso relieves his dead past on the girls by seeing the girls as enemies to be destroyed and then mock their bodies. It is not a wonder therefore that even after cutting off Thenjiwe's head, he imagines "getting into her body and swimming into a mute stream" (p. 74). The impact of Machiavellian power of domination over the two sisters by Sibaso has further destroyed his reasoning faculties and made him psychologically restless and destroyed. He suffers the integrated effect of power; power as paradox. This is further manifested in Sibaso's fight against an abstract war that he has concretized in his mind as the enemy that must be destroyed in self-defense. Through the attacks, he seems to purge his soul and rejuvenate his strength as the most powerful: the only one who possesses the power to execute. This thought makes him sane and relevant as an authoritative man. He is a social misfit haunted and hunted in the society. He lives in fear. This is depicted through his encounter with Nonceba. 'He is careful to cover his back. He demands to know if anyone is with her. He asks her, is there anyone here beside you? Who else lives here? Do you expect someone? Are you with someone?' (p. 81).

Sibaso's manner of questioning is a clear indication that he is a man who operates in secrecy. He cannot afford to be seen by anyone, he does not want to see anybody either. He believes that other people are his enemies and he must see them first before they can see him because he is a power over them. This is a habit he developed at the war where they lived within the margins. Their presence was never fully announced to the enemy. This was a strategy to ensure survival. The narrator describes the kind of life that was lived by Sibaso during war as a life lived for the moment in constant and camouflaged suspicions. At the battle field, quality of life was suspended and people just drifted along day after day. Men like Sibaso were mainly concerned about staying alive so they were always ready to attack.

For Sibaso therefore, the attacks he has meted out to Nonceba and Thenjiwe are justified and heroic. Having power over his enemies makes Sibaso feel exorcised and rejuvenated. He wants to improve his ability to do more extraordinary things and he believes that the source lies in the legs of spiders. Sibaso is fascinated by the spider's ability to walk on water when human beings drown instead. As if to share in the spider's power and to prove that he is even more powerful, Sibaso ate handfuls of spider legs throughout the war as a soldier. He considers this a great secret that should only be known by a selected few like his prey, Nonceba.

He takes his act of terminating life and wiping it from the face of the earth as a ritual that cleanses a country. He looks at it as it as heroic favors which moves the country closer to her freedom realities. He considers the act of harvesting spider legs and eating them symbolic to the destruction of the superior forces at the battle field, which proves the soldiers' abilities as more superior and releases the country to her freedom.

Sibaso is aware that the war is over and the country is now free from the colonialist but he wonders about the lives of the ex-soldiers like himself. He compares his life to that of a starved post war spider. He confesses his broken life. He says that, “I saw it walk across a mirror one morning. Then it stopped moving. The mirror looked cracked. I could see my broken face behind it” (p. 84).

Sibaso sees his current life in the spider with long legs. Like it, his life is broken and fragile. He slides into corners and lives in the margins. He is afraid of people and cannot afford to be seen. The ex-soldiers are aliens who get alienated at the war front. They are men accustomed to hardships and torture. They acquired lifelong scars both on their physical bodies and their psyches. Their emotions are fragile and prone to erupting anytime. The self-disclosures by Sibaso validate the assumptions and dramatize the realities of the colonial battle front.

Through the ex-soldiers current lives, Vera scoffs at the futility of the war. For her the battle field destroyed the fighters rather than liberated them. They found themselves entangled in a web of power paradox. The effect of destruction is so deep that the ex-fighters can only live if they remove the effect from their systems. They lived lives where one had to end a life for him to live. Back to life away from the guns, Sibaso does not know how to live with people. He is learning how to resist the battlefield actions and memories. He is a destroyed man who needs to heal to be accepted and respected. Sibaso needs to unlearn what he learnt in the bush and to effectively resist the pursuit of war memories for him to be well. This requires patience in an enabling environment; unfortunately, Sibaso has no family to go back to. The neighbors tell him that his father died in prison because of him. He manages to retrieve his memories. Sibaso shows gratitude to the new tenant of his parents’

house for giving him the book. The content of the book jolts him back to reality and makes him long for change. He says:

Unless you know too much about spiders, a dead spider crushed between papers is neither male nor female. This sort of weightlessness should be experienced at least once by each human being (p. 122).

The power that Sibaso has spent his entire life fighting for has brought him more harm than gain. Frustrated and tormented by the strategies he used to get power, Sibaso is ready to change his approach. He desires an approach where individuals are human beings and validated as such not based on gender or position.

5.6 Conclusion

As a way of explaining The Paradox of Power in this chapter, the study has examined the power strategies that Vera's characters have adopted to acquire and concretize their positions of power against the strategies employed by the white men who were the main agents of the colonial administration. The study has used a three dimension approach; colonialism, patriarchy and the women. The patriarchal approach focuses on the power strategies adopted by the natives or black men. The third approach is that of women, it examines the strategies employed by the female characters to secure and solidify power for themselves.

An examination of the strategies across the novels reveal that the characters assumed roles in their quest for power either to dominate others or to free the self and that the strategies they adopted created reverse effects on their actions which ended up destroying them rather than propelling them to their intended ends. Upon the actions the characters employed while exerting power over or denouncing it to free the self for a better life, Vera suggests that the effects of such actions can be contradictory.

She insinuates that exercising power through actions that subvert the norms of the society does not guarantee progress for the instigator, and that there is always a possibility of an integrated effect of power on the individual character's actions hence the paradox of power is a reality.

The study has also noticed how dehumanizing painful circumstances have been instrumental for amplifying the inner call to acquire power and the deployment of any form of action especially those that subvert the societal norms. Actions such as that taken by Muroiywa to rape his daughter to acquire power of domination ended up destroying him instantly. He is murdered by his wife as soon as he completes the act. In *Butterfly Burning*, Phephelaphi circumstantially kills two fetus in her womb to take up a nursing course. She dies from the impact of the same power strategy that she employs to destroy her baby. Fumbatha, Kaguvi, Thenjiwe and Mazvita just like Phephelaphi, suffered a similar fate of contradictions of the expected outcomes in their power exercising since the power strategies they had chosen became the same agents of their destruction.

In Vera's *Nehanda*, she tells us of the white men who for the need of more power acquisition made their first appearance in the African land of Zimbabwe. They were the agents of the powerful queen of Britain who was desperately looking for colonies in Africa to enable Britain secure and solidify her authority as the most powerful country. Oblivious of the white men's power appropriation plans, the Africans in Zimbabwe welcomed their "guests" and gave them land on which to put up temporal shelters.

Exploiting the native's generosity, the white men introduced Christianity and education, which they used as strategies to cascade their influence. They also lured

people with gifts to embrace them and what they represented. Using their superior weapons like the gun, they fought Africans to take their land, labor, and freedom. Though they seemingly managed to control the natives and made them squatters on their ancestral land, the study has discovered that they did not only lose one of their key leaders, Mr. Smith to the wrath of the natives, but they also lived in constant fear among the natives.

In the foregoing discussion, the study has established that some of the renowned African warriors like Kaguvi were destroyed by their ancestors' very powers. This mode of power that Kaguvi used to trample upon his foes in his traditional set up was not able to liberate him when the colonial forces captured him. Kaguvi's defeat symbolically meant the defeat and subjugation of the patriarchal man due to the traumatizing experiences they underwent in the hands of the colonial agents. This argument resonates with the thoughts of Kai Erikson in *Notes on Trauma and Community*. To him, collective trauma is a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community (p.187).

The study further found out that the Whiteman conscripted African men into their army to fight their own people among other evils. This further destroyed the societal bond that held the Africans together because they turned a brother against a brother. This caused pain and trauma among Africans, especially the men. A Psychologist Kai Erickson (1991) describes the effect of such trauma on the society as working slowly and insidiously into the consciousness of those who suffer from it. He points out that kind of power as causing shock when the community eventually realizes that their

community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared.

Borrowing Kai's words of 'shock and trauma', this study concludes that the shock and trauma suffered by the men in the hands of colonial regime rendered them impotent in a sense that they could no longer fulfill their obligations as per the patriarchal universal logicity. This is particularly evident through family disintegration. Children like Mazvita are abandoned to fend for themselves on the streets instead of being with their parents or at school, young men hide in dark corners to rob and kill for a living while others are either conscripted to fight in the colonial government or engaged in hard exploitative labour.

The women like Deliwe and Zandile flock bars and brothels to sell their bodies for a living and for some form of power to feel useful. The young who stay away from outright prostitution shack up with men much older than them as strategies to their freedom only to end up being killed or raped, or use deviant social acts like infanticide, illegal abortions or even killing their babies destroying their lives in the process.

In Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, for instance, the study realized that the strategies Fumbatha adopted to secure and solidify his little power ended up hurting him other than working for his progress. Phephelaphi, whose personality and charm rejuvenated Fumbatha's male power, gave him responsibilities' and semblances of family obligations as per the expectations of patriarchy, and is also the same one through whom Fumbatha lost his power. This is because Fumbatha's power strategies failed to resonate with Phephelaphi's needs and desires which on the other hand were presupposed to be the bedrock of her power quest. Fumbatha's lack of insight into,

and the consideration of the significance of Phephelaphi needs and desire, did not only hurt him but also Phephelaphi. In what this study reads as power contest between patriachial and feminist ideologies, Fumbatha and Phephelaphi got hurt. They destroyed themselves with the reversal power impact of their self-centered subversive actions, which contradicted the logical expectation of securing and consolidating their power bases.

Like Fumbatha, Muroyiwa in Vera's *Under the Tongue* is a man whose power strategies have reversed his existence. Muroyiwa's desire to defeat the subjugated life he lives under colonial surveillance pushes him to destroy the life of his only daughter, Zhizha, through an act of rape. His life is terminated by his wife Runyararo. Muroyiwa's family gets disintegrated and destroys everything he had worked so hard in the mines to build. His wife Runyararo is jailed as he gets buried, leaving their wounded little daughter to her pain and constant nightmares. Her old heartbroken grandmother is not able to give her the healing she very much requires. Runyararo on the other hand has lost her power of motherhood for exercising it to defend her daughter through a mode that is against the societal norms and the colonial laws. In *Without a Name*, Mazvita destroys her dreams of being a significant woman, respected and valued by the society. The strategies she uses to rise from the pain of rape and the death of her parents in the hands of colonial soldier have ended up destroying her.

Like her other novels, Vera's *The Stone Virgins* also present to us victims of their own power strategies. The very power strategies through which the characters exercised their power to reverse their oppressive circumstances are the very ones that ended up destroying them. Thenjiwe and Nonceba, the orphaned twin sisters have

been destroyed due to the power of their youth, and for wanting better lives. Sibaso, the agent of this destruction, has raped Nonceba and murdered Thenjiwe to cleanse and liberate himself from the tormenting memories he carried from the battlefield. The war he fought all his adult life, to conquer his people for the white man's supremacy ended up destroying him psychologically and physically. Fortunately for him, he eventually realizes that the strategies he used to get power are the very ones that destroyed him. His desire for change has taken over his previous desires of acquiring power through the Machiavellian approach, which argues that power can only be attained through force, deception, and coercion (p. 153). The study observes that the writer has used the change of heart of a character like Sibaso to discourage manipulating power through actions that compromise human dignity due to their far-reaching destructive aftermath. The observation is based on the fact that even if Sibaso transforms his perspective on the methods of power acquisition, the reversal power impact on him has caused irreparable damage to all faculties of his life.

The characters operating in Vera's novelistic world are on an emotional terrain where they dream of a compensatory force that compels them to adopt any power strategy available to them to achieve their ends. Through her characters' subversive self-centered power strategies, whether directed over the body or of the body, Vera has demonstrated that such power strategies have destructive reverse effects that are suffered by the individual characters who instigate them.

The study concludes that power appropriation and manipulation that involves force, deception, and coercion have the tendencies to generate an integrative impact of power where achievement is just a short-lived gratification preceded by irreparable destruction of the self. The reversal destructive impact of power on the instigator is a

depiction of the complex nature of the workings of power which validates power as a paradox.

Having examined the power strategies used by Vera's characters, the study has attempted to explain the nature of power, as elusive and contradictory; what it refers to as "The Paradox of Power". It has established that when the exercising of power is motivated by desires that lean more on the self, greed, and fear, an integrative effect on the character's actions is possible. The power action generates a brief illusion of gain which is preceded by some form of destruction that obliterates the character's hope for the desired goal. The study has further demonstrated that power strategy that is not based on the considerations of others is dangerously destructive due to its reversal impact on the character.

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 CONCLUSION: THE POWER GAME COMPLEXITIES

This study has interrogated the impact of power as exerted through the subversive narratives employed by Vera's characters to reverse their oppressive painful circumstances in Vera's five novels: *Nehanda*, *Butterfly Burning*, *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins*. The study has explored how power is exercised through various strategies reflected in these works to understand its role, purpose, and meaning in the writer's representation of Zimbabwean women and men's oppression.

The study has noted several issues as significant in the writer's work, for instance, the significance of power, the selection of narrative strategies that subvert the societal norms and the pain and tragedy that characterize the characters' attempts to disembark from their dehumanizing circumstances they found themselves in, in colonial Zimbabwe. A reading of the existing critics on Vera's works inspired the need to explore the discourse of power which the writer uses to discuss the issues that bedeviled the people of Zimbabwe, especially at the colonial era.

A keen observation indicated that Vera's fiction had received profound critique especially at the thematic level to understand the writer's discourse on the social concerns of the Zimbabwe people. The review noted that though the artistic dimension on power had not received attention in the existing criticism, it was important to investigate it since it forms a crucial part of the substance of the thematic structure of her writing. Upon this consideration, the statement of the problem emerged; to interrogate the narrative complexities of power which institute an

oppressive environment for men and women of Zimbabwe and their attempts to free themselves and better their lives.

The identified problems with its attendant outlets revealed an oppressive world where men and women appropriate power and manipulate it through deviant social acts that subvert the norms of their society as power strategies for their freedom and relevance. The characters' actions that are largely motivated by their intolerable predicament prompted the theoretical choices of feminism and Michel Foucault's perspective on power to guide the study by investigating the characters' subversive narratives featured in Vera's five novels. The two perspectives have enabled the examination of the characters subversive narratives and their impact on the character' lives. The study applied a discourse analysis methodology in the gathering and analyzing the power discourse that was done under five analytical chapters.

The interrogations in the analytical chapters have revealed Vera's passionate involvement with her characters' inner and external worlds which she presents as the sites where power is played. The analysis, therefore, readily lends itself to the theoretical orientations of Michel Foucault's perspectives of power and a conglomeration of strands of feminism. Michel Foucault's approach has enabled, the examination of the characters actions which this study refers to as power strategies and deviant social acts, because for Vera, the basis of the characters relationships seem to be grounded on the quest for power.

The psychoanalytic strand of feminism has been instrumental in understanding the sources of the inferiorisation and the superiorisation of the characters on the basis of gender. Other strands of feminism became crucial in the interpretation and the motivation of the identity assertions by Vera's female protagonists. The study

realized that the motivation behind these assertions is the desire for power to enable the characters to vacate their oppressive spaces to meaningful independence and freedom. This scenario is informed by the fact that Vera writes about privileges power as the pedestal on which an individual's worth is either celebrated or ridiculed. This is depicted through the patriarchal institutions which directly bequeath power to the man so that being male is celebrated and assigned power of superiority while being female, on the other hand, is empathized with and regarded inferior. Therefore, it is a natural consideration by society that the man exercises his power over the woman in their social relationships to maintain the societal equilibrium of harmony.

Vera rejects every school of thought that determines the value of an individual on the basis of their birth sex and holds the view that every individual should be validated on their own ability and worth as human beings. She has demonstrated her position through her female characters who have defied the patriarchal order and the colonial laws through their actions that deviate from societal expectations, which does not bring fulfillment to the concerned characters because they had been anchored on inappropriate strategies.

The radical feminist thought validates Vera's stance. It encourages the women to vacate the position of "Otherness" that is assigned to them by the society, and fight for spaces at the so called power centers. Simone De Beauvoir, suggests that this is the only way a woman can get a platform to explain her identity as a woman in her own terms. For her, a woman must reject her generic labeling by the man as "other" because "such labeling assumes that humanity is male so man defines woman in relation to him and not as the woman is (p.173).

Feminism celebrates the varied ways in which many women have rejected the demands of the patriarchal systems and attempted to, or taken charge of their destinies. The feminists' position is supported by Michel Foucault's power ideas that are beyond conventions as it subverts the norm through its belief that power is not concentrated in one place. Rather it is diffused everywhere as is manifested in actions of power play, where, on one hand an action is meted upon an action either to modify them or do away with them. On the other hand, antagonistic actions spring up to counter the actions over them.

The argument advanced by Foucault is that every individual possess some form of power which they can exercise according to their desires and project their voices. Through this lens, Vera underscores the centrality of the power question in human relations and explains why the word power is on every one's lips trying to find out who has control of, over whom, and for what, and what are the reactions. Foucault has christened this kind of power play, a power struggle, which he looks at in three different dimensions; struggle against forms of dominations, against forms of exploitation and struggle against forms of subjectivity (p.781).

The study appropriated these forms of power struggles in order to understand the problems that plagues the society that Vera writes about and the natural society that we live in because, literature, through its mimetic concept validates nature. As established by the study, the society is engaged in power struggles at the patriarchal, colonial and individual levels. The pressures from the three external power sites actuated to provoke varied power strategies by individuals and institutions. As established by the study, these strategies were riddled by what this study likens to

what the Greek Philosopher, Aristotle, in his *poetics*, refers to as the tragic flaws or omissions that lead to the tragic hero's down fall.

Like people in real life, fiction characters may succeed. However, whether they succeed or not, this study retaliates that a narrative perspective that depicts a writers' line of thought on the issues they address is of great significance as it gives the reader a clear insight into the work itself.

In the four analytical chapters of this thesis, the study discovered that man has deliberately attempted to oppress and subjugate the woman due to the patriarchal systems' postulations on man's superiority and woman's inferiority. It reveals that the struggles for power in Vera's novels are instigated by the imbalances of power in social relationships. These has prompted the characters to appropriate power and manipulate it through subversive narratives as power strategies to propel them forward, but which end up destroying them instead due to their actions' reversal power impact. The study has concluded that power imbalance and its accompanying struggles are responsible for the paradox of power as the research findings indicate. The study was navigated through four objectives which were highlighted through four analytical chapters.

6.2 Research Outcomes

6.2.1 Objective One: The female body as the site of power manipulation

In chapter two of this thesis, whose objective was to investigate the female body as the site of power manipulation, the study has identified several power strategies through which man has been able to manipulate power on the woman's body. In power relations, the body plays a crucial role in the concretization of power

exercising. This observation is validated by Michel Foucault's claim that power is directly related to bodies and operates either over bodies where it takes hold of the body to invest it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks and perform ceremonies (p.157).

Leaning on Foucault's lens, the study established that the female body in Vera's fiction has not only been used by man as an arena for the enactment of intimate sexual rituals like in the institution of marriage, motherhood and compulsory heterosexuality, but also as an instrument of social control over a woman's body and mind to keep her at her culturally constructed inferior position where man can use her in any way for his needs and wants with little resistance if any. Man appropriated public power and manipulated it to suppress, oppress, patronize and exploit the woman. The overt acts that are the embodiments of power manipulations manifested themselves through rape, murder, incest, lust, torture and prostitution.

Through rape, man has not only violated a woman's body but also degraded and tortured her. Rape that the colonial soldiers the colonial soldiers mainly committed mainly committed symbolically reduced the female bodies to battle grounds for male nationalist's pleasure, which as Tembo (2014) puts; that in war time translates to men nationalist anger, articulated through the weaponisation of rape against both the enemy camp and the local women's bodies (p.111-unpublished). Just as Foucault observes, the exercising of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individuals or people, it is a way in which certain actions modify others.

Through her characters, Vera has demonstrated this claim in her five novels. She has presented to her readers men whose male egos have been punctured by the colonial system through various dehumanizing actions. These men have then appropriated power and manipulated it through subversive narratives like rape, coercion and

murder on the women's bodies to modify their hurtful actions from the colonial system. For instance, in *The Stone Virgins*, after raping Nonceba and murdering Thenjiwe, Sibaso feels contented and justified because, for him, the attacks have not only been executed to satisfy his male desires, but also in imaginary self-defense. Through such attacks as rape and murder, he purges his soul and rejuvenates his strength as the most powerful man. The study has established that while such offenders as Sibaso escape the justice systems, the women undergo psychological and physical trauma, if they live to tell the tale.

Zhizha's body in *Under the Tongue* is viewed by her father, Muroyiwa as a sex object capable of giving sexual pleasure and rejuvenating his battered male ego. Muroyiwa confidently plans to rape his daughter just because he feels the need to satisfy his desire to have sex with a fresh young woman, to feed his ego as a real patriarch. Though his wife kills him; he has destroyed the life of his only daughter who has heard a mental break down due to the severity of her trauma.

In *Butterfly Burning*, the study realized that men like Fumbatha have objectified the bodies of women like Phephelaphi, Deliwe and Zandile, and treated them as sites for the enactment of their sexual intimacies and instruments for patriarchal relevance. The bodies of women prostitutes like Deliwe, Zandile and Getrude are especially used by men as sex objects. Using economic power, men have commoditized their bodies and paid for sexual services. These women in turn have perceived themselves as sex objects to be looked at and evaluated for pleasure (Fredrickson & Robert, 1997:177). The Umguza River incident exposes Fumbatha's lust and schemes for Phephelaphi's young attractive body. Vera observes that Fumbatha has never seen a woman who possesses a body as attractive as Phephelaphi's and that he would possess her like the

land under his feet. Fumbatha proposes a living arrangement that would ensure his possession of Phephelaphi.

Mazvita in *Without a Name* also finds herself in similar circumstances. Running away from an oppressive life that is characterized by homelessness and rape, she readily becomes a prey for Nyenyedzi and Joel in a living arrangement that was useful to both men and her. She had hoped to use the opportunity offered by an urban set up to get a job and transform her life.

The study has established that the power appropriation and its manipulation on the women's bodies did not only turn them into sites but also objectified them. As observed by critics like Simone de Bourvoir (1952) and Barky (1990), the objectification itself is a form of oppression for objectified bodies. Since other people see them as objects, they begin to perceive themselves as social objects. They claim that such self-perception can have significant psychological and social costs (p.211).

This study observes that the power manipulation on the women's bodies have had traumatic effects on their psyches and physical domains, making them desperate for transformation. The study claims that this desperation to change their traumatizing environments pushed the women in Vera's fiction to deploy subversive narratives as their strategies of resisting power over their bodies.

Across the five novels, Vera's voice comes out strongly against the men's power manipulation on women's bodies. Vera not only condemns the heinous acts of power manipulations such as rape, murder, coercion, incest and rejection that she views as the hallmark of power appropriation and manipulation on the women's bodies, but she also empathizes with their traumatic circumstances and encourage them to assert

themselves and vacate their vulnerable positions of ‘Otherness’ and fight to become who they want to be. Vera’s stance resonates with the voice of de Bourvoir who maintains that for a woman to be free from male power appropriation and manipulation that displace them from the center to occupy spaces at the peripheries, they must break away from the bond of patriarchy, define themselves and defy male classification as the ‘Other’ (p.119).

6.2.2 Objective Two: Subversive Narratives as Strategies of Resistance

In chapter three of this thesis, the study established that the women, through what Foucault refers to as the power of bodies, the body’s force of Will and desire (p.156), were able to oppose the male power of domination that was imposed upon their bodies through various acts of power appropriation and manipulations. They came up with what this study refers to as ‘subversive narratives of resistance’. The study has noticed that Vera deploys the subversive narratives to give a general representation of the dilemma circumstances the characters needed to put behind them.

In *Butterfly Burning*, for instance, Phephelaphi has to weigh between living with Fumbatha in an arrangement that resembles marriage and giving birth to their baby in her womb under the precarious oppressive circumstances that would obliterate her hopes for the future, and walking away from Fumbatha, procuring illegal abortions and joining the nursing college that would ensure the realization of her dreams as an empowered independent woman who can participate in societal decision making and developmental agenda of her nation. Eventually she settles for self-inflicted abortions, not once but twice.

This strategy puts an end to her dreams since she dies in the process. The study has noticed that the pressures created by her dilemmic situation pushed Phephelaphi to

choose what she perceived as the only strategy available to propel her to her future dreams. Though she managed to protest her oppressive situation, the power impact of her strategy brought her destruction.

Like Phephelaphi, the women prostitutes had to make certain choices, objectify and commoditize their bodies for sale to get finances for their basic needs or conform to societal norms that require them to remain submissive in their inferior positions as wives at the peripheries of the power centers, if they are lucky to get married. Such a woman is obedient to patriarchal ideology no matter what. This is what Mary Daly (1973) in *Beyond God the Father*, views as good and bad. In her encouragement to women to redefine their spaces in the society, Daly claims that a woman approved of by patriarchy as good is bad because she is a woman who remains trapped by the oppressive patriarchal systems and is afraid of rejecting them for fear of being called bad. On the other hand, Daly insists that the woman who is called bad by the patriarchy is good because she asserts herself to be free of the male domination (p.107).

The women chose to compromise their societal dignity and sell their bodies as prostitutes. Though they allowed their bodies to be used by men as sex toys, the study has established that the women were able to be in control and offer their bodies in their own terms through the power of their bodies. This power manipulation through prostitution brought untimely death to Getrude, who got killed by one of her customers one night.

A similar scenario is reflected in Vera's other novels. In *Without a Name*, Mazvita has chosen to give birth and kill her baby without even giving her a name. This, she does as a way of dealing with her past experience of rape which planted a baby in her

womb and Joel's rejection. After committing the act of infanticide most cruelly, she becomes neurotic, ties the body of her dead baby on her back and boards a public bus back to the bushy desolate place that was once her home. Mazvita's cruel actions lead to her mental breakdown.

With the deterioration of her health, Mazvita can no longer pursue her dream of getting a job in Bulawayo city and becoming a successful independent woman. The study has realized that Vera has used the narratives that manipulate power for self-empowerment to portray the intensity of the women's suffering and desperation to get out for something better. However, she also disapproves of the kind of power strategies that they use because they are destructive.

In *Under the Tongue*, Runyararo confronts her daughter's rapist, her husband, and murders him. In her dilemma traumatizing state that is provoked by the site of her daughter pinned down on a forced incestuous sexual act, Runyararo chooses to eliminate the man to free her daughter. Though physically the daughter seems to have been freed her psych and rape scars remain trapped on the act and makes her neurotic.

Though Sibaso has over powered Thenjiwe and managed to murder her, it was not without resistance. The study noticed that Thenjiwe's sensual attraction had lured Sibaso into following her everywhere, including their living premises. She had encouraged him because she needed a husband. Her eventual resistance of him brought her demise, never to experience her dream of motherhood. Nonceba puts up resistance and manages to escape with both bodily harm and psychological torture. She ends up staying with her sister's boyfriend since she has no family.

The study has noticed that a related incident has occurred in *Nehanda*. The spiritually chosen girl, named after the legendary prophetess, Mbuya Nehanda, makes a very drastic personal choice to save her people from colonial upheavals. Nehanda gives up a normal life of marriage and procreation that many girls of her age are engaged in. She leads her native army against the colonial army. This choice soon leads to Nehanda's death before she could redeem her people. The study has established that though Vera does not encourage the kind of power strategies that her female characters have used, due to their destructive nature, she celebrates the fact that they have been able to assert themselves to resist male domination and oppression. For her, the determination to vacate their inferior positions in order to become visible in significant places is some form of achievement.

In this chapter, the study has established that Vera's female characters are fighters who will go at any depth to reject the injustices meted upon them by the convergence of patriarchal and colonial systems. Notably, the very strategies the women have used to assert themselves are the same ones that have destroyed them.

In the five novels under study, this research has realized that Vera has disapproved the oppressive issues the women of Zimbabwe have had to endure. Nevertheless, she does not approve of their use of the subversive narratives as strategies of resistance due to their self-centeredness and reversal destructive effects on them. In her thoughts, an assertion should fulfill its intention of delivering the desired goals and not just a brief gratification that is superseded by failures and destruction of the instigator. In Vera's view, the strategies used by her major female characters like Phephelaphi, Mazvita, Runyararo, Thenjiwe and Nehanda, failed to deliver the desired outcomes as they all got destroyed in the process.

6.2.3 Objective Three: Colonial Subjugation and power appropriation

Chapter four of this thesis discussed the study's third objective which is colonial subjugation and power appropriation. The study has established that a subjugated male is a man whose trauma for losing his prestigious patriarchal position is beyond his management threshold and can propel him into Machiavellian expression of power. His bitterness and desire to revert to the celebrated powerful man, fulfilling his responsibilities as assigned to him by the patriarchal norms, manifested in his unscrupulous acts of dominance that alienated and oppressed the woman.

The study realized that the men's predicament was occasioned by a subjugating kind of power that the colonial regime in Zimbabwe applied on the people, especially the men. This form of power reduces an individual to the lowest level of humanity. In his work, *Subject and Power*, Foucault discusses this form of power as attaching itself to immediate everyday life and categorizes an individual. At the same time impose on him a law that regulates his existence. He points out that this power subjugates an individual and makes him subject to someone else by control and dependence (p.781).

The colonial system succeeded in making the men of Zimbabwe subject to its rule. By choosing this kind of power to explain the predicament of people of Zimbabwe, especially men, Vera argues that even patriarchal authority that has always subordinated the woman is also challengeable and that no authority is absolute. She has further demonstrated that a social space occupied by a particular gender has no sex implications and can be occupied by any gender.

The study has noticed that man is not comfortable in this colonially constructed position where he has been stripped of his patriarchal power and made subject to colonial authority. The study has also realized that the colonial system has damaged

the patriarchal social order that had given man authority over the woman and a sense of community life. This in turn brought man into the realization that he no longer has any power-base to lean on for support and that part of him had disappeared.

The study also established that it is the desperation to reclaim the old self and bury the colonial shame that aggravated men like Fumbatha in *Butterfly Burning*, Muroyiwa in *Under the Tongue* and Sibaso in *The Stone Virgins* found the space of subjugation too harsh for them to endure. To revamp their male ego and have some form of control, these men resorted to power appropriation and its man manipulation through subversive actions like rape, incest, coercion and murder to punish the woman.

This notion is especially validated by a critic, Diana Koester in her work, *Gender and Power*. She claims that gender relations are power relations for the simple reason that power, as sanctioned by patriarchy equals masculinity (p.25). The study noticed that the writer has exposed the desperation of men in her fiction but she has also condemned the power strategies they have chosen as their instruments of empowerment. She decries both the physical and the psychological harm the men have done to the women and even themselves due to the nature of their power strategies. Fumbath, for instance, cannot work due to his psychological trauma resulting from the death of his woman and two babies. Likewise Muroyiwa is murdered by his wife and even rejected in death by his mother and his daughter. The study concludes that man's oppressive tactics did more in exposing his weaknesses and alienating him from the woman than propelling him to his desired authority.

6.2.4 Objective Four: Paradox Nature of power

Chapter five, the final analytical chapter of this thesis, discussed the substance of power as a paradox. The subversive narratives of power across the selected texts have

revealed that Vera's keen insight in the choices to depict the oppressive environment the people of Zimbabwe live in depended on many factors. The study has noticed that individual characters appropriated and manipulated power based on their life experiences and the kind of life they desired and hoped to have.

An exploration and interrogation of the gendered power play in the previous chapters has revealed that Vera's characters, both men and women are looking for power of various kinds for different reasons. The study also discovered that all characters; both protagonist and antagonists employed particular strategies to propel them to the apex of the power pyramid.

The study also established that the focal point of the power game was motivated by the desire to be an absolute authority so that the characters can be in control of their lives and their environments at different levels. The colonial authority, for instance, wished to conquer the African state of Zimbabwe, own its citizens and resources and establish its rule over them. It was a power quest for domination where they used force, coercion, ruthlessness and strategic violence. They conscripted strong young natives to the war to fight against their own, and exploited the labour of those who remained home for their selfish gains.

The study observed that though they had some partial victory and disrupted both the social and political lives of the natives, they also suffered losses in terms of lives and ammunition. Furthermore, they faced hostilities from the natives and eventually they had to leave all that they had purported to have acquired. They left bile of hatred in the hearts and minds of the natives, and their sympathizers. The men and women who fought at the battle front like Sibaso, gained the power of the gun, and destroyed lives but ended up being tormented as social misfits in their environments. The study

established that the ex-soldiers' acquired power of self-destruction rather than liberation. This was demonstrated by Sibaso, a University graduate and a soldier in the colonial wars.

Going through his university notebook, Sibaso realizes the futility of the heavy baggage he carried from the battle field in the name of power. He was reminded of true liberation by a dead spider he found between the pages of the book. He says that "this sort of weightlessness should be experienced at least once by each human being, and all the time, by all nations" (p.122). In Sibaso's view, the old should be crushed like the spider so that the new can be born for people to be free. Sibaso realizes the damage caused by his power quest strategy; however, he is already destroyed.

Vera's conception of oppression is linked to her characters' physical and psychological pain as a member of the oppressed community. The characters' manner of power appropriation and its manipulation is indicative of the intensity of their need to get some relief. The study has established that the destructions is Vera's way of discouraging the use of subversive narratives as a means of achieving one's desired goals. She is making a statement that such strategies will fail to achieve their purpose and destroy the characters involved due to the reversal impact of power on ones' actions. The strategies only provide an immediate gratification that is preceded by spells of destruction in various forms; it is what this study refers to as the paradox of power.

The study has concluded that both men and women employed power strategies that have not served them to realize their set goals because they were mainly motivated by self-centeredness, desperation, greed and fear that saw them adopt the strategies that subvert the norms society they live in. The study has also established that the impact

of power as exerted through the subversive narratives employed by Vera's characters to transform their painful circumstances was to a great extent destructive rather than productive. It concludes that there are possibilities of an integrative effect of power appropriation on the characters' actions: a brief gratification that precedes some form of destruction that reveals the paradox nature of power.

This study has advanced three key contributions to scholarly research concerning the reading of power discourse in Vera's fiction. First, through her use of subversive narratives as modes of power exercising, Vera has shown that such a manner of power exercising will yield contradictory outcome characterized by immediate illusion of gain that precede forms of destruction. Secondly, the study has concluded that Vera has made visible to her readers the folly of power struggles in human social relationships. She has demonstrated the need for interdependency informed by the fact that man and woman are part of human same. Finally, the study has pointed to a new trajectory in the understanding of power narratives.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The study has realized that the vastness of Vera's fiction would not allow effective coverage within one research. The study therefore acknowledges that it did not examine all aspects of power in Vera's writing. It was limited to its scope, which covered the nature, meaning, and function of power as Vera's five novels represented. The study recommends further research on power to determine the most effective manner in which it should be exercised in social relationships, which for now is beyond its scope.

REFERENCES

- Abel, G. (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods* Kijabe Printing Press Kijabe
- Acholonu, C. (1988). "BudiiEmecheta." *Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the Present* Vo. 2 Guardian Books Nigeria Limited 216-222
- Adichie, C. (2006). *Purple Hibiscus*. Nairobi. Kwani Trust
- Adler, A. (1972). *Understanding Human Nature*. Routledge: London.
- Allen, J. (1992). "Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women". In Marilyn Pearsall ed. *Women and values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy*, pp.91 - 101. Belmont Calif: Wordsworth.
- AMM, (1998). *The Housemaid*. Heinemann Educational Publishes. USA.
- Anene, J. C. & Godfrey B. (1966). Eds. *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries*. Ibadan: U of press & Nelson.
- Annette, K (1980). *Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism*" (Feminist Studies, Spring 1980) Vincent B. Leitch, ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company
- Barstow, C. (2007). *Right use of power: The heart of ethics* Co. Many Realms.
- Barstow, C. (2008). *The power Differential and the Power Paradox: Avoiding Pitfalls*, Vol 110 No. 2, 265-284.
- Bashirahishize, L. (2018). *The Poetics of Horror in Toni Morrison's Novels*: Moi University PhD.
- Boehemer, Elleke. *Stories of women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*. Manchester UP, 2005.
- Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against bur will: Men, Women and Rape*. Simon & Schuster: New York
- Bull L. *Tales of the Nation: Feminist Nationalist or Patriotic Defining National History and Identity in Zimbabwe*. Research Report No. 132 Uppsalla: NordiskaAfrikainstitutet, 2004
- Bull, L. *Tales of the Nation: Feunist Nationalist or Patriatic History? Defining National History and Identfy in Zimbabwe*. Research Report no 132 Uppsalla: Nordiska Afrikaistituted, 2004.
- Cesaire, A. (2010a). "Culture and Colonization", *Social Text*, Vol. 28, Issue 2, pp. 127-144
- Charles, R. (1976). *The Novel in the Third World*, Washington, D.C. Inscape.

- Chondorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of Mothering: psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. University of California: Berkeley.
- Cixous, H. (1987). *The newly Born Woman*. Manchester U.P
- Cliff, M. (1997). *The village Voice*. New York: Dutton.
- Coates, J. (1986). *Women, Men and Language*, London: Longman
- Coundouriotis, E.(2005) "Self-inflicted Wounds in Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning*." *World Literature*.pp. 64-67.
- Craven, M. (2012). 'Colonialism and Domination.' In: Fassbender, Bardo and Peters, Anne, (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 862-889.
- Curtin Philip (1964). *The Image of Africa; British Ideas and Action*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. pp1780-1850.
- Dahl, A. (1957). "The Concept of Power." *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* 2(3), 201–215.
- Daly, M. (1973). *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Daniel J. Mkudeet al (2003). *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera*. Weaver press ltd.
- Daugaremba, T. *Nervous Conditions*. (1988). London: Women's Press 2001.
- David, M. (2003). *The Totem*. Published by Routledge
- Daymond, M. J. (1996). (Ed). *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory, and Criticism*. New York: Garland Publishers.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1974). *The Second Sex*. Trans and ed. H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books
- Dinnerstein, D. (1977). *The mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*. Harper Colophon: San Francisco.
- Dowding, K. (1996). *Power*. Buckingham: Open University Press/Minnesota University Press.
- Dwokin A. (1981). *Pornography: Men possessing Women*, London: Women press.
- Eagleton, M. (Ed). (1996). *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Blackwells.
- Ellyson, S.L. Dovidio, J.F (EDs) (1985) *Power, Dominance, and non-verbal behaviour*. New York: Springer-Verlag sembene Ousmane 1970(1962). *God's Bits of wood*, trans-Francis prince, Heinemann, London.

- Elshtain, J. B. (1982). *Feminism, Faculty and Community*. Princeton University Press:
- Emerson, R. M. (1962) *Power dependence relations* American Sociological Review, 27, 31-41.
- Eustace, P. and Marjorie, J. (eds), *Women in African Literature Today*. London,
- Falk,E. (2007). *Select and History in Selected Works by Abdul Razak Gurnah, Yvonne Vera and David Dabydeen*. Karlstad University. Sweden.
- Fanon, F., 1990 (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farington, Peuguin, London.
- Farrar, S. (1998). *African Writing book review, Butterfly Burning, Feminist Literature Yvonne Vera*. Amazon.
- Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2000), Edition: 1st. *Butterfly Burning*. Paperback, pp.144
Cary, N. and Larry G., eds (1988). In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Fiske, S.T (1993). *Controlling either people: the impact of power on stereotyping*. American Psychologist, 48,621-628.
- Fonchingong, C. C. (2006). *Unbending Gender Narratives in African Literature*. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol.8(1), 135-14
- Foucault, M. (1965). *Madness and Civilization. A history of insanity in age of Reason*. Pantheon. Books: New York.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the prison*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power and Knowledge*. Ed. C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1982). *The Subject and Power*. Chicago Journals, vol.8, No.4, pp.777-795.
- Fox, C (2002). *Historical Perspectives on Violence against Women*. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(1), 15-34.
- French, M. (1985). *Beyond Power: on Women, Men and Morals*. Summit Books: New York
- Freud, S. (1989). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In the Freud Reader, ed. Peter Gay, 594-7. London Vintage
- Fwangyil, G. (2006). *A Reformist approach to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Hibiscus*. Indexed African also online. Vol.5, pp261-274.
- Gagiano, A. (2007). *Reading The Stone Virgins as Vera's Study of the Katabolism of War*. University of Stellenbosch. Vol.38. No.2

- Gaidzanwa, R. (1985). *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*. Harare: College Press.
- Greene, R (1982). *The 48 Laws of power*, NY. Penguin Books.
- Gunnar, M. (1975). *An American Dilemma. The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Volume 1. Published by Routledge
- Gwetai, E. (2008). *Petal Thoughts: Yvonne Vera: A Biography*. Mambo Press, 2008
- Hunnicut, G. (2009). *Varieties of patriarchy and violence against women: Resurrecting "patriarchy" as a theoretical tool*. *Violence Against Women*, 15(5), 553–573.
- Hussein A. Bulhan (2015). *Stages of Colonialism in Africa: From Occupation of Land to Occupation of Being*. Franz Fanon University. Hargeisa, Somaliland.
- Ifeyinwa J. O. (1972). *Speaking for the Voiceless: Yvonne Vera's Characters and Social Conditions*. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
- Iragaray, L. (1980). 'When Our Lips Speak Together'. "Signs"; *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 6 (1).
- Jaggar, A. (1983). *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Totowa, N.J Rowman and Allanheld pp. 249-302
- James Currey, and Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, pp. 5-13.
- John, R., French, P.& Raven, B. (1959)..*Powerplay work in Relationships*. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*. Vol. 7, No. 2, 217-244
- Kant, I. (1958). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. Harper Torch books: New York
- Katrak, H. (1987). "Womanhood and Motherhood: Variations on a Theme in Selected Novels of Buchi Emecheta". *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 21.1.159-170
- Katrin, B. (2005). *Female Identity in Contemporary Zimbabwean Fiction*. Bayreuth: Breintinger
- Kaufman, D. (Ed.) (1973). *American Feminist Thought: At Century's End*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Keltner, D. (2008). *The Power Paradox*. Greater Good Magazine, 4(3) winter.
- Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York

- Kipnis, D. (1976). *Metamorphic effects of power*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61(2), 127–135.
- Kostella I S. (2006) *Poetic Language and Subalternity in Yvonne Vera's Butterfly Burning and Stone Virgins*. University of the Witwatersrand, Joburg.
- Kothari, C.R (2004). *Research Methodology: methods and techniques*. New Delhi:New age International Publishers Ltd.
- Kristeva, J. (1 982). *Desire in Language*. Cdumbia University: New York.
- Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution Poetic language*. Trans Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia UP.
- Lakoff, G. (2006). *The Political Mind: Why You Can't Understand 21st-Century American Politics with an 18th-Century Brain*. Viking Adult.
- Lavelle, R. (2003). *Yvonne Vera's Without a Name: Reclaiming That Which Has Been Taken*.
- Liddle, A. (1989). 'Feminist Contributions to an Understanding of Violence Against Women: Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back', *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 26(5): 759-775.
- Lindfors, B. (1979). *Politics, Culture and Literary Forum in Black Africa*. Colby Library Quarterly, volume 15, no 4, pp 240 -251.
- Machiavelli, N. (1532). *The Prince*, Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (eds.), (*Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mackinnon, C. (2006). *Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory*. The University of Chicago Press Vol. 7, No. 3, Feminist Theory, pp. 515-544
- Malhotra, A and Mather, M. (1997). "Do Schooling and Work Empower Women in Developing Countries? Gender and Domestic Decisions in Sri Lanka." *Sociological Forum* 12(4):599-630.
- Marechera, D. (1978). *The House of Hunger*. London: Heinemann.
- Mark, K.. (1983). "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman". *Displacement: Derrida and After*. Bloomington: Indiana UP. pp. 169-195.
- Mccall, D. K., Simon de Beauvoir. *The second sex, and Jean Paul Sartre*. *Signs Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5(2), 1979 — 1980, pp. 209 — 223.
- Midika, T. (2016). *Trauma in selected East Africa Fiction and life writing on Civil war*. Unpublished.
- Millet, K. (1970). *Sexual Politics*. New York: Garden city.

- Mitchell, J. (1974). *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. Vintage Books: New York.
- Moi, T. (1988) *Feminist literary criticism: in modern literary Theory. A comparative introduction*. 2nd Ed. Ann Jafferson Lanham, MD: Barnes Imports, 19-87.
- Muponde and Taruvinga (2007) History, Gender and the problem of presentation in the Novels of Yvonne Vera Muponde and Taruvinga 155-178
- Muponde, R. *The sight of the Dead Body: Dystopia and resistance in the versa W.A. Muponde and Taruvinga* 117 -126.
- Murray, J. (1992). *Remembering the Short Stories of Yvonne Vera: A Postcolonial and Feminist reading of Why Don't you Carve Other Animals?* University of South Africa. Pretoria. pp.136-150.
- Murray, J. (2011). *Africa Has Erred in its Memory: Exploring Continuities and Discontinuities in Texts by Petina Gappah and Yvonne Vera*. Unisa. University of the Witwatersrand. pp154-170.
- Narayan, A. (2014) *Dislocating cultures; Identities, traditions and third world feminism*. London U.K. Routledge. New York.
- O'Brien, M. (1981). *The Politics of Reproduction*. Routledge & Kegan Paul: Boston.
- Obi, N. (2012). *The Nation and Subaltern in Yvonne Vera's Butterfly Burning*.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (1987). *The Female Writer in Eldred Johns* Trenton, N.J.: Africa World P.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (1994). *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World P.
- Opondo, R. (2010). "Power in Psychic Landscape", Kenya: unpublished.
- Orwell, G. (1946). *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*. New York. The new American Library.
- Palmer, E. (1983). "The Feminine Point of View in Buchi Emecheta's. *The Joys of Motherhood*. "Africa Literature Today 13. Ed. Eldred Durosimi Jones. New York: Holmes and Meier.
- Palmer, E. (ed.) (1972). *An Introduction to the African Novel*, London, Heinemann.
- Palmer, F. (1999). *Women's studies encyclopedia*. Greenwood publishing Group: United States of America.
- Palmer, F. (2009). *Beyond freedom and constraint: Alternative intimacies in the novels of Yvonne Vera, Calixthe Beyala, and Amma Darko*. New York: Holmes and Meier
- Paul Z. (2007). *Colonial Fictions; Memory and History in Yvonne Vera's Imagination*. *Research in African Literatures* vol 38 no 2 p 9-21.

- Pierre, B. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Columbia University Press.
- Qin, D. (2004). *Toward a Critical Feminist Perspective Culture and Self*. *Feminism & Psychology*. 14(2), 297-312.
- Rachel, M. Calogero & John, T. Jost (2010). *Self-Subjugation Among Women: Exposure to Sexist Ideology, Self-Objectification, and the Protective Function of the Need to Avoid Closure*. University of Kent Virginia Western College & New York University- etal 2011, Vol.100, No.2.211-228.
- Rich, A. *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5(4), summer 1980, pp 631 - 690
- Robert, M. and Ranka, P. (1958). *New Approaches to Literature and Culture Ed. Harare: Weaver*.
- Russell, B. (1986). *Power: A New Social Analysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Sembeme O. (1962) *God's Bits of wood*. Trans. Francis price, Heinemann London
- Shafer, M. and Frye, M. (2000). *"Rape and respect" Feminism and Philosophy* Littlefield, Adams & Co.
- Shakespeare, W. (1996). *Hamlet in T. J Spencer, The New Penguin Shakespeare*. England: Penguin Books London.
- Shaw, C. *Turning Her Back on the Moon: Virginity, and Mothering in the works of Yvonne Vera*. Stable [URL:Vol.51,No.2](#) (2004), pp.35-51.
- Showalter, E. (1971). *Women's Liberation and Literature*. Harcourt BraceJovanovich: New York.
- Showalter, E. *"The Female Tradition"*. First chapter: A literature of their own. *British Women Novelists from bronte to lessing 1977*.
- Shulamith, F. (1970). *The dialectic of sex: the case for feminist revolution*. New York: Morrow
- Silima, N. (2013). *Subjugation: Astudy of the women characters in khalid Hosseini's and Arundhati Roy's novels*. New Delhi.India Vol.4(10) pp.456-461
- Sofia Kostela. (2015). *The body is his, Pulse and Motion: Violence and Desire in Yvonne Vera's The Stone Virgins*. Stable URL pp.75-87.
- Spender, D. (1980). *Man Made Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Spivak, G.C. (1976). Translation of an introduction to Derrida's of *Grammatology*. Baltimore: John's Hopkins.
- Spivark G. (1976) *Translation of Introduction to Derrida's Grammatology*. Baltimore John Hopkins

- Steve, T. (2015). *The Fall: The Evidence for a Golden Age, 6,000 Years of Insanity, and the Dawning of a New Era*, John Hunt Publishing.
- Tannen, D. (1994). *Gender and Discourse*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thornton, W. (2015) *Power, Privilege and Patriarchy: The Complexities that Arise for Women Enduring Domestic Violence Around Accessibility to Services in Trinidad and Tobago*. Hamilton. Ontario.
- Tong, R. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*. London: West view press. 1889.
- Tumisang, T. (2010). *Standing on the Outside, Woman's Search for Identity in Yvonne Vera's Why don't you Carve other Animals*.
- Uwakweh, A. P. (1995). *Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberation Quality of Voicing in Tisitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*". Research in African Literatures 26:1: 75-84.
- Vera, Y. (1993). *Nehanda*. Harare. Baobab
- Vera, Y. (1994). *Without A Name*. Harare. Baobab.
- Vera, Y. (1996). *Under The Tongue*. Harare Baobab
- Vera, Y. (1998). *Butterfly Burning*. Harare. Baobab.
- Vera, Y. (2 X)2). *The Stone Virgins*. Harare. Baobab
- Vera, Y. (1995). *The Prison of Colonial Space: Narratives of Resistance*; PhD thesis. York University Toronto.
- WaThiong'o, N. (1982). *Homecoming*. London. Heinemann,
- Wener, M. (1975). *The Power of the State and the Dignity of the Academic Calling in Imperial Germany, transl. and ed. by E. Shils*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Welter, B. (1966). *The Cult of True Womanhood; 1820-1860'*
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1975). *4 Vindications of the Rights of Women*. W.W. Norton: New York
- Yvonne, V. (2001). *Crossing into the Space-Time of Memory: Borderline Identities* Ranka Primorac. Nottingham Trent University.
- Yvonne, V., (2005). *Re-writing Discourse of History and identity in Zimbabwe*" Muponde and Primorack 203-216.

Q.E.D