

https://dspace.org/

Power, sexuality and subversion in Lutsango and Siswati traditional wedding songs

Dlamini, Nonhlanhla

2009-07-06T10:11:32Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7069

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

POWER, SEXUALITY AND SUBVERSION IN *LUTSANGO* AND SISWATI TRADITIONAL WEDDING SONGS

BY

NONHLANHLA DLAMINI

A thesis submitted to the faculty of arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2009

ABSTRACT

Popular songs are not only forms of entertainment or frosting on a cake. They are spheres where social and power relations are enforced, challenged and negated. This research studies Swazi women folk songs performed by women in various social and communal gatherings and during Swazi traditional marriage rites such as *umtsimba*. In this research, the songs are studied as a sphere, which women use to depict gender and power relations, negate these relations and create oppositional language that counters patriarchal norms and views on female sexuality. The study achieves this by reading songs that portray gendered power relations within the familial space and looks at the ways in which the women negate these relations. The research also looks at the manner in which Swazi women talk about their sexuality versus male–authored discourses on female sexuality. Lastly, this research probes the relationship between women's folk songs and subversion of patriarchal institutions and the agency behind the composition of songs whose discourses destabilises patriarchal discourses about the position of a woman in the familial space and female sexuality.

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my dad, Alpheus Mfan'mpela Mazibuko 1941-2nd December 2006. Mhlophe, I remember you always with love, tears, smile and laughter. You were, are and will be the wind beneath my wings.

To Nomcebo, thank you mom for propelling me along the thorny path, for your patience and perseverance.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

_____

(Name of candidate)

_____ day of _____, 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the University of Witwatersrand for awarding me with a Post Graduate Merit Award to pursue my M.A. degree.

Dr Ojwang, my M.A. supervisor for moulding the haphazard, guttered and indecipherable thoughts into a complete text. Thank you for your patience and for taking pains in reading the 'instalments' that kept on flooding into your inbox.

Dr L.Z. Dlamini (UNISWA), thank you for the guidance and inspiration. Dr Sihle Zwane (UNISWA), thank you for the encouragement. Dr B.A.B. Sikhondze (UNISWA), I am humbled by the hospitality and affection you showed me from my undergraduate years to the present. Mr. Edward Fire Dlamini, thank you Hlubi for ensuring that my financial needs were met throughout the entire period of my study. Most importantly, I would like to thank you for granting me with a rare opportunity.

I am forever indebted to Nkosinathi "Old John" Nxumalo for giving the wings to soar. Mnguni, of all friends, you are the kind that should be kept in a treasure box and be treasured forever.

La Ndwandwe, the unpaid medical bills, talks and counselling, kept me and the ambers burning in that little house I call home. Ngiyabonga Njomane.

My ‘omnipotent’ friend (Dudu), thank you for being a sound financial manager. Cozi, Mbusi, The [Faith], Sheppy, Dabengwa, my colleagues…Kimathi, Chiliboyi, Themba, Lungelo, Beth and Lindo thank you for being those brothers and sisters that I never had.

Maina *wa* “Touch What you Don’t Have”, *asante sana* for keeping this baby growing from its conception stage to its birth. From you, I have learnt that ‘to every birth its blood’. Jennifer, *ntfombatane* you will always be engraved in my heart and thoughts. Olivier, your contribution throughout the entire period of my study at Wits is not footnoted, but it is in the body of all the texts you printed.

Mom, I cannot find the exact words and expressions with which to express my gratitude. *Emphilweni kuba njalo nje-ke ntfombi yaka Ndlangamandla. Kulesinye sikhatsi indlela iyayenyukele, iphindze ibelukhetse. Silwe siphindze sidvubane. Lokumcoka kunakokonkhe kutsi sigcina sitenyukile letinsaba nemincwa sikanyekanye.*

I will forever be grateful to all the women whose voices and experiences are captured this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title
page…….....i

Abstract……...…….....ii

Dedication……..…….....iii

Declaration…….....iv

Acknowledgements……..…….....v

Table of Contents…….....viii

Chapter one:
Introduction…….....1

Chapter two:
Gendered Power Relations in the *Umtsimba* Songs …….....18

Chapter three:
Sexuality in *Lutsango*'s Songs.....45

Chapter four:
Subversion, Gender and Genre…….....62

Chapter five:
Conclusion……..…….....85

A Glossary of siSwati Terms Used……...…….....89

Bibliography…...…….....91

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research examines gendered power relations, subversion of patriarchal ideologies and female sexuality in siSwati traditional songs composed and sung by Swazi women during siSwati traditional marriage rites and in social gatherings. It focuses on songs sung and performed in various communal gatherings and during *umtsimba*[1] ceremony. The other set of songs analysed in this research are termed as *lutsango*[2]'s songs. Women sing the *lutsango* regiment's songs at social and communal gatherings.

During the *umtsimba*, women perform songs that carry what James Scott (1986: xii) calls 'hidden transcripts' that depict the skewed nature of gendered power relations and destabilises the power relations and its establishment. According to Lara Allen:

> a hidden transcript is a mechanism of critiquing dominant public discourse and voicing dissent behind the backs of the powerful. Many types of hidden transcripts are expressed through clandestine, private modes [jokes or gestures for instance], music is able to slip the subversive messages into more public forum. (Allen 2004: 5)

[1] *Umtsimba* is one of siSwati traditional marriage rites performed by the bride and her bridal party. This ceremony is performed after the groom has paid the *lobolo* cattle. During this ceremony, the bride joins the groom's family as a lawfully wedded wife according to siSwati customary law.

[2] *Lutsango* is a Swazi regiment for married women.

The songs introduce counter patriarchal discourses that the bride can seize and use to negotiate for a better position in the family into which she is married. These songs promise the bride that as a wife and a mother, there are opportunities in marriage life that will allow her to successfully appropriate power for herself. Through her offspring, the bride's power and influence is extended and in future, it enables her to challenge unfair patriarchal customs such as serorate and levirate, should circumstances necessitate their observance. The accompanying dances for these songs are the *tsamba*[3] and *giya,*[4] the nature of which allow for much fluidity and creativity in their public performance. It is through such songs that contemporary issues affecting women are harnessed into performance, which this study reads as subversive of patriarchal power.

Women use *sitsambo*[5] to express truths about their private and public lives. Its fluidity enables women to mock, subvert patriarchy, address issues affecting them, question societal beliefs that work to their detriment and talk about female sexuality in ways that undermine patriarchal discourses about female sexuality. Women also use the *lutsango* regiment's songs to talk about and poke fun at their husbands in a manner that transgresses social codes. They re-inscribe existing *lutsango*'s songs and use them to talk about issues that they deem important. In the re-scripting process, they change only the words of the songs, but retain the tune and dance moves.

[3] Manner of dancing performed by married women to display their composing and dancing skills.

[4] Manner of dancing performed by married women to showcase their dancing skills.

[5] *Sitsambo* is a song genre, which women chant. It involves a great deal of improvisation, composition skills and impromptu performance. The word *sitsambo* is derived from the manner of dance *kutsamba*.

In these songs, the study focuses on the subversion and agency behind the re-scripting of already-existing songs. To what extent do these songs subvert patriarchal norms? Do women re-script the songs in favour of prevailing popular discourse(s)? In the *umtsimba* songs, the research looks at the manner in which the women use the songs to paint a portrait of existing power relations and how they negate the power relations and negotiate for a better position within the familial space. In its study or the power relations, the study looks at the women's view of the marriage institution and the husband or father figure within the familial space. Lastly, the study examines the manner in which Swazi women view female sexuality. How do they talk about their bodies and sexuality in their own signifying terms? What are their views on female sexuality? Do they view it as a site of oppression or anatomical difference that can liberate, excite and empower them? Do they connive with patriarchal discourses that label the female sex as inert?

A brief background on the importance of women's songs and its ability to articulate social relations within societies sheds some light into reading of these songs as spaces within which women contest their subordination and negative scripting of female sexuality in hegemonic discourses. Swazi women's folk songs show the way women imagine themselves in relation to one another and societal hierarchical social set-up. Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner (1995: 1) underscore the importance of the songs when they say, "oral literature plays a dynamic discourse about society and about the relationships between individuals, groups and classes in society". Gunner and Furniss (ibid) add that oral literature is "a domain where in a variety of social

roles, individuals articulate commentary upon power relations in a society and indeed create knowledge about society". They further say:

> oral literature is not just a folksy domestic entertainment, but it is an aural literary genre in which its producers are not just commentators but are often involved in relations of power themselves, in terms of subverting or supporting those in power. The forms with which they work are themselves invested with power; that is to say, the words, the texts, have the ability to provoke, to move, to direct, to prevent, to overturn and to recast social reality. (Furniss and Gunner 1995: 3)

The women's songs are tools that women use to depict, critique and subvert power relations in the Swazi society. They are forms that are endowed with power. In their endowment with power, the songs are a 'double-edged' sword layered with ambiguities. At one level, the *umtsimba* and *lutsango*'s songs act as patriarchal police by endorsing and enforcing patriarchal norms. At another level, the songs subvert and question the norms they support. The research concerns itself with the manners in which the songs achieve this.

The *umtsimba* ceremony is performed in stages and lasts for two days. The first stage involves the dancing of the bridal party and the second stage involves the *kumekeza* [6]

[6] Traditional marriage rite performed after the *umtsimba* on the bride by the bridal party. The bride is woken up in the morning, put in the cattle byre to wail until morning. This ceremony is companied by a set of songs that paint a gloomy picture of married life, warn the bride about the hardships of married life and also tell the in-laws to handle the bride with care.

and the *umhlambiso*[7] ceremonies. Through songs performed in these ceremonies, the women depict gendered power relations, endorse these relations, question, critique and subvert those that put women at the periphery of power and negate male stream discourses which inscribe female sexuality in ways that subordinate women. In their various social gatherings, women sing about female sexuality and sexual pleasure in ways that contravene Swazi social codes. This is made possible by the fact that the *tsamba* chants involve a great deal of composing skills. They are more like personal memoirs where the women employ humour, irony, sarcasm, heavy language and a whole range of metaphors to talk about female sexuality as a space of pleasure, play, power and identity negotiation.

In the reading of the selected body of songs, and how they articulate power relations and body politics, the research foregrounds itself on the theories of popular culture and feminisms. Situating Swazi oral literature within these theories does not only bring out the dynamism of oral literature and popular cultural productions, it also brings out the different reading of the songs, which incorporates the emerging ways of performing masculinities and femininities. These emerging ways of performing masculinities, helps bring to the forefront the complexities of female sexuality and heteropatriarchal construction of masculinity into theoretical gaze. In particular, the songs are read as a canvass on which gendered power relations are mapped out. The songs are reassessed, as a women's space for speaking and contesting their marginalization and for expressing their sexuality as a personal experience and space of pleasure. By interweaving the selected body of songs with popular culture, body

[7] A Ceremony performed after *kumekeza*, where the bride gives gifts to her in-laws. The value of gifts varies with the economic standing of the bride.

politics, and quotidian experiences, this research fills a gap left by numerous scholars who undertook an analysis of Swazi women's folk songs.

In unpacking the gendered power relations, subversion and female sexuality articulated in these songs, the study uses different ideas and theories from African feminism [womanist], corporeal feminism, concepts from popular culture and ideas on the importance of the song. The study also foregrounds itself on the importance of the song in the African setting to underscore the importance of women's songs in articulating gender politics. Contending scholarly views on the importance of women's songs help bring out the importance of this medium in articulating gender politics. Sarah T. Dupont-Mkhonza (2003: 54) argues that the oral medium is not good for articulating women's concerns because it is an uncontested space. She views the song as an uncontested space that makes the women to be classified as subaltern[8]. In other words, she argues that women can sing about their maltreatment and marginalization, but their singing is ineffective because no one listens to them because they use an overlooked genre to convey the message. She says:

> the fact that women's songs are sung in uncontested spaces is part of the problem that renders them ineffective and, as such, vehicles for carrying meanings that are unheard. Women are not heard when they sing and act out what they do not like about marriage. Creating oppositional language in an uncontested space takes away the power of women's songs. (Dupont-Mkhonza 2003: 54)

[8] The term subaltern in this context is not used in the Gramscian sense. It is used to denote occupants of marginal position in the power matrix.

Like Dupont-Mkhonza, Dubose Brunner views the song as non-effective medium in articulating women's concerns because it is a not a political space where people contest for power. She says, "songs are considered as play. They make women not to be heard. Songs occur in an antistructure that is not political" (Brunner 1998: 113). Contrary to Dupont-Mkhonza and Brunner's arguments, the marginal status of the song and the song as a medium is vital in addressing power and gender relations and destabilising male-authored discourses on female sexuality that work to the disadvantage of women. The marginal status of women's songs give women a space that they can use to undermine patriarchal power and (re)write the self into the Swazi cultural script in their own signifying terms and language. The song is pivotal to women in talking about topics that they cannot raise in day-to-day conversations because they are deemed as taboos.

Lara Allen (2004), Maina Mutonya (2006) and Frank Tenaille (2005) demonstrate that popular songs in Africa have become a major site for thinking through politics. Allen (2004: 1) asserts, "in many ways, in and on different registers, people are engaging their political circumstances through music". Mutonya (2006: 36) adds, "musicians contextualize their work of art in everyday life by appropriating or using their local repertoire, as a representative of their societies". Mutonya further notes that, "it is in such circumstances that music becomes a symbolic representation of day to day struggles". Oliver Mtukudzi highlights the importance of the song and its relationship with politics when he says, "in our culture, we do not sing a song unless there is something to be said" (quoted in Silindiwe Sibanda 2004: 18).

Frank Tenaille (2005:5) emphasizes the importance of song in Africa in *Music is the Weapon of the Future* when he juxtaposes the song and the newspaper. He notes, "the newspaper has no use to the old woman unless she uses it to wrap her donuts. But the song is very important because it goes everywhere, from a house to the streets; moreover, the streets easily understand it". Mutonya, Allen and Tenaille underscore the value of the song in the African setting and its ability to articulate fears, disappointments, opinions, commentary on social ills, imbalance of wealth and gender relations in African societies.

According to Allen (2004: 1):

> music is very important in Africa because it provides a platform where Africans are able to voice their concerns, worries, fears, losses and aspirations. To a certain extent, music functions in a politically effective manner because it is expected to do so, by both rulers and subjects. African musicians are continually expected to use their privileged access to a platform to engage in socio-political issues –even to reveal wrong doing if necessary. They are the continent's investigative journalists, talk-show hosts, and editorial writers. Again, the possibilities of the private/public or communal/individual intersection that music offers constitutes a particular source of strength. (Allen 2004: 2-6)

Landeg White and Leroy Vail (1991)'s study of the *paiva* song undercut Brunner and Dupont-Mkhonza's contention concerning the use and the importance of song in the African setting. Vail, Gluckman and Kuper also note that the song is a very powerful weapon for reviewing those in power without fear because it possesses a 'poetic license' (White and Vail 1991: 45). White and Vail (1991:41) argue that this license stems from the African ideology that 'criticism expressed in song is licensed criticism'. They explicate that "it is not the performer who is licensed; it is the performance- whether the poet is addressing the chief or protesting to an overseer or complaining while possessed by a spirit or mocking a husband in a pounding song" (Vail and White 1991:57). By juxtaposing the two contending views on the song in Africa, in particular, the Swazi setting, this study demonstrates that the song is a contested, effective and a political space, which women can use to articulate their views. In addition, this research report seeks to find out how women appropriate the medium of song to address gender politics. In the reading of power relations, subversion and sexuality expressed in these songs, this research report looks closely at the 'hidden transcripts 'carried by these songs. What are the hidden transcripts carried by the folk songs? How do they help in subverting and questioning the power relations in the Swazi society? How do they undercut male-authored discourses about female sexuality?

Songs analysed in this study are situated within popular culture studies in African literature. Situating the songs within popular culture helps avoid what Chandra Mohanty (2000: 69) terms as "the Third World difference" where African women are treated as a group brought together by the commonality of their oppression and powerlessness in their societies. Mohanty (2000:71) argues that the dichotomies such

as power/powerless freezes African women into “objects-who-defend-themselves” such that by the end of the day every society read women as powerless and men as powerful. This removes agency from African women and positions them as objects rather than subjects who rewrite their own histories.

Karin Barber (1997) and Stephanie Newell (2006) demonstrate that popular cultural productions are works of art produced by different individuals within particular societies according to what they want to express at a particular point and time. Popular cultural productions do not diffuse from the top to the lower echelons of society, they are produced within different hamlets to express or comment on certain dominant discourse(s).

The songs under study are not part of what Barber (1997) calls ‘high culture,’ that is, cultural productions produced by those in high stratum of society and regarded as the standard forms. Royal rhetoric and state promotion of culture may be prominent in Swaziland; however, Swazi women do not use folk songs because of the royal hype and presence, they use the medium of song because it is a medium inherited from their fore mothers and they in turn pass it from one generation to the next through the word of mouth and in dance performances. Had there been any available forms, they would have used those forms. Like other forms of art that belong to the popular genre, the songs are composed and performed by different groups of Swazi women from different localities to talk about various forms of unfair practices that are phallocentric [exalt and favour the male sex over the female sex.] in nature.

According to Barber (1997: 3), “the concept popular is a very ambiguous concept because it comes inscribed to us with the history of political and cultural struggles”. She adds, “the popular designates that which truly serves the interests of the people by opening their eyes to the historical conditions of their existence”. Jane Bryce (1997: 118) points out that the term popular refers to a low status. The term popular has different meanings depending on the contexts of use. For the purpose of this research, the term popular is used at three levels. It denotes mass consumption, low or marginal status and cultural works which are a sphere “in which people struggle over reality and their space in it, spheres in which people are continually working with and within already existing relations of power, to make sense and improve their lives” (John Connell and Chris Gibson 2003: 5).

The manner in which Swazi women contest their subordination within the Swazi society allows one to use African womanist feminist theories in the analysis of the songs. These are theories articulated by Gwendolyn Mikeli (1997), Steady Filomina (quoted in Davies Boyce and Anne Graves 1997), Obioma Nnaemeka (1998), Nfah-Abbenyi Makuchi (1997) and Alice Walker (quoted in Clenora Hudson-Weems 1998). In looking at the manner in which Swazi women subvert patriarchy, this research pays close attention to the language that the women employ composition of the songs. Does it blows apart patriarchal cultures or negotiates? How is it subversive of patriarchal norms?

According to Connell and Gibson (2003: 5), “popular music constitutes the social context in which fans emerge with distinct cultural attachment to a sound and artist, and the human spaces created for the enjoyment of music”. If Connell and Gibson

posit that the popular constitutes the context and the spaces in which fans create for the enjoyment of the songs, what then are the spaces that women have created for the enjoyment of these songs? What is the importance of these spaces in the composition and performances of these songs? This study concerns itself with answering these questions as it reads the subversive messages slipped into the messages of the songs.

The different spaces of performance and spaces that fans create for the enjoyment of popular songs are very important because they show that as the song migrates from one space to the other the lyrics change. In his discussion of the carnivalesque festivals, Mikhail Bakhtin (1968) demonstrates that the context of performance influences a literary rendition. This research examines how the spaces of performance influence or 'corrupt' the lyrics of the songs.

In its treatment of female sexuality expressed in the songs, the study employs Elizabeth Grosz (1994: 19)'s views on the female body and female sexuality. Grosz (1994) views the body as a medium where power relations are played out. She also views the body as an inscriptive surface where male stream of cultural history and writing on the subject have inscribed on it discourses that foster the discrimination of women using their bodies and certain cultural practices that render the female body subordinate and inferior to the male body. When reading female sexuality expressed in the songs, I juxtapose male stream views on female sexuality versus female views on the same subject and examine the discourse(s) and cultural practices that men use to write the female body as subordinate.

Sexuality involves a whole range of concepts and ideas. Louise Mina (1991: 58) argues, “sexuality is a very indefinable subject which moves from poetry to biology right under our eyes”. Mina adds that what you do when you are in bed with whosoever defines your sexuality. In other words, the sexual objects that one uses for sexual fulfilment also denote one’s sexuality. In this research, I explore sexuality as a space of pleasure and sexual orientation to incorporate emerging feminist studies on sexuality, which were not put into theoretical gaze by heteropatriarchal feminists because they argued, “African feminism is distinctly heterosexual, prenatal, and concerned with mainly issues of bread, butter, culture and power issues” (Gwendolyn Mikeli 1997: 4).

In its reading of the subversive discourse(s) slipped in these songs, the research probes the relationship between popular cultural production, the marginal status of the song and its subversive power. The relegation of women’s songs to a marginal status gives the song a subversive thrust. Bryce (1997: 118-124) argues that the relegation of women’s writing to the popular genre (popular in this instance is used to refer to low status) is a blessing in disguise because it gives women a “certain space in which to operate” (Karin Barber 1997: 5). Bryce (1997: 121) demonstrates that women use the popular form to upset male-authored ideologies and discourses on gender. Furniss and Gunner (1995: 5) note that “Zulu women use the song to constantly (re)define the terms by which they are signified within broader social discourses”. They note that the marginalized genre has enabled Zulu women to seize and shift the discourse on gender to produce their own signifying terms. Gunner (ibid: 5) adds, “gender, power and genre discourse is an on going dialectic layered with positives and negatives”. She further notes that “women’s oral poetry is rarely

performed publicly in large arenas as part of public occasion" (Gunner 1995: 192). Gunner (ibid) observes that this seclusion gives oral literature the muscle to subvert power relations. This study scrutinises how this marginal status of the women's song gives women a tool, which they can use to challenge patriarchy and redefine the manner in which they have been portrayed in patriarchal discourses.

This research studies the songs as a text within a specific context. Text in this context refers to the poetry of the songs. The treatment of the poetry of the songs as text stems from Agawu (2001)'s notion that a drum in the African context is also a text that communicates certain message(s) to its audience. This also stems from my knowledge of music instruments as texts that communicate meaning(s) to audiences or listeners. For instance, the ringing of cowbells, the sounds of a halting train and the hissing of a steam train engine are communicative texts in Hugh Masekela's song "The Coal Train".

The reading of the poetry of the songs as texts resonates with Hanks (1989) and Agawu (2000)'s definition of a text and their view of the African song. According to Hanks, "text can be taken to designate any configuration of signs that is coherently interpretable by some community of users" (cited in Mutonya 2006: 21). Hanks further notes that, "a narrative, a poem…a piece of music displaying specific features of format; a beginning, middle, ending; compositional units such as episodes, scenes, sections, turns and stanzas; and genre categories, depending on the case at hand can be studied as a text" (ibid). Speaking of music, particularly in the African setting, Agawu (2001: 8) says, "the varieties of African music known to us today may be designated as text." Agawu adds that African music is a text within a specific context

and it is externally motivated. For its complete analysis, it must be interpreted within its context. He says:

> traditional African music is not normally described as contemplative arts. It is thought rather to be functional. Functional music drawn from ritual, work or play is externally motivated. Thus funeral dirges sung by mourners, boat rowing songs sung by fishermen, lullabies performed by mothers, and songs of insult traded by feuding clans: these utilitarian music are said to be incompletely understood when ever analysis ignore the social or 'extra musical' context. (Agawu 2000: 8)

This research reads the songs within their various contexts of performance. The reading the selected body of songs within their contexts of performance helps bring out a complete analysis of the songs and the external forces motivating its composition. It further helps in bringing out the gender and power relations and the discourses on female sexuality that bolster hegemonic male stream discourses which write female sexuality as static. The power relations and discourse on female sexuality can be interpreted from these songs "because not all art forms take place in a vacuum, they are created within specific national contexts, which they speak to, and potentially shape" Johannes Fabian (1997: 21). Since this study concerns itself with the analysis of the poetry of the songs and the external forces that motivate the composition of such the songs, I tap from a reservoir of knowledge of the siSwati culture that the respondents of my study possess in my analysis of these songs.

A video cassette that I recorded at a Swazi traditional wedding ceremony is used as a primary text in this study. In addition, informal interviews were conducted with the composers and consumers of the songs to get an insight on the meaning of the 'hidden transcripts' employed in the composition of these songs. The other songs analysed in this study are songs recorded in various communal and social gatherings that women participated in, in the local area. The power relations and subversion carried by these songs are teased out through informal interviews that were carried out in the locality with the women who compose and sing these songs.

The songs under study are a cultural production of certain groups of Swazi women and are sung in siSwati. The songs are translated from siSwati to English. This process poses a significant problem for this study because siSwati is a problematic language, which does not follow the English language's syntactical rules. In addition, during the translation process most of the siSwati words lose their intended meaning. Sometimes they come out structurally wrong in the English language and nonsensical. Because of this problem, some siSwati words are used as they are. Their meanings are either explained or footnoted.

The first chapter is an introductory chapter where tools used for the analysis of the songs are laid down. The second chapter examines the gendered power relations, as they exist in the Swazi society by studying songs sung and performed at the *umtsimba* ceremony and probe how they express gendered power relations. The thought of reading the songs as texts that express gendered power relations stems from the notion that a song is a social text, which can be studied to show how power relations are ordered and played out in a particular society.

Chapter three reads female sexuality in the *sitsambo* and *lutsango*'s songs. In this chapter, sexuality and the female body are treated as a space of sexual pleasure, play and power negotiation. This chapter examines the manner in which the women use the song to undermine heteropatriarchal discourses about female sexuality. It also looks into the manner in which women have been written about in the Swazi cultural script and juxtaposes these discourse(s) with the ways in which the women (re)inscribe their sexuality into the Swazi cultural script. The fourth chapter examines the relationship between gender, genre and subversion of patriarchy. The chapter looks at what gives women's folk song the subversive thrust. It also investigates women's agency behind the composition of these songs. The conclusion wraps up, highlights all the important issues raised, and suggests new areas for scholarly research.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDERED POWER RELATIONS IN THE *UMTSIMBA* SONGS

> Music functions as a form of entertainment and aesthetic satisfaction, a sphere of communication and symbolic representation, and both a means of validating social institutions and ritual practices, and a challenge to them. Music may comment upon and reinforce, invert, negate or diffuse social relations of power. (Connell and Gibson 2003: 43)

This chapter examines how Swazi women use the *umtsimba* songs to reinforce, comment, give a picture of, negate and question gendered power relations in their societies. The chapter reads the power relations through the analysis of the *giya*, *tsamba* and *mekeza* songs. The songs are read and analysed within their contexts of performance and within the context of Swazi customary law in order to scrutinize the gendered and power relations. The reading the songs within the context of Swazi customary law helps in looking at the songs as societal texts signifying how gender and power relations are arranged in the familial space. Reading the songs as social texts concurs with Bruner's idea of society as a text. Brunner (1998: 208) argues,

"many extracts from society are symbols of what society believes". The songs are read as a 'societal mirror', showing power relations between the two sexes.

The songs discussed in this chapter include *Nansi Indvodza Ingishaya bo*, *Nababe Ungilahla Emaweni, Yesibali Mbuyisele Ekhaya*, *Ngililiseni Sive Sekhakhami* and *Mntfwanamake Sitokulahla*. The songs under study were recorded at the *umtsimba* ceremony uniting LaNdwandwe[9] and Mr. Mhlongo[10]. Songs sung during the *umtsimba* are songs that serve a number of purposes. They warn the bride about the hardships of married life, pains of wifehood and motherhood and inform the bride on the manner in which she must conduct herself as a married woman. While advising the bride regarding the manner in which she should behave in her married life, the songs also preach respect, obedience and docility to the bride.

In other words, the songs reify the existing power relations in the society and at the same time challenge and critique, the existing power relations and societal beliefs that perpetuate the marginalization and maltreatment of a woman. The songs reify the status quo in diverse ways. In the performance of the song, *Mntfwanamake Sitokulahla*, women equate marriage to death. They perceive marriage as an institution layered with many negatives and positives, which feed into patriarchy and at the same time, empower them. Nevertheless, the women celebrate matrimony. To the new bride they say, "we are here to throw you away, you must do as they say and never question anything because you are in a foreign place". This proposition reifies the existing gendered and power relations. It is through such songs that I examine the power relations and societal beliefs concerning the (im)balance of power. I also

[9] The bride.
[10] The groom.

examine how women destabilise and negotiate for a better position within the power matrix.

The following is a song that depicts power relations between a husband and a wife in the familial space. It also shows the manner in which these power relations are played out. The song is titled *Nansi Indvodza Ingishaya bo*, [Here is a Husband Beating me up].

LEADER: *Nansi indvodz' ingishaya bo!*

CHORUS: *Mushaye Ndvodza!*

LEADER: *Nansi indvodz' ingishaya bo!*

CHORUS: *Mushaye ndvodza!*

LEADER: *Ive emagama ekutjelwa bo!*

CHORUS: *Mushaye ndvodza!*

LEADER: *Ive emagama emcamelo bo!*

CHORUS: *Mushaye ndvodza!*

LEADER: *Itsi! Itsi! Itsi!*

CHORUS: *Mushaye ndvodza!*

LEADER: Here is my husband beating me up to pulp oh!

CHORUS: Beat her harder husband!

LEADER: Here is my husband beating me up oh!

CHORUS: Beat her harder husband!

LEADER: He has heard rumours oh!

CHORUS: Beat her harder husband!

LEADER: He has heard matters of the pillow!

CHORUS: Beat her harder husband!

LEADER: He beats me like this, like this, like this!

CHORUS: Beat her harder husband!

The above song is a women's chant song known as *sitsambo*. The *sitsambo* is not only restricted to the *umtsimba* ceremony. It can also be performed in various social and communal gatherings. LaDlamini[11] performed the songs *Nansi Indvodza Ingishaya bo* [Here is a Husband Beating me up] during LaNdwandwe's *umtsimba*. The song depicts the ways in which power relations are arranged and played out. It also shows societal beliefs concerning the power relations and critiques these in a very bitter, sarcastic tone and ironic manner.

The manner in which LaDlamini sings this song is very important in the analysis of this song. Throughout the song LaDlamini chanted in a high pitch voice. The voice modulation is represented by an exclamation mark in the written form of the song. This form of punctuation is very significant in this song in a sense that it shows that this woman is not merely singing, but shouting out for help. In siSwati, this act of shouting at the top of one's voice for help is known as *kuhlaba inyandzaleyo*. One does this act when he or she has encountered a problem and is calling out to the society to come and help deal with it. For instance, one shouts for help when she has seen a snake or been attacked by any wild animal and so on. In this song, LaDlamini is crying out for help because the man is beating her. In the first line of the song, the leader uses the phrase *ingishaya* meaning the husband performs the act of beating on

[11] LaDlamini is one of the respondents and members of LaNdwandwe's bridal party.

her. In this song, this woman is telling us of herself. In the telling of the self, she also narrates how the power relations are played out between a husband and a wife. The husband oppresses and subordinates this woman through the beatings that he dishes to her.

She also demonstrates the manner in which the husband beats her. She states that he does it 'like this, like this'. Even though she uses 'I', the experience of domestic violence that she sings about is not an experience known and experienced by her alone. This experience is familiar to some women.

When asked if she suffers from the above form of abuse, LaDlamini did not clearly respond in a positive manner, though she inferred that she does receive different forms of abuse from her husband. She quickly explained that her husband does not necessarily beat her with a rod, but he performs the beatings in different ways, and all amount to beatings that need to be talked about and addressed. Her statement made me to reflect a bit on types of abuse that the women in this gathering are suffering from. Are they able to come in the open and talk about these forms of abuse? Asked if her husband had once laid his hand on her, the response was positive but she stated that it was not performed on a daily basis and she showed some ambivalence towards domestic violence. Some part of her believes that the violence visited upon her is just because she provokes the husband.

I also discussed the meaning of this song with LaSimelane[12] who was part of LaNdandwe's bridal party and a respondent. Asked if she suffers from spousal abuse,

[12] LaSimelane is a member of the *lutsango* regiment.

she pointed out that she used to, when she was married. She sings and dances to this song because it resonates with some personal truths and experiences. Both LaDlamini and LaSimelane agreed that the song depicts and critiques societal views on the issue of domestic violence. It shows that the power relations are negatively skewed on the part of the wife since she is an object of the husband's acts of violence. Talking about the manner in which the song challenges the power relations in the society, the women drew my attention to the purpose of the back up chorus in the song. LaDlamini explained that the chorus represents two contrasting views on the issue of domestic violence. At one level, the chorus represents the patriarchal views on the issue of wife battery. When LaDlamini cries out and says, "here is a husband beating me," like the society, which overlooks wife battery, the chorus says, "beat her up!" LaSimelane pointed out that the act of beating emanates from the Swazi belief that a wife is a child in the familial space. This belief depicts the marginal position occupied by the wife in the family. This societal view on wife battery is a highly contested issue among the Swazi.

On the one hand, some argue that a husband has no right to beat his wife. On the other hand, another party claims that a husband has a right to beat his wife to a certain extent. "Traditionally, he has all the right to beat his wife or punish her in any way he sees fit" (Gloria Mamba 2008: 63). Hilda Kuper says, "he is entitled to beat her, albeit not to excess-he must not 'break the skin" (cited in Thandabantu Nhlapho 1992: 84). Nhlapho (1992: 81) says, "Kuper's statement must have been right at some point in time. Whether it is still an accurate reflection of contemporary law is in doubt". He agrees that "some men do in fact beat their wives". The only bone of

contention is over the "right" to beating a wife. Nhlapho (1992: 84) clarifies this when he says:

> we must distinguish between the view of lay people and those of court adjudicators. Ordinary Swazi do appear to believe that there exists a right to beat a wife. The Swazi court of appeal at Lozitha rejected this notion, insisting that assault upon a wife is an offence, though of course in the circumstances of each case there may be *mitigating* factors showing that the husband was intensely provoked or otherwise acted on the heat of the moment. Whether he is fined or not and how much will thus depend on *a balancing of his act against the woman's wrong doing*: but the act itself is still characterised as wrongful. (Emphasis mine)

Even though Nhlapho skates over this issue, it is evident that wife beating is allowed if the man does it to a limited extent as Kuper says. It is also allowed if the woman is found guilty of intensely provoking her husband. The husband can also get away with it if he can balance his act of beating against his wife's wrong doing. The three scholars quoted above are all saying one thing using different words. In a way they capture what the society believes in as far as wife beating is concerned. In their chorus, the women also capture this view.

The chorus reviews this view in a bitter, ironic and sarcastic manner. The leader raises the alarm and the chorus reiterates the societal view with undertones, which question this view. They sarcastically say, 'beat her harder'. They hurl the societal view into the air for every member of the society to examine it with a very sharp and critical eye. The irony of this statement resides in the fact the chorus do not mean what they say. Their intended statement is the direct opposite of their utterance. LaSimelane validated this statement by asking; how can a wife cry and shout out for help when she enjoys what is happening? She explained that the act of *kuhlaba inyandzaleyo* is not merely done for nothing. The act of critiquing violence is highlighted by the excuses that the man gives for beating the wife. The woman says, 'he heard rumours, matters of the pillow'. The women are highlighting the petty reasons that women are beaten for. In a way, they ask the question; how can you beat her over untrue stories?

When the chorus says "beat her harder husband!" it does this through bewilderment. The chorus is appalled by the fact that a husband can really beat a wife over petty issues he heard from other people. The chorus ironically questions the belief that a mature person can be treated like a child. The statement "beat her harder husband" does not only depict power relations but it also questions societal view on the issue and asks the questions: 'how could this happen? How could you beat another adult for petty issues such as rumours which you heard from other wives?'

The chant song is an outcry by the women folk who suffer from this form of abuse. The women use the chant to stage protest to a society that condones such violence on a mature person. In this chant song, the women are beating a drum about an abuse

that the society deems fit to be administered on women. This is an invitation to all the members of the community. The women invite both men and women to a discussion and a debate on the gender relations and heteropatriarchal[13] construction of masculinity and the way it manifest itself. The women are calling on males and females to this debate because womanists "resist the exclusion of men from women issues and invite men as partners in problem solving and social change" (Nnaemeka 1998: 9). This chant is a cry of a Swazi woman. It is not a cry from a lone woman, but it is a cry from the heart of physically abused Swazi women. Vast amount of literature records that domestic violence is escalating not only among the Swazi but also among most African societies where men wield their physical power over women in order to control them. This is also a cry from the heart of a Swazi woman who is weighed down by heteropatriarchal norms.

Speaking of heteropatriarchal normativity and domestic violence, Lisa Ernst (2003: 105) notes that "as long as male behaviour is taken to be the norm, there can be no serious questioning of male traits and behaviour". A norm is by definition a standard of judging; it is not itself subject of judgement. The above *sitsambo* is not only a critique of heteronormalcy, but it also of the heterosexual construction of masculinity. Jorgen Lorentzen (1998: 88) demonstrates that there is a link between the heterosexual construction of masculinity and domestic violence. He suggests that this can be understood if it is looked at from different vantage points or perspectives. He says, "domestic violence has to do with men who have internalised the feeling of

6 Heteropatriarchy is a compound word. The prefix 'hetero' is a Greek word meaning different. Patriarchy is a widely held ideology which structures society on the basis of family units, where fathers have a primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole, acting as representatives via public spheres. Some one who is heteropatriarchal believes in opposite sex attraction and believes that a family led by a husband and a wife is the traditional and natural moral order is the ideal structure for the rearing of children and the cultural health.

supremacy the patriarchal culture gives to men and who put it into practice in concrete actions against those who are nearest to them" (Lorentzen 1998: 88). The women cited above critique the heterosexual construction of masculinity, which is a concept, associated with a man's capacity to exercise power and control. This capacity to exercise power and control leads men into anxieties that make them to be violent in the household in order to show the woman how power relations are arranged. By critiquing domestic violence, these women are delving into the heart of the violence that we witness in public spheres.

Lorentzen (1998: 86) underscores this link between private violence and violence carried out in public spheres. He argues:

> the public violence that we see is largely rooted in the private sphere. Violence carried out in the private sphere is transferred and extended into the public sphere. The violence that we see in the private sphere also permeates the household of the sons who stay with violent parents because sons have a tendency of repeating the patterns set by their fathers. (Lorentzen 1998: 86)

By composing and dancing to this song women like LaDlamini, LaSimelane and those that are part of the chorus look at domestic violence and see it as a problem that needs to be addressed. Like the Swazi women, Lorentzen notes that "it is domestic violence that should claim our attention and it is where efforts to combat violence should be directed" (ibid).

Through the naming of the violence (men's violence against women), the women show a great deal of resistance. They show a great deal of resistance in a sense that they identify the source of the problem and deal with it from its grass root (heteronormativity and its construction of masculinity). The construction of heteronormativity and masculinity amongst the Swazi holds the notion that beating a wife as a husband is an appropriate way of putting her back on line and one of the ways of showing her love as a husband. If a husband beats his wife excessively, she should not talk about it to other people because it is termed as *tibi tendlu* [household's dirty linen]. In this song, the women refuse to eroticize or romanticize violence visited upon them by men. They confront and talk about it.

The song titled *Mntfwanamake Sitokulahla* [Child of my Mother we have Come to Throw you Away] is amongst songs sung at the beginning of the *umtsimba* ceremony. It was sung in the beginning of LaNdwandwe's *umtsimba.*

LEADER: *Mntfwanamake sitokulahla*

CHORUS: *Mtsimba lodl'emabala sibali walahleka*

Utawuhamba mntfwanamake

LEADER: *Asuhambe ntfombi yekuphela*

CHORUS: *Mtsimba lodl'emabala sibali walahleka*

Utawuhamba mntfwanamake

LEADER: *Mntfwanamake sitokusisa*

CHORUS: *Mtsimba lodl'emabala sibali walahleka*

Utawuhamba mntfwanamake

LEADER: *Mntfwanamake mntfwanamake*

CHORUS: *Mtsimba lodl'emabala sibali walahleka*

Utawuhamba mntfwanamake

LEADER: My sister we have come to throw you away

CHORUS: Traditional wedding which eats with its spots brother in-law deserted

You will go child of my mother

LEADER: My sister we have come to throw you away

CHORUS: Traditional wedding which eats with its spots brother in-law deserted

You will go child of my mother

LEADER: Go one and only girl

CHORUS: Traditional wedding which eats with its spots brother in-law deserted you

You will go child of my mother

LEADER: My sister, my sister, child of my mother

CHORUS: Traditional wedding which eats with its spots brother in-law deserted

You will go child of my mother

LEADER: Child of my mother we have come to loan you

CHORUS: Traditional wedding which eats with its spots brother in-law deserted

You will go child of my mother

The bride's maids and her age mates sing this song. Through this song, they spell out the power relations to the bride. They tell her that they have come to throw her away. In this song, the bridal party also demonstrate their outlook of the marriage institution. They view marriage as an act of throwing one away into death. This is evident from the use of the phrase *sitokulahla*; we have come to throw you away. LaGamedze[14] explained that the phrase is taken from the noun *kulahla*; to throw away. The phrase *sitokulahla* connote that the bridal party has come to throw their own sister in an abyss of trouble and suffering. A person is thrown away *etilahlweni*; at the graveyard. The women in this song equate marriage to death. The death metaphor or trope re-occurs in most of the songs that women sing during the marriage ceremonies. This is because it shows the position that is occupied by the bride in the family where she is married. She lives her life under the marriage institution and it is governed by the grammars and syntaxes of the institution. The former maiden dies and a new self who is governed by the principles of a new home and marriage emerges.

The death of the former maiden in her parental home is symbolized by the fact that she carries all her belongings from her home to come and stay with her in-laws permanently. Nelisiwe Mhlongo, a member of the *lutsango* regiment and a respondent, added that the death of the maiden is symbolized by a kist, a box that the bride carries as she goes away from her parental home. Asked what the bride carried back before the advent of the kist, LaGamedze explained that the bride used to carry

[14] A respondent, a member of the *lutsango* and the bridal party.

a box called *maye maye,* a word that translates into an exclamation one uses when in pain in siSwati.

The act of throwing one's sister away is symbolized by the solemn mood which engulfs the performance of this song. This song is sung with millisecond pauses and the words are dragged. The pauses are meant for reflection and contemplation about what is going on. The song and its diction enact an imagery of destitution and helplessness. It is symbolic of marriage life, which is full of difficulties and contradictions for the woman who is getting into it. LaGamedze pointed out that this song is a piece of advice advising the bride about the type of life and the marginal status she is going to assume in this family. It shows that skewed gendered relations between males and females in a society emanate from the marriage institution.

The bride is not only thrown away, she is also 'loaned'. The term 'loaned' is a loose translation of the verb *sisa* formed from the noun *kusisa*[15], which is a form of sustenance system in the rural areas. Explaining this form of sustenance, LaGamedze pointed out that this can be done in two ways. In the first one, a poor person who is in dire need of livestock [cattle] to feed his family, approaches the rich man and asks him to give him part of his stock to look after so that he can benefit from its produce. This does not mean that he owns the stock. The livestock is loaned to him. Whatever happens to it he reports to the owner. Alternatively, a person with livestock and lives in areas where there is drought or poor grazing lands may approach a man who resides in areas with good grazing grounds and asks him to look after his livestock.

[15] Loosely, this term means to loan, but not in the English sense of the word loan.

The man does not become the owner of the stock, but he becomes an eye of the stockowner.

Asked about the meaning of the noun *kusisa* in this context, LaGamedze pointed out that this is a negative term, which should not be employed when one is being married because it denotes that she is a pawned object and reduced to the level of cattle. At another level, she pointed out that it shows that the bride is relegated to the status of a service provider in this family. She ploughs and ensures that she takes the family lineage further through the seeds of her womb. The noun *kusisa* also carried a subversive message in a sense that it tells the bride that the family where she is married to is not a means to an end. If life gets unbearable, she still has a place at her parental home. The husband and the in-laws do not treat the bride as they please because she is at the margins of power and a foreigner in the family.

Throwing her away is not done out of hatred, but out of love. This love is shown by the use of the phrase *ntfombi yekuphela*; the one and only girl child. The 'one and only girl child' is thrown away because the Swazi societal set up is heteropatriarchal. Sisana Mdluli (2007: 88) posits that from the earliest stage of development, the girl child is socialised to fit into heteropatriarchal units. Such that when a girl child is born the father is envied because it is believed that he will get rich from the *lobolo* cattle that his daughter is going to fetch at an adult stage.

Connell and Gibson quoted in the epigraph of this chapter argue that popular songs reinforce and negate social relations of power. How does this song achieve this? From the beginning of this song I have demonstrated that women view marriage as a

site of oppression. However, they celebrate it and challenge some of its unfair practices. The challenge is done through women's shifting identities. Buchi Emecheta and Mariama Ba quoted in Nfah-Abbenyi (1997: 24) demonstrate how a woman subverts patriarchy using her changing identities. They say:

> a woman who is a senior wife has at least three things that stand in her favour, and which she uses with impunity: her position of senior wife; her status as mother; and her status as mother of sons since her sons are the direct heirs of the family's property. (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997: 24)

Through these multiple identities, women are able to move from the margins to the centre of power wherever it may be because it is fluid. Women can only subvert patriarchal power when they are inside it in order to shake its foundations. In this song, the women depict that the marginal position they occupy in the familial space can be negated through undermining patriarchy. They can achieve this through identity-shift. The undermining of patriarchal power is alluded by the use of the phrase *mtsimba lodla emabala*. Elucidating the meaning of this phrase, LaNkhambule[16] narrated that this phrase is layered with various meanings that give the wife a hope that even though today she is at the margins of power, she will move to the centre of power with time. This movement is achieved through being a wife and a mother of sons and daughters.

[16] A respondent and a teacher at Mliba Nazarene Primary School.

This fits aptly with Nfah-Abbenyi's womanist theories. She says womanists, "find empowerment in their families and children. They use their status as mothers to challenge some of the demands that culture places on them" (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997: 24). In this song, the women show that they view child bearing and marriage as empowerment. A woman moves from the margins to the centre of power by being a senior wife and a mother of sons and daughters, and by being a senior wife who will 'eat' the family in case the husband deserts or dies. While in these positions, the wife has the right to stop the practice of customs such as levirate and serorate should the family and custom deem it fit to be carried out. These three things come with the beauty of being a wife and being married through the *umtsimba* custom. LaGamedze pointed out that a wife who 'eats' a family is the one whose *lobolo* is paid to the fullest, she entered the household through the *umtsimba* ceremony and as a maiden. The wife who 'eats' the family is a mother of a son who becomes an heir of the family estate. The son cannot do anything without the approval of his mother.

The women say *mtsimba lodla emabala* because of these three things that a married wife enjoys. This phrase is derived from the siSwati proverb '*ingwe idla ngemabala*' meaning a leopard eats with its own spots. LaGamedze pointed out that there are many wild cats in the forest. They come in different shapes and colours, but the leopard differs from the rest because of its own spots. This statement means that a person or a thing gains favour through its beauty and goodness. Like the leopard, the *umtsimba* is different from all the other forms of marriage because of the advantages it gives to the woman as a daughter in-law, mother and wife. The wife who 'eats' the family does not only benefit from her husband's estate but also enjoys the right of being consulted and informed about major decisions that the family council takes and

she enjoys full membership in such a council. In this song, the women show the marginal status of the woman within the familial space and show how she can fluctuate from the margins to the centre of power.

Towards the end of the *umtsimba* ceremony, the bride displays her dancing skills in the dancing arena. She does this through the performance of what is termed as the *giya* dance. This dance is accompanied by *giya* songs. The bride does not perform this dance alone. Her younger sister who later becomes an *inhlanti*[17]accompanies her. The song titled *Yesibali Mbuyisele Ekhaya* [Brother in-law Bring her back Home] was one of the songs that accompanied LaNdwandwe's *giya* dance. In this song, the bride formed a line with her siblings. The first in the line was her youngest sister, followed by LaNdwandwe and her older brother. Speaking of the older brother's presence, LaMaziya[18] explained that the older brother is the father's eye since he does not attend this ceremony. The older brother is very significant in this occasion because he is the one that the groom consults in when he encounters problems with the bride. When they sing:

LEADER: *Yesibali*

CHORUS: *Hha hha*

LEADER: *Yesibali*

CHORUS: *Mbuyisele ekhaya*

LEADER: *Ungamushayi, ungambulali makakwehlula*

[17] The term *inhlanti* [the who washes away] is derived from the noun *kuhlanta* meaning to cleanse . In most cases, the *inhlanti* is the bride's younger sister. Her sole purpose is to cleanse her sister's shame in the groom's family if she does not bear children. The bride's family gives the groom the *inhlanti* if he has paid the *lobolo* in full.

[18] A respondent and siSwati traditional marriage rites overseer.

CHORUS: *Mbuyisele ekhaya*

LEADER: Brother in-law

CHORUS: yeah yeah

LEADER: Brother in-law

CHORUS: Send her back home

LEADER: Don't beat her; don't kill her; if you can't put up with her

CHORUS: Send her back home

The bride's siblings direct this song to the groom. It is a warning that he should not dare lay his hands on their sister. If he finds out that life with their sister is unbearable he should send her back home. They also tell him that if he feels that their sister is not conducting herself in a manner that pleases him, he must send her back home to her parents. In this song, the siblings show their awareness of the power relations that exist between a wife and a husband. They know that the husband can beat the woman because it is taken to be a norm. Through this song, the women are offering the husband an alternative. The option is to send the bride back to her people instead of beating or killing her. They tell the groom to send her back to home because she is 'loaned'. This puts her at the periphery of power. Occupants of such a position are the ones who suffer from all forms of abuse because of their powerlessness. The act of sending the bride back to her people is very significant to a married woman. According to Lomgcibelo[19], the act of sending the bride home is an invitation to a discussion between the two families. Sending the bride back home is a

[19] A respondent and an overseer during LaNdwandwe's *umtsimba* ceremony.

huge step on the part of the groom. On the bride's part, it is an advantageous step in a sense that she is not convicted by her in-laws before trial.

The above song is more than warning to the groom. The song calls for the patriarchal police [men who are guarding their 'rights' with jealousy and women who make it a point that the skewed gendered and power relations remain the same because they benefit from the status quo] to re-examine the power relations between the wife and husband, look for other avenues of communication, rather than beating or killing a woman. Lomgcibelo adds that women advocate for the bride to be sent back home because of the loopholes they have noted in the customary law. She points out that the customary law permits the husband to beat the wife to a limited degree and at the same time does not permit a man to be a juror on his own because the wife has parents who must be consulted in case of anything that happens to her. These two propositions are in conflict with each other. Women explore this conflict to their advantage.

The women sing, 'send her back home', they challenge the Swazi customary practice. They challenge this practice because they have noted its ambiguity. Sending her back to her people is a sign that the husband wants a divorce or the behaviour of the wife to change in due course. The wife's people do not take this step lightly. They send someone to the groom's family to find out what their daughter has done. If their daughter has decided to come back because of domestic violence, she has the right and the backing of her family to end such marriage. Like the marriage, the whole issue of divorce in the Swazi customary law also hinges on the *lobolo*.

The song titled *Nababe Ungilahla Emaweni* is a song recorded during LaNdwandwe's *umtsimba* ceremony. The bridal party on behalf of the bride sang it. This song points out to the source of the imbalanced gendered relations.

LEADER: *Nababe ungilahl'*

CHORUS: *Emaweni*

LEADER: *Emaweni*

CHORUS: *Emaweni*

LEADER: *iyelele Mama*

CHORUS: *Ukhona longanga Bhuza*

LEADER: *Iyelele Mama x2*

CHORUS: *Emaweni*

LEADER: *Iyelele Mama*

CHORUS: *Emaweni*

LEADER: *Iyelele Mama*

CHORUS: *Ukhona longanga Bhuza*

LEADER: Father is throwing me down the cliffs

CHORUS: Over the cliffs

LEADER: Over the cliffs

CHORUS: Over the cliffs

LEADER: Oh my mother

CHORUS: There is someone who is big as Bhuza

LEADER: Oh my mother x2

CHORUS: Over the cliffs

LEADER: Oh my mother

CHORUS: Over the cliffs

LEADER: Oh my mother

CHORUS: There is someone who is big as Bhuza

Lomgcibelo explained that in the song, *Babe Ungilahla Emaweni* [Father is Throwing me over Dangerous Cliffs], women express their view of the marriage institution. They view marriage as an act of pushing one over very dangerous cliffs.

LaMakama[20] added that women perceive marriage as 'death' to an extent that when death occurs in the household when the *umtsimba* date has been set, the corpse is put aside in favour of the *umtsimba.* Nonetheless, a woman goes into this form of 'death' because she has been socialised to view it as some form of empowerment. In the above song, women liken marriage to the act of falling down over a dangerous cliff. Speaking of this imagery, Lomgcibelo argued that women equate marriage to death because of the manner in which the bride is treated in the familial space. The bride is treated like an outcast and a little girl. She added that sometimes her in-laws do not accept her. Lomgcibelo and a number of women that I interviewed regarding the significance of these songs agreed in one voice that marriage is a site of women subordination and marginalisation. This strand of thought concurs with Keith Ruiters and Tamara Shefer's outlook on marriage. They argue that it is an institution "which

[20] A respondent and overseer of Swazi traditional marriage rites.

is layered with many ambiguities that feed patriarchy and work to the detriment of women" (Ruiters and Shefer 1998: 39).

After the *umtsimba* ceremony, the bridal party rests for the day. On the following day, the party wakes up at dawn and performs *kumekeza* ceremony. The bridal party performs this ceremony on the bride. It sings the *mekeza* songs on behalf of the bride. The song, *Ngililiseni Madvodza Ekhakhami* is a song recorded during LaNdwandwe's *mekeza* ceremony, which is later on followed by *Kuhlambisa*[21].

LEADER: *Ngililiseni sive sekhakhami*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya aye*

LEADER: *Leni lapha ekhaya*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: *Ngililiseni madvodza ekhakhami*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiye aye*

LEADER: *yemntfwanamake*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: *Ngitekukhonta ngitekutsakatsa*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya aye*

LEADER: *Lapha ekhaya*

CHORUS: *Aye*

[21] *Kuhlambisa* is a ceremony where the bride gives gifts to her in-laws. The gifts vary with the financial status of the bride.

LEADER: *Ngitekukhonta ngitodla emacandza*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya aye*

LEADER: *Lapha ekhaya*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: *Ngitekukhonta ngitekucala emanga*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya aye*

LEADER: *Lapha ekhaya*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: *Ngitekukhonta ngitekuphinga*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya aye*

LEADER: *Lapha ekhaya*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: *Ngililiseni sive sekhakhami*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya aye*

CHORUS: *Leni lapha ekhaya*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: *Ngiliseni madvodza ekhakhami*

CHORUS: *Yehha zhiya ye*

LEADER: *Yemntfwanamake*

CHORUS: *Aye*

LEADER: Weep with me people of this family I am married into

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: You who are present in the household

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: Weep with me men of this family that I am married into

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: Child of my mother

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: I have come ask for a place to stay; I have come to bewitch

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: In this home

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: I have come to ask for a place to stay; I have come to eat eggs

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: In this home

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: I have come to ask for a place to stay; I have come to speak lies

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: In this home

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: I have come to ask for a place to stay; I have come to commit adultery

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: In this home

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: Weep with me nation of the family that I am married into

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: Who are in this household

CHORUS: Aye

LEADER: Weep with me men of this family that I am married into

CHORUS: Yeah

LEADER: Child of my mother

CHORUS: Aye

In the above song, the women narrate the manner in which power relations are organized. They also show the kind of treatment a wife receives from her in-laws. She becomes a scapegoat for everything that goes wrong in her new family. She steals, commit adultery, tells lies, and steals eggs from the chicken's nests because she is perceived as an outsider. She is at the margins of power and at the mercy of her in-laws because she is known as *sidzandzane semtini* [a girl from a foreign family] (Motsa-Dladla 1994).

LaMaziya argued that instead of looking at this song as a song, which shows helplessness on the part of the bride it must be looked at as a song, which strengthens

the bride for the long and meandering journey ahead. It tells her of what she is going to experience and encourages the woman to brace her self for this hardship such that when hard times come she takes things lightly. It also tells her that the life she is about to take is full of conflicts that she needs to deal with in her own way as a woman. In all the four songs analysed in this chapter, the women portray the power and gender relations and at the same time show the ways in which a woman can negate these relations. Unlike radical feminists, the womanists do not advocate for the abolishment of the marriage institution, but they address its ambiguities and challenge its practices that subordinate women. They also encourage women to stay in their marriages if they work, but if they do not work out, they quickly remind the woman that you have been 'loaned'.

Having looked at the nature of power relations between the male and female, and the way women negate and critique these relations, the next chapter studies how women (re)inscribe female sexuality into the Swazi cultural script in a language of their own. It looks into how women talk about female sexuality in ways that negate patriarchal discourses about female sexual pleasure.

CHAPTER 3

SEXUALITY IN *LUTSANGO* REGIMENT'S SONGS

"How does one satisfy a woman in bed? *Once a woman conceives*, it shows that she gets *satisfaction*". (Moi Moi Masilela King Mswati III's appointee to parliament. quoted in *Mail and Guardian* on line 1st September 2006; emphasis mine.)

Ngicobeleleni!
Aseningicobeleni bafati!
Ngicobeleleni lenitsandvwa ngako
Ngicobeleleni

Tell me
Tell me women
Tell me the secret behind it [the love potion]
Tell me [*sitsambo* song performed by LaTsabedze[22] of Malindza]

Female sexuality is not a new concept in the African literary scene. The newness of this concept lies in the manner in which it has been inscribed into the African literary scene. In this chapter, I examine the manner in which Swazi women sing or (re)write female sexuality into the Swazi cultural script in ways that destabilise patriarchal ideologies and discourses about female sexuality. This chapter concerns itself with the manner in which Swazi women think of their sexuality. Do they view their femaleness as a limiting factor? How do they sing or talk about their sexual pleasure? Do they think of female sexual pleasure in terms of something that can only be satisfied after conception like Moi Moi Masilela quoted in the epigraph of this chapter? What is their view of promiscuous behaviour? Do they view promiscuity as a female social condition or a degradation of the Swazi society? This chapter addresses these questions and investigates the manner in which women use their songs to speak about their sexuality in ways that destabilise hegemonic and patriarchal discourses about female sexuality. The genre of song discussed in this

[22] A respondent, member of the *lutsango* regiment endowed with composing and dance skills.

chapter falls into the category of *lutsango* songs, which women compose for various purposes and perform in different social and communal gatherings. The songs analysed in this chapter were recorded during a *lilima*[23]activity and drinking sprees.

In its reading of sexuality expressed in the songs, this chapter unpacks the meaning of the term sexuality because words come loaded with meanings they carry from other contexts. The term sexuality involves and refers to a whole nexus of ideas, meanings and concepts including sexual pleasure, expression, powers, orientation and many more. Louise Mina (1991: 5) argues that "sexuality is a notoriously elusive subject of study". Coward says:

> sexuality is the innate attributes of an individual, including sexual desires, roles and identities, which find expression in sexual relationships and sexual activities with others or it can be defined as an individual's preferences for specific forms of sexual expression; an individual's sexual orientation. (Coward 1983: 263)

In other words, who you take to bed and what you do when you get there also defines your sexuality as an individual. Leslie Hall[24] contends that sexuality "is a container or a bundle rather than a ratified thing in itself". Since sexuality is a bundle rather

[23] Lilima is one of the ways used to procure labour for weeding fields. A neighbour who has fields that need to be weeded asks for extra weeding hands from the members of the community. After the completion of the task, she cooks and provides traditional beer for the people who have come to help. After eating, the people dance and sing as a token of appreciation to their host.

[24] http/www.answers.com/topic/sexuality

than a ratified thing in itself, in the bundle I pick up sexuality as a space of play, sexual pleasure, power, and identity negotiation.

The song, *Shende Bengikwebela* which was recorded at the *lilima* activity depicts how LaDlamini (re)engraves female sexuality in people's minds in a manner that undermines male-authored discourses regarding female sexuality. Through this song, she also gives the audience her view on promiscuity within her community. LaDlamini sprang on her feet and sang the song while the crowd cheered and backed her.

LEADER: *Ye shende bengikwebela*

CHORUS: *Dlani uhambe akusiko kwakho*

Dlani uhambe

LEADER: *Lesibumbu bengikwebela mine*

CHORUS: *Dlani uhambe akusiso sakho*

Dlani uhambe

LEADER: *Lelikuku bengikwebela mine*

CHORUS: *Dlani uhambe kakusilo lakho*

Dlani uhambe

LEADER: Secret lover I was stealing

CHORUS: Eat and go it does not belong to you

Eat and go

LEADER: I stole the vagina for you

CHOURS: Eat and go it does not belong to you

Eat and go

LEADER: I stole the cake for you

CHORUS: Eat and go it does not belong to you

Eat and go

The first thing that I picked from this song was its resemblance in rhythm and tune with one song performed and sung by LaNdwandwe's younger sister during the *umtsimba* ceremony. In the *umtsimba* arena the words of the song were as follows:

LEADER: *Yesibali buya utolala lapha*

CHORUS*: Indlu yonkhe isemakamelweni*

Indlu yonkhe

LEADER: *YeMhlongo buya utolala lapha*

CHORUS: *Indlu yonkhe isemakamelweni*

Indlu yonkhe

LEADER: Brother In-law come and sleep here

CHORUS: The whole house is in the bedroom

The whole house

LEADER: Mhlongo come and sleep here

CHORUS: The whole house is in the bedroom

The whole house

The performance of the song titled *Yesibali Buya Utolala Lapha* relies much on gestures made by the performer in front of an audience. When she says, 'brother in-law come and sleep here' she points at her breast. The song *Yesibali Buya Utolala Lapha*, recorded during the *umtsimba* enforces the custom known as *kulamuta*[25]. The re-scripted version of the song undermines the *kulamuta* custom and the patriarchal notion that a wife has no sexual needs. Asked about the significance of this song and the *umtsimba* version of the song, LaDlamini pointed out that the re-scripted version of the song is composed to show that men who marry wives in multiples of two necessitate the practice of promiscuity. She explained that a wife engages in illicit relationships, because with time, she becomes less favourable and neglected by the husband. In some cases, the husband divorces the wife and still claims that she must stay within the family compounds because he paid *lobolo* for her.

La Ndzinisa[26], who was in the midst of this gathering, pointed out that a married wife is forced to submit to anything because of the *lobolo* cattle. According to her, the *lobolo* cattle keep a woman in bondage. She also argued that the payment of bride wealth perpetuates violence against women because the men view them as property acquired through the *lobolo* beasts. She further added that husbands force women to stay within the homestead because of the payment of the *lobolo*. To a certain extent, *lobolo* payment perpetuates feelings of sexual jealousies in men. Men desert or

[25] A Swazi customary practice which permits a man to have a sexual relationship or to marry his wife's younger sister.

[26] A respondent.

divorce their wives but refuse to let them go because they paid *lobolo*. Because of this, the woman engages in illicit relationships. While in this relationship the persona knows that, she belongs to her husband who paid *lobolo*. It is for this reason that she says, “eat and go”. LaNdzinisa pointed out that a woman has sexual needs, when the husband does not satisfy the needs, she is inclined to look for secret lovers who will “eat and go”, because when caught, she charged with adultery.

LaNdzinisa further explained that the neglect is frustrating because a woman becomes a widow as far as sexual pleasure and satisfaction are concerned. As a result, the woman seeks other avenues of sexual fulfilment. LaDlamini bitterly narrated that had she been given a chance to choose between her husband and her secret lover, she would choose the latter. According to her, the space within which she celebrates her femininity with the secret lover is a free space, with no conventions. She argued that it is an open space because no man makes rules for her and if she gets pregnant or anything the husband is responsible, the child still belongs to the man who paid *lobolo* for her. She added that she does not expect the secret lover to stay with her because he knows that whatever it is that is going on between the two of them is not allowed. Asked if this space is liberated or amoral, she argued that it is a liberated space. I view the ‘liberated, free or amoral’ space as a space where women invite society to a debate concerning female sexuality.

I asked LaDlamini if she is not worried about being called all sorts of derogatory names that the society uses to call women whom it deems amoral. She cynically equated those names to the biblical anointing oil, which was poured on Abraham’s head and rolled over his beard. Through this metaphor, LaDlamini highlights that the

female body has been written as unfaithful and unreliable in mainstream discourses. Through this song, LaDlamini shows that the "female body is scripted negatively as immoral" without taking into consideration the reasons behind this immorality (Desiree Lewis 2005: 13). Pumla Gqola (2005: 3) observes that the female body is not just not just an object but it "acts as both a site and language through which positioning is negotiated". In this song, LaDlamini articulates body politics, uses her body and sexual pleasure as a tool with which she negotiates her position in the society and the familial space. She uses the song to talk about her mistreatment because of her sexuality. Through singing this song, she destabilises the societal outlook and discourses on female promiscuity. She demonstrates that promiscuous behaviour is a woman's social condition rather than a degradation of the society. Through the performance of this song, LaDlamini gives the society a new perspective and a set of looking glasses with which to view female sexuality and promiscuity within communities.

LaDlamini's sexual neglect is attached to what Keith Ruiters and Tamara Shefer (1998: 41) term as 'male sex drive'. In their study, Ruiters and Shefer (1998) did interviews where they recorded societal views of female and male sexuality. Some of their respondents pointed out that "men need sex; are focused on sex; are 'ever ready' to have it and it is ultimately a biological urge beyond their control. Women on the contrary are viewed as less sexual". From their responses, the respondents constructed "males as purely sexual beings and women as centred about love and relationship" (Ruiters and Shefer 1998: 41). LaDlamini undermines such hegemonic discourses on female sexuality.

LaMagagula took centre stage after LaDlamini. She performed a *tsamba* song titled *Wangitsintsa la* [You Touched me here]

LEADER: *Wangitsintsa la*

CHORUS: *Ngatfukutsela*

LEADER: *Wangitsintsa la*

CHORUS: *Ngaftukutsela*

LEADER: *Wangitsintsa la*

CHORUS: *Ngamoyitela*

LEADER: *Was'ungitsintsa la*

CHORUS: *Ngahleka ngedvwana*

LEADER: *Was'ungitsintsa la*

CHORUS: *Ngahleka ngedvwana*

LEADER: You touched me here

CHORUS: I got angry

LEADER: You touched me here

CHORUS: I got angry

LEADER: You touched me here

CHORUS: I smiled

LEADER: (And) then you touched me here

CHORUS: I laughed alone

LEADER: (And) then you touched me here

CHORUS: I laughed alone

LaMagagula took the audience by storm when she demonstrated where she was touched through this *sitsambo*. This chant is more like a monologue in a sense that the woman tells the audience about the experiences of her body. Asked about the responses she gives when touched in various places of her body, LaMagagula pointed out that she smiled when touched in those parts because it felt sensuous. LaMagagula pointed out that as a woman she knows what she wants from whoever is touching her and she knows what satisfies her and pointed out that those men who claim that a woman is never satisfied are just 'males' with sugar diabetes who cannot perform well in bed or are impotent. She pointed out that there is a difference between a 'male' and a 'man'.

The most controversial and interesting question that followed the analysis of this song was over the sexual orientation of the hands that touched LaMagagula. Most respondents took it for granted and argued that it is quite obvious that the hands are male and heterosexual because the Swazi setting is heterosexual and these songs promote a heterosexual culture. Some respondent's responses differed. Of note was a response from a respondent who argued that the song could have intonations of homosexuality in present day Swaziland where homosexuals have come out of the closets and declared their sexual orientation on national media. Thembekile Dlamini[27] contended that this touch could possibly be a female's touch. She based this argument on the fact that like Nguni languages, the siSwati has no masculine or femininine pronouns. She then posed this question; how does one ascertain the sex of the person who touched LaMagagula?

[27] A respondent and literature in siSwati teacher at Sitsatsaweni High School.

After the discussions with different people regarding the sex of the person who touched LaMagagula, I conducted an interview with SWAGA[28]'s legal advisor and the research team on sexuality in Swaziland. They pointed out that homosexual relationships are not legally recognised, but they have had a number of homosexual clients who consult them on sexuality related issues. They pointed out that homosexuality exists and it is common but no one is willing to talk about it even in parliament because Swazi legislators are not pro-active but reactive. The legal advisor lamented that Swazis do not want to take preventive measures for any situation or crisis; they only want to do patch work when the problem has resulted into a crisis in the country. The legal advisor pointed out that they have not heard about violence against homosexuals. The people live with them in their various communities but they do not talk about them since they view them as ungodly and unSwazi. The legal advisor lamented on the use of the term unSwazi because Swazis use it as a label to put on issues that they do not want to address no matter how serious those issues are.

The song *Wangitsintsa la,* clearly shows that female sexuality is a very complex phenomenon which heteropatriarchal feminists must not treat as a straight jacket or as binary oppositions. The introduction of LaDlamini's subversive reading of the song has undertones that interrogates and unpacks heteropatriarchal sex objects, dismantles binary systems that heterosexuals use to describe homosexuals. These dichotomies include words such as Godly/unGodly, Swazi/unSwazi, good/evil, deviant/straight and so on. Destabilising the gender binaries results to what Alice Walker (1997) calls a "continuum" (quoted in Nfah-Abbenyi 1997: 78). Upsetting

[28] An acronym for a feminist organisation which looks at the welfare of Swazi men and women. It stands for Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse.

the dichotomies leaves heteropatriarchs with what Nnaemeka calls the whiter and the greyer zones ranging from one end to the other end of the scale. The continuum means that hetero and homosexuality are not binary opposites, but are along the sexuality range. The legal advisor and her team pointed out that they have evidence that homosexuality existed and exists within the royal circles and the Roman Catholic Church but it is spoken about in hushed tones.

LaDlamini subversive reading of the song brings out the complexities that exist within the Swazi society. LaDlamini pointed out that homosexuals existed and exist in the Swazi community but they are in their closets where society keeps them. They are kept in the closet because they are viewed as less feminine if they are females. If males, they are viewed as emasculated men. For those who opt to stay celibate, the Swazi society labels them as people who have failed to reach the puberty stage. Some of them are labelled as hermaphrodites because they either walk like a man but look like a woman or look like a man but act like a woman. During the course of this research, it dawned on me that homosexuals are the people that we as society have labelled as asexual beings because they have never been linked to any sexual partner(s) for the fear of patriarchal violence against them. Nkunzi Nkabinde and Ruth Morgan (2005: 14) record that homosexual relationships exist in the Nguni traditional setting amongst the traditional healers. However, these relationships are camouflaged as 'ancestors' or spirit's wives and husbands.

I went to a traditional drinking spree where some members of the community spend their hot afternoons. In the drinking spree, LaTsabedze performed the songs titled *Balele Banikati Belikhaya* and *Ngigega Egumeni kabo Mfana.*

LEADER: *Asambe mnganami siyokwendzela*[29]

CHORUS: *Iyashis' imphama*

LEADER: *Asambe mnganami siyokwendzel' lemphama*

CHORUS: *Iyashisa lemphama*

LEADER: *Sengigega egumeni kabomfana*

CHORUS: *Iyashisa lemphama*

LEADER: *Ngitowotsisa lemphama*

Ngitowendzel' lemphama

LEADER: My friend let's go to ask for food for the palm

CHORUS: The palm is hot

LEADER: My friend lets go to ask for food for the palm

CHORUS: The palm is hot

LEADER: I am loitering at the boy's homestead

CHORUS: The palm is hot

LEADER: I have come to warm the palm

I have come to ask for food for the palm

In this song, LaTsabedze sings about her sexuality and shows that it is not inert. In this song, the persona is addressing a friend who is her inner voice. It can be likened to a soliloquy because the friend that she is talking to is herself. She is telling this

[29] *Kwendzela* is a Swazi sustenance system, which Swazis use in times of dire need of food. A woman is the one who goes to ask for food from other relatives to feed the family. The term is employed when one goes to ask for food.

friend that they must go and find food for the hot palm. The 'hot palm' in this case is a euphemism for her vagina. Asked why she uses such a word she pointed out that it is one of the various names that people use to call the vagina and more so because it fits the size of the palm of her hand. When she performed this song she kept on touching her vagina with her palm to show the audience the type of palm she is talking about in this song. The food for the hot palm is hinted in the second stanza of the song when she says, 'I am loitering next to the boy's homestead'. She lingers around the boy's homestead because she has come to warm up and find food for the hot palm.

After the performance of the 'Hot Palm', LaTsabedze rendered another performance of a song titled *Balele Banikati Belikhaya* 'The Owners of the Home are Asleep'

LEADER: *Balele banikati belikhaya*

Balele bo

CHORUS: *Vula ngentasi x2*

LEADER: The owners of the home are asleep

They are asleep

CHORUS: Open below x2

The meaning of this song can only be decipherable when one watches its performance, which relies heavily on gestures. When LaTsabedze says the owners of the home are asleep the chorus tells her to open below. When the audience tells her to open below, she opens her legs wide and points at her vagina.

In the four songs analysed in this chapter, the women demonstrate a couple of things about their sexuality versus the way it has been scripted in hegemonic patriarchal discourses. An example of such discourse is used as an epigraph in this chapter. The discourse that sells the notion that female sexuality is inert; it does not need satisfaction the only organ that needs satisfaction is the penis and that is a biological need and urges that men cannot control. When the women sing about their sexuality as a space of pleasure and play in this manner, they are telling each other the secret behind their love potion. The telling is done in a woman-dominated space and it is an 'authentic' story because it is told by the persona who lives inside a woman's skin and body.

Talking about the secret behind the 'love potion' LaTsabedze narrated that marriage is not only based on love. It is based on her sexual prowess as a woman and her husband's virility because she did not leave her parents to come and plough fields, fetch water and look after her in-laws. She left her parents and siblings to get what she could not get at her parental home. Explicating about the 'sleeping owners of the home' she sang about, she told me that the sleeping owner of the home between her legs is a husband who does not clear a single field and plough it, but clears several grounds for ploughing and ends ploughing only one because of loss of energy.

The husband is the owner of this home because he paid *lobolo*. Most of the women who furnished me with information and knowledge needed for a detailed analysis of the songs lamented that whatever unfairness, maltreatment or subordination they are subjected to as wives and mothers stems from the fact that the husbands paid *lobolo*.

La Tsabedze, La Magagula and La Gamedze echoed the phrase "*ngalotjolwa*" 'I have been paid *lobolo* for; therefore I must behave in this manner because I am a wife'. La Simelane noted in a bitter cynical tone that the neglect, desertion and bondage they are kept in is 'okay' because the men have paid *lobolo*. 'They bought you and your womb; therefore they have a right to desert you or divorce you and tell you to linger around the homestead because they own you'. Commenting on the *lobolo* cattle, Nhlapho (1992: 57) and Kuper (1963) state that by the *lobolo* cattle the husband is not buying the wife but he is buying *sinye kanye nebantfwana* [the womb and the children].

Through singing songs such as *Shende Bengikwebela, Balele Banikati Belikhaya* and *Wangitsintsa la*, the women demonstrate that their bodies and sexuality "is…a medium, on which power operates and through which it functions"(Elizabeth Grosz 1994: 146). However, the women refuse to bow down to that view. They are aware that the *lobolo* cattle keep them in bondage nonetheless; they undermine the shackles that tie them down. Roger Horrocks (1997: 129) asserts, "sexuality is a political phenomenon: the male domination of women in a patriarchal society is articulated through sexual practices and beliefs about sexuality". Horrocks (1997: 132) adds, that sexuality is also "structured by patriarchal norms and expectations." These are expectations and notions articulated by Moi Moi Masilela, King Mswati III's appointee to parliament in 2006, quoted in the epigraph of this chapter. He views female sexuality as a space for procreation; however, the women cited in this study view it as a site for pleasure, play and identity negotiation. They refuse to view their sexuality as a site for subordination because they compose, sing and dance songs that

proclaim their sexuality within the constraints of culture and custom. Elizabeth Grosz (1994: 202) says:

> women's bodies and sexualities have been constructed and lived in terms that not only differentiate them from men's but also attempt, not always or even usually entirely successfully, to position them in a relation of passive independence and secondariness to men's.

The women cited in this chapter rise up to the challenge in a sense that they live their sexuality in a manner that transgresses societal constructions of female sexuality. In the songs studied in this chapter, the women articulate body politics and talk about their sexual pleasure in a manner that destabilises patriarchal construction and view of female sexuality versus male sexuality. "Male sexuality is conceived according to the norms of masculinity, constructed as 'mastery', 'domination', 'activity', and so on; female sexuality is seen as akin to femininity, understood as 'passivity', 'masochism', 'docility' and so on" (Horrocks 1997:132). Because of these notions one will hear a man comments and asks questions such as, "How does one *satisfy* a woman in bed? *Once a woman conceives*, it shows that she gets *satisfaction*" (Masilela quoted in *Mail and Guardian* on line September 2006).

When LaTsabedze asks the women to tell her the secret behind their 'love potion', LaNdwandwe responds in song and proclaims "*luhlale lwangena luphondvo loluhlal' ekhikhini*", meaning 'the horn which resides in the pocket has entered', when she enters the groom's homestead after the *umtsimba*. Through this song, she proclaims

her sexual prowess. LaTsabedze pointed out that the horn refers to the penis. From the analysis of the songs in this chapter, I have learnt that any sexual object can be used by any woman for her own sexual pleasure. The choice of sexual objects does not make them unSwazi or anti-womanist, but it makes them African women and womanists because they "love both men and women sexually or asexually" (Alice Walker cited in Clenora Hudson-Weems 1998: 154).

In the songs analysed in this chapter, the women talk about and (re)inscribe the way they experience their sexuality in ways that are contrary to heteropatriarchal constructions of female sexuality. They show that they are not stationary as men imagine them. They also sabotage patriarchal discourse on female sexuality using these songs. The next chapter examines the relationship between gender, genre and subversion by looking at the marginal status of women's songs and the subversive messages slipped into these songs. It delves on what gives the women's songs a subversive thrust and the women's agency in composing songs that question and destabilises patriarchal norms.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUBVERSION, GENDER AND GENRE

Popular songs delve into quotidian experiences. They also constitute a "whole realm within which tastes come and go, the social context in which fans emerge with distinct cultural attachment to a sound and artist, and the human spaces that are created for the enjoyment of music" (Connell and Gibson 2003: 5). This chapter studies the subversive messages slipped in the women folk songs in relation to the contexts and performances of the songs. The spaces or contexts of performance of the women folk songs influence the message(s) and lyrics of these songs. It further gives the women's songs a subversive thrust that it may otherwise lack if they were performed for instance on the *umtsimba* arena. The relationship between the song performed by women, its marginalisation and its subversive power and the women's agency in composing subversive songs is examined in this chapter.

Music fans use songs in many interesting and amazing ways that baffle composers of the songs. They appropriate a song and use it in contexts that depict their experiences of every-day-life. Connell and Gibson (2003: 5) say fans put an individual cultural attachment to song and create a new space for its enjoyment. This in itself makes the songs under study to be classified as popular. The songs used in this chapter show how women use the *lutsango* regiment's songs as a tool for subverting patriarchy and questioning men's behaviour and norms. It also demonstrates how Swazi women seize the song, use it to destabilise, and question Swazi societal construction of manhood and fatherhood. Songs studied in this chapter are songs recorded from a

traditional drinking hole where some men and women quench their thirst with *umcombotsi* [Swazi traditional beer], and spend most of their afternoons after a day's work. This is a space similar to the South African shebeen and it is characterised by a lack of censorship and the free will of expressing oneself.

The lack of censorship emanates from intoxication. The performance space of these songs can be likened to Mikhail Bakhtin (1968)'s discussion of the carnival festivals. During the performances of these songs, the women "temporarily suspend all hierarchical distinctions and barriers…and of the prohibitions of usual life" (Bakhtin 1968: 15). It is a space that gives women freedom to talk about the hidden self and personal politics. This space is characterised by freedom of interaction because it is where the women meet their peers and chat. The song titled *Yela Singani Sami* is one of the songs recorded in such a space. The female respondents pointed out those songs that accompany the rituals that take place within the Swazi society are arranged in manners that make them fit the contexts of performance and purpose appropriately.

The songs discussed in this chapter are those that mock or ridicule and subvert patriarchal ideologies. LaMamba and LaGamedze explained that these songs are used as a communicative device, which they employ to indirectly talk to their husbands, in-laws or any other person regarding certain matters. This indirect device is termed as *inshanshu,* where one says something within the earshot of the intended recipient of the utterance and never expects a reply but a change of behaviour or redress of the issue sang about. The song, *Yelasingani Sami*, is part of this genre. LaMamba, LaNdwandwe, LaGamedze were in the midst of the group of women who danced and performed this song.

LEADER: *Yela ngani sami*

CHORUS: *Utawusal' ebaleni*

LEADER: *Babe longasekho*

CHORUS: *Utawusala wedvwana*

LEADER: *Ngagan'injobo mnganwami*

CHORUS: *Utawusala wedvwana*

LEADER: *Ngagan'injobo ngashiy'emajaha*

CHORUS: *Utawusala wedvwana*

LEADER: *Babe longasekho*

CHORUS: *Utawusal'ebaleni*

LEADER: Hey you lover

CHORUS: You will be left in the open

LEADER: Father who has passed away

CHORUS: You will be left alone

LEADER: I fell in love with *injobo* my friend

CHORUS: You will be left alone

LEADER: I fell in love with *injobo* and left real men

CHORUS: You will be a left alone

LEADER: Father who has passed on

CHORUS: You will be left in the open

After the performance of this song, I discussed its meaning and subversive power with the performers. I asked the meaning of the term *injobo* from different

individuals since it proved to be a very difficult term with a wide range of meanings. When asked of the meaning of the term *injobo*, Mr. Magagula, a respondent and member of *Umlondolozi*[30] regiment explained that its meaning is multilayered. It refers to a person who belongs to a certain regiment. At another level, the term refers to the three little objects dangling on the *umgobo*; a stick on which the male shield hangs. Men place these objects at the beginning, middle and end of the shield. They are there solely for decorating the shield.

In the above song, the women sabotage and mock the husband's behaviour and ridicule his status as a father. The women equate him to a useless lover. Equating him to a useless lover relegates him to an inferior position in the household. This relegation pokes him. LaNdwandwe, who was part of this gathering and very instrumental in the analysis of this song narrated that she does not only sing this song because she is part of this gathering. She also sings it when she is at home doing her chores to show the feelings of disgust that she has towards her husband who does not want to support their children. This feeling emanates from patriarchal division of labour or chores in the family. The feelings of anger are directed to the husband because of his failure in his manly duties [providing for his wife and children].

His uselessness is highlighted by the use of the metaphor *injobo*. According to Grassi and Deblois (1984), a metaphor is a way of comparing by saying something is actually the thing that it is likened to. Likening and equating the husband to the *injobo* highlights his useless. LaNkhambule, a respondent, explained that the *injobo* that is talked about in this context means *indvodza lesinikiniki* to use her exact words.

[30] A Regiment for Swazi men who took part in the Second World war. The term *umlondoloz*i means the one who keeps things safely.

Loosely translated, the phrase means a nincompoop. She added that the song, *Yela Singani Sami* was her mother's favourite song. She sang it within the earshot of her father to show her feelings of hatred and disgust towards the man she was forced to marry.

The women highlight their disappointment on the choice of men they married. They lament that they married something, which resembled a man, but under scrutiny, it did not look and behave like a 'real' man. When they call their husbands *injobo,* they are also telling their peers that they got married to imbeciles. By equating the man to the *injobo,* the women show that he is an absentee father or a man parading as a father and a husband when in reality he is not fit for such responsibility and position.

According to the Swazi heteropatriarchal norms, performing fatherhood and manhood means a whole range of duties that a man must perform without fail. Mickias Musiyiwa and Memory Chirere (2007: 156-162) point out that according to heteropatriarchal normativity, being a father and a man is intertwined with marriage and the ability to sire a child, provide for the children and the wife, protect and control the household. They further add that the man's worth as a good father and husband is judged by the way he performs his fatherly and manhood duties. The women use this heteropatriarchal yardstick for performing fatherhood and manhood to measure the worth of their husbands. When a man cannot perform these duties, he is seen as a failed man or an *injobo.*

Part of these women's project in this song presents 'conflicted masculinities' where you have societal expectations and manner of performing masculinity, which clashes

with an individual's lifestyle and the manner in which he performs masculinity. In this instance, LaNdwandwe calls her husband a nincompoop and useless because he has failed to live up to the societal construction of the institution of fatherhood and manhood. She juxtaposes the heteropatriarchal ways of performing manhood and fatherhood with the ways in which her husband performs manhood and fatherhood through this song. When the two do not match, she swears that she will desert the man who does not live up to her standards of performing manhood and fatherhood. This is depicted by the use of the phrase *babe longasekho*. Through the use of this phrase the persona evokes the spirit of her deceased father. Amongst the Swazi the use of these words indicate that whatever the persona is talking about will happen.

The song titled *Vila Lenja* [Lazy Dog], belongs to the genre that women sing and perform in social gatherings such as the *buganu* ceremony or drinking sprees. This song differs because of its vulgar content. According to LaTsabedze, the use of songs that have vulgar content is not a sign of disrespect. It is a technique that women use to mock and critique their husband's behaviour.

LEADER: *Ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja!*

LEADER: *Ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja!*

LEADER: *Sibaya siwile*

CHORUS: *Wena ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja !*

CHORUS: *Ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja!*

LEADER: *Emasimu alele*

CHORUS: *Wena ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja !*

CHORUS: *Ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja!*

LEADER: *Lutsango luwile*

CHORUS: *Ukhutsala entsambama*

CHORUS: *Vila lenja !*

LEADER: *Ukhutsala entsambama*

LEADER: You become very active at night

CHORUS: You lazy dog!

LEADER: You become very active at night

CHORUS: You lazy dog!

LEADER: The cattle byre has fallen down

CHORUS: You become very active at night

CHORUS: You lazy dog!

CHORUS: You become active at night

LEADER: The fields are idle

CHORUS: You become active at night

CHORUS: You lazy dog

CHORUS: You become active at night

LEADER: The fence has fallen down

CHORUS: You become active at night

CHORUS: You lazy dog!

CHORUS: You become active at night

LaTsabedze pointed out that this song known as *inshanshu* in siSwati. *Inshanshu* can be equated to an aside even though it slightly differs from an aside. *Inshanshu* is uttered within the vicinity of its addressee. This utterance is only meant for the ears of the addressee who is not expected to respond but to change his behaviour in due course.

This song is used as *inshanshu* by a wife to show her feelings of anger towards a husband who wants to sleep all day and claims to be a man and a father in the household. LaTsabedze pointed out that some men behave in a very annoying manner and then hide in the thicket of Swazi customary law and culture. During the entire course of this research, I noted several things about the Swazi customary law. The Swazi customary law has become a very thick bush, which Swazis frequent for various personal reasons. Some visit it to relieve themselves, collect firewood, and fetch water and etcetera. This is so because it is not written down. Every man and woman has his or her version that they use depending on the situation at hand. The use and interpretation of the Swazi customary law is contradictory and layered with

ideologies that subordinate Swazi women. This law is a yoke that lingers on the neck of the Swazi woman. Some of the male respondents felt that it is Swazi and 'manly' for a man to do nothing and throw everything unto the wife because of her capabilities. Another section felt that pushing all responsibilities to the wife is unSwazi and shows signs of laziness.

The woman equates the man to a lazy dog, which does not hunt but spends its time sleeping under the shade and expects the owner to fend for it. LaTsabedze and LaGamedze pointed out that the gist of this subversive song lies in the use of the dog metaphor. The man is equated to a dog in this song. LaGamedze explained that calling someone a dog is an insult in the siSwati culture. By equating the man to a dog, the persona means that he has attributes of a useless dog. A useless dog in the Swazi rural setting sleeps all day and when the sun sets, it gets busy with many mischievous activities. These include eating neighbour's chickens, goats, eggs and food it finds in the kitchen if unleashed at night. The dog does all these things in the cover of darkness; at dawn, it comes back home and pretends to have been within the homestead the whole night. What comes back to the owner is a report from neighbours about its activities.

The persona and her children mend the cattle byre, plough the fields, mend the fence and come back home tired. When she goes to sleep at night, she finds a sexually active husband who has been sleeping all day long. When the woman fails to perform because of weariness from the day's work, the man goes around the locality and looks for women who can satisfy his libido. This done, the man goes back home and pretends that nothing has happened. The woman will hear about her husband's deeds

when a girl comes to report that the husband has impregnated her. If the man slept with someone's wife, the wife will only hear this under hushed tones.

The next song; *Sinikeni Lamajobo* [Give us the Loin skin], was recorded in a social gathering where the women of Malindza community were celebrating the completion of their skills workshop where they received certificates for attendance and completing the workshop.

LEADER: *Sinikeni, Sinikeni lamajobo* x2

CHORUS: *Koncono ninike tsine*

Kuncono ninike tsine lamajobo ngob'anifuni kuyosebenta

LEADER: *Emsebentini bafati* x2

CHORUS: *Kuncono ninike tsine*

Kuncono ninike tsine

Lamajobo ngoba anifuni kuyosebenta

LEADER: *Anisebenti ninani?* x2

CHORUS: *Kuncono ninike Tsine*

Koncono ninike Tsine lamajobo ngoba anifuni kuyosebenta

LEADER: *Ekhondomini bafati* x2

CHORUS: *Kuncono ninike tsine*

Kuncono ninike tsine laamkhondomu ngoba anifuni kubhulukela

LEADER: Give us; Give us the loin skins x2

CHORUS: It is better you hand over the loin skins because you do not want to go to work

LEADER: Let us go to work women x2

CHORUS: You better give us; you better give us the loin skin because you do not want to go to work

LEADER: Why are you not working? x2

CHORUS: You better give us; you better give us the loin skin because you do not want to go to work

LEADER: On the condom women x2

CHORUS: You better give us; you better give us the condom because you do not want to go to work

Unlike the *umtsimba* songs, which enforce patriarchal norms, the *lutsango* songs show explicit defiance mockery of men who do not fit into patriarchal construction of masculinity. This it does through the voice of the leader who tells men to give the women the loin skins: traditional regalia worn by men in the siSwati culture. LaMamba, a leader of the *lutsango* regiment explained that this is meant to show the men that they have failed in their duty of being providers in the household. Due to this explicit failure in the part of the men, the women demand that they be given the loin skins so that they can be providers in the family.

LaMamba pointed out that the seizure of the loin skin unsexes women so that they can gain access to certain privileges enjoyed by the men. These include access to land in the Swazi Nation Land under the eye of the chiefs, property ownership and loans from monetary institutions. The seizure of the loin skins for this group of women also symbolises attainment of economic freedom. Steady Filomina (1986: 6) quoted in *Ngambika* posits that the seizure of economic independence, resourcefulness and self reliance is a sign of true African womanism.

LaMamba pointed out that economic freedom is not all that she wants as a Swazi woman married in accordance with Swazi customary law. She also wants to have an ability to control her body, its reproductive capacity and prevent it from contracting sexual transmitted diseases. This is shown by the suggestion; 'you better give us the condom because you do not want to wear them'. I asked LaMamba if the song informed by Non Governmental Organisation's discourses. She pointed out that women use the song to address issues of any nature. This includes the spread of HIV, which cannot be easily contained in the Swazi cultural setting because of the practice of customary rites that promote the spread of HIV. In addition, men have the privilege to control the women's bodies and to accept or refuse the use of the condom. According to C.A.B. Zigira (2003: 71), women are stripped of their rights of controlling their bodies through the payment of *lobolo*. He says:

> through the payment of the bride wealth, a woman's reproductive capacity and rights are appropriated by the husband and his family. The consequences of this practice are not seen as having rights to control men's sexuality. This makes them

vulnerable to the danger of contracting a number of diseases.

(Zigira 2003: 71)

LaMamba pointed that efforts to curb the spread of this scourge in her community can be successful if men are willing to give up certain privileges that Swazi customs give them. In this song, the women have used the hybrid status of traditional songs to question some cultural practices that subordinate them.

Like other forms of popular cultural expressions, such as radio dramas and novelettes the songs are "new kinds of cultural expressions which gives scope for wrestling with the present while beckoning to the past" (Gunner 2000:226). These songs deal with the present and beckon to the past in a sense that they are songs which women use to comment on contemporary issues affecting them while they belong to a genre which is rooted in the siSwati culture and read as retrogressive. This gives the song an important status; wisdom sanctioned by the past.

The songs' rootedness in the siSwati culture gives it a strong voice and acceptance in patriarchal circles. Reviewing or questioning societal norms using a medium accepted and approved by patriarchy gives the song a subverting thrust which other media lack. The status of these songs as mediators between the present and the past makes them very sharp tools that shake patriarchy from its foundation without stigmatising its composers because they are within the Swazi culture and tradition. The genre of the women's song becomes a site where complexities and ambivalence about gender roles and cultural norms are debated and reviewed.

The Swazi have a very large repertoire of aural cultural expressions composed and performed by both sexes. Women compose and perform the *umtsimba, teka, sitsambo*, songs while men compose and perform songs sung during traditional national ceremonies such as *iNcwala*[31] and royal hunt. When juxtaposed with the male genre, the female genre is looked down upon and is regarded as mock performances that do not warrant serious attention. Songs sung by men are given a high status and are reserved national ceremonies such as the *iNcwala*. Men's songs become part of what Barber (1997) calls 'high culture' and women's songs are at the margins and reserved to be performed in women dominated spaces.

The marginal status occupied by the women's folk songs gives the song power to question, subvert and comment on gender relations in ways that the siSwati culture does not permit. Bryce (1997: 120-122) notes that women are able to seize and use the marginal status to given their works to sabotage patriarchal ideologies and discourse(s) about females and sexuality. In her study of oral poetry produced by both Zulu males and females, Gunner (1995) makes important views and observations on Zulu women's oral poetry, its marginal status and its subversive power. Gunner (1995) observes that the marginalisation of Zulu women's oral poetry is a blessing in disguise as it gives the women 'a room of one's own' within which they can operate and use to maximum gain. Gunner says:

> in a way this privacy, this distance from the overt centres of patriarchy, sometimes gives it a cutting edge, a subverting thrust which it might otherwise lack. More than that, it gives

[31] A first fruits ceremony.

> the women a chance to fill out for themselves a chance to fill out for themselves a completely different identity, an answer, even a challenge which undercuts the dominant discourses relating to images of power and the status of men and women. (Gunner 1995:192)

The subversive power that the women songs have is shown by the manner in which the women talk about their husbands and act out the ways in which power relations are played out in a ridiculing manner. The women talk about their husbands and address them in a manner that violates Swazi moral codes. They also talk about female sexuality in a manner that transgress Swazi societal norms and destabilises patriarchal discourses about femaleness in these songs. Women achieve this because their songs are composed and performed in private spaces. However, these songs are not confined to the women's spaces, they also filter into the public spaces. When these counter patriarchal discourses reach the public domain, they destabilises the patriarchal ideologies that work to the detriment of women. LaGamedze and LaTsabedze mentioned that a wife can indirectly address her husband through a highly abusive song without punishment because she is culturally licensed. She is licensed because "customs grants the right to certain freedom and familiarity, the right to break the usual norms of social relations" (Bakhtin 1968: 200-2001).

The idea that the song is licensed to express criticism to those who wield power corresponds with Allen (2004), Vail and White's view on the song. Allen (2004: 5) says that popular music is very important in commenting on those in power because of the performer's immunity to punishment and more so, because the singers are

expected to speak truth to power using their talent. On the other hand, White and Vail (1991: 42) say, “when the complaint or insult is expressed through song, it is alright, so long as it is done through singing, there would be no dispute”. This view of the song stems from the African ideology that criticism expressed through song is licensed criticism. The women in the above songs employ “poetic license” (Vail and White 1991: 41). Through composing and performing these songs, the women show that gender relations in the Swazi society have been organised in a manner that exclude women from participating in the familial and public discourses of power. Through these songs, women infuse power and sexual politics with patriarchal discourses that work to the detriment of women.

In a broadcast of SWAGA’s programme on Swazi national television dated December 5th 2008, sensitising the sixteen days of activism against women and children abuse, I noted the kind of attitude that the male callers had towards the women on the programme. Instead of paying attention to the information disseminated on the programme, they asked questions such as “whose wife are you?” and “Whom are you representing in this programme?” They put it plainly that pro-feminist organisations such as SWAGA “corrupt” the “docile” rural women. When the women sing the subversive songs, the men hardly complain. They mumble and point out that the women are loading their heads with all sorts of unworthy ideas. They do not slam them the way they slam Non-Governmental Organisations preaching about the betterment of men and women in the society. What makes these songs acceptable to a patriarchal society, which resists change like the course of a river?

In her article on Zulu radio drama, Liz Gunner (2000: 228-231) investigates the factors which made the genre to be so vital and air anti-apartheid discourses at a time when the apartheid regime was so vigilant in silencing voices it viewed as dissident. She examines the language employed by the genre and points out that it is one of the factors which made the genre to "bypass the forced silences of those years". Gunner (2000: 228) says, "possibly it was the thick medium of language itself that provided such a means of survival". Likewise, the dense language used by the women in the composition of the folk songs makes the songs to by pass patriarchal censorship.

The language employed to convey the subversive message enables the women to talk about their private and public lives in ways that transgress Swazi societal norms without being labelled as dissidents. Gunner (2000: 229) says, "there is a way in which language as a carrier of multiple signs and discourses and as a medium for the transformation of consciousness by passes censorship". This is enabled by the use of literary devices such as metaphors, sarcasm, euphemism, ridicule and similes. According to Stuart Hall (1980: 40):

> language in its widest sense is the vehicle of practical reasoning, calculation and consciousness, because of the ways in which certain meanings and references have been historically secured. But its cogency depends on the 'logic' which connect one proposition to the other in a chain of connected meanings; where the social and connotative meanings are condensed and reverberate off one another. These chains are never permanently secured, either in their

> internal systems or in terms of social classes and groups to which they belong. (Hall 1980: 140)

The manner in which language is structured and used amongst women gives the songs the ability to hide in the thicket of language in its subversion of patriarchal discourses. The following excerpts from the analysed songs demonstrate that the language employed by the women give the songs a subversive thrust and makes them to bypass patriarchal censorship. Consider the songs *Sinikeni Lamajobo, Vila Lenja, Yela Singani Sami,* and *Mntfwnamake Sitokulahla, Balele Banikati Belikhaya* and *Asambe Siyokwendzela.*

In the song, *Sinikeni Lamajobo*, the women do not engage their husbands in an altercation and demand for the exchange of clothing because the men have failed in their duties. They mockingly suggest that the men must give them the loin skin because they do not want to go to work. This suggestion has undertones of anger and mockery. When the women suggest that the men should give the women the loinskins, they are actually saying the husband must hand over his manly duties to the wife because he has failed. Seizure and wearing of the loin skin by a woman is a taboo in the Swazi setting.

In the song, titled *Vila Lenja* the women do not explicitly insult the lazy man, but they use the dog metaphor. LaMamba narrated that they use the dog metaphor because the man's character is comparable to that of a lazy dog. In *Nansi Indvodza Ingishaya bo*, women use ridicule and irony to act out and question patriarchal attitude towards wife battery. In the song, *Yelasingani Sami,* the women use the

injobo metaphor to highlight the uselessness and the fraudulent nature of the husband and father. In the songs, *Asambe Siyokwendzela, Wangitsintsa la, Shende Bengikwebela* and *Balele Banikati Belikhaya,* the woman uses euphemism and gestures to convey the message. All these subversive messages are slipped into the songs through the use different levels of meanings that the siSwati language carries. The women use hidden transcripts, which one can decipher if she knows the connotative meaning they carry.

There are many reasons why the women compose songs that subvert heteropatriarchal normalcy. The agency behind the composition of such songs stems from the women's understanding of Swazi societal institutions such as marriage. They have observed that marriage is layered with ambiguities and contradictions that feed into heteropatriarchy and at the same time, perpetuates their marginalisation and subordination, not only in the familial space but also in public spaces.

Dupont-Mkhonza (1996: 58) argues, "institutions are normal forms of social conduct. They have languages and codes of their own. They have scriptural texts and behavioural texts. They have verbal codes which are transpersonal". Richard Brown (1987: 122) also notes that "institutions are not things, nor are they merely ways of doing things; they are also grammars that account for these ways of acting". According to Brown, institutions are texts with their own grammar, syntax and language patterns that are determined by the society. They are also narrow and rigid worlds where individuals articulate themselves through the rules set by the institutions. Brown's assertions and observations pertaining institutions also applies to the marriage institution in the Swazi society.

Marriage is an institution with syntaxes and grammars of its own. Women who live in it function in a rigid world set by this institution. There are ways of expressing oneself that are permissible and not permissible within this institution. The life of a wife/ mother/ woman is regulated and maintained by the rigid laws that govern marriage. Women compose these songs because they are challenging the language, grammars rules and syntaxes that govern this institution, which is phallic in nature. LaGama argues that the composition and the performance of the folk songs is a space where the women let off steam. She says, *bayatihhamula,* to use her exact words. In addition, by composing these songs, the women are "addressing rather than evacuating ambiguities, innuendos, contradictions and gaps" (Pereira 2002: 9).

Dupont-Mkhonza (2003: 51) says, "women sing and compose these songs because the songs bring out the aspect of their roles in history and they bring out the oppression as it exists" in the Swazi society. Through the songs, the women are able to enact a "world of conflict that is unmediated and it lingers as a yoke on the woman (Mkhonza 2003: 51). Furthermore, the women use these songs as a weapon for subverting patriarchy and as a platform for airing their opinions, comment, critique and question things that they see in their localities. Through composing these songs, the women are what Allen (2004: 6) calls "investigative journalists and talk show hosts".

Motsa-Dladla's (1994)'s respondents argued that the songs give them a voice to make their views heard. The voice and "not-speakingness" of the women bring to the

forefront postcolonial theories on the marginalised or subaltern[32] groups (Aviva Spector 2001: 16). The most famous question asked is; can the gendered subaltern speak? Does the song give the women a voice or it renders her mute? Dupont-Mkhonza (2003) and Brunner (1998) argues that the song makes the Swazi woman a subaltern. Brunner argues that the song makes women to be excluded in patriarchal discourses of power because it is not a political arena and a contested space.

LaMamba and the rest of the female respondents in this study argued that the song gives them voice where they are silenced. Heather Hewett (2005: 85) notes that there is a difference between voice and voicelessness. She says, "a person can suffer from both being silenced and not being heard" She argues that this is a result of the "selective hearing and mis-hearing of her oppressors" (ibid). The women's songs documented in this study do not make the Swazi woman mute or subaltern because they are firstly, within the discourses of power hence the use of the term popular to classify the songs. As said earlier on, popular songs are invested with power. They are a highly politicised space. Moreblessings Chitauro, Caleb Dube and Gunner (1994: 111) say, "the messages and images communicated through forms of popular culture have enormous influence in shaping the real language of gender and power relations in a culture".

Secondly, the women quoted in this study cannot be labelled as subaltern because they have seen that the mechanics of female discrimination lie in language use by patriarchy to talk about women. Through composing these songs women have

[32] The term subaltern does not denote the Gramscian meaning of the term [proletariat who are structurally written out of capitalist discourse]. Subaltern in this context is used to denote 'gendered' and marginalised groups that are negatively written or misrepresented in patriarchal discourses of power.

created oppositional language that destabilise and negate patriarchal norms and discourses. Motsa-Dladla (1994) asserts that Swazi rural women may appear stupid and illiterate but they are intellectuals. Motsa-Dladla's perception of these women concurs with Ackson Kanduza's perception. He says:

> Swazi intellectuals have appeared in diverse forms and have participated in politics for a long time. These intellectuals are not exclusively identified in terms of their literacy or level of western education. They are largely known because of ideas they have presented and how they have projected new forms of knowledge. (Kanduza 2003: 34)

This chapter explored the relationship between popular cultural productions and the subversive thrust they carry. It further looked at the reasons beyond the composition of women folk songs. This chapter demonstrated that the composition of songs of this nature by Swazi women demonstrates that African feminists and intellectuals existed long before the advent of feminist theories and studies. Amata Ata Aidoo reiterates this proposition when she says:

> African women struggling both on behalf of themselves and on behalf of the wider community is very much part of our heritage. It is not new and I really refuse to be told I am learning feminism from abroad, from Lapland. Africa has produced a much more concrete tradition of strong women fighters than most other societies. So when we say that we are refusing to be

overlooked we are only acting today as daughters and grand-daughters of women who always refused to be keep quite. We haven't learnt this from anybody abroad. (quoted in Nfah-Abbenyi 1997: 10)

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This research has read gendered power relations, sexuality and subversion of heteropatriarchal discourses in the *umtsimba* and *lutsango* regiment's songs. The reading and the analysis of the songs situated the songs within popular and feminist studies in African literature. Situating the songs within this range of studies has brought to the fore diverse meanings that the songs carry. The research has demonstrated that oral literature goes beyond the entertainment realm. Oral literature does not only entertain, but it is a space in which Swazi women engage in the reviewing of social relations and patriarchal discourses that work to their disadvantage. Indeed, Swazi women's songs are invested with power. The reading of the songs using African feminist [womanist strand] and radical feminist theories bring out the manner in which women subvert the ways in which gender relations are mobilised in the familial space.

Chapter one has laid down the tools used for the reading of the songs and the contending ideas about the use and importance of the songs. In this chapter, I have also demonstrated that the song in the African, and in particular in the Swazi setting, is not only arranged in a manner pleasing to the ear or performed in a manner pleasing to the audience or spectators, but it is a social text. The song is an artefact that depicts the ways in which the society is organised.

Chapter two has looked into the manner in which the *umtsimba* songs depict how social and gendered power relations are arranged in the familial space. In addition,

this chapter has brought out the diverse ways in which power relations are played out in the familial space and the different ways in which women diffuse or negate these relations. The manner in which these relations manifest themselves in the familial space brings heteropatriarchal construction of masculinities and domestic violence into the feminist theoretical gaze. Bringing masculinities and violence into the theoretical gaze helps one comprehend the relationship between heteropatriarchal construction of masculinity and domestic violence. The reading of the songs has not only concerned itself with the marginal position occupied by the wife/mother in the familial space, but has also examined the ways in which the mother /wife fluctuates from the margins to the centre of power. In its depiction of the manner in which women fluctuate in the power matrix, the study has shown that Swazi women are not all the time read as powerless.

Chapter three has investigated the ways in which women talk about female sexuality in their own signifying terms and discourses. This chapter put side-by-side male-authored discourses with reference to female sexuality and female-authored discourses on female sexuality. Sexuality and the female body in this chapter are read as spaces of pleasure, play, power and identity negotiation. This chapter has examined the ways in which women debunk male-authored ideologies about female sexuality and the female body. Heteropatriarchal sexual objects are also questioned and unpacked in this chapter. Destabilising the discourses on sexual objects through the subversive reading of the song *Wangitsintsa la* [You Touched me Here] bring into the light the need for heteropatriarchal feminists to redress issues surrounding sexuality as a space for sexual orientation. Women's outlook on female promiscuity

through the use of discourses that write female sexuality as inert is examined in this chapter.

The fourth chapter has looked at the relationship between the low status occupied by women's songs and the subversive discourses carried by women's songs. In addition, it has examined the ways in which women subvert and challenge heteropatriarchal division of labour, construction of the institutions of fatherhood and manhood. Songs analysed in this chapter bring out what is termed as 'conflicted masculinities' where women juxtapose heteropatriarchal expectations of a man and a father with the ways in which their husbands perform manhood and fatherhood. The chapter probes women's agency in the composition of subversive songs. The effectiveness of the song in giving the women a voice is examined. Specifically, this research has demonstrated that the women's songs are an effective medium for articulating women's concerns, which is a view that contrasts with Dupont-Mkhonza's views. Mkhonza-Dupont (2003) argues that women's songs are effective in articulating women's concern because they are an uncontested space. The song is more powerful than day-to-day conversation because of its ability to suspend all hierarchical set up and conventions in the society and to address issues that are deemed as taboos.

In its reading of the songs using the outlined theories, the research has brought out the dynamism, power and significance of women's songs in articulating gender politics. It has shown that women's songs are powerful in articulating gender politics because in a song, a woman tells and narrates a story about all aspects of the self. This has been made easy by the fact that singing and composing a song does not require reading and writing skills that almost forty percent of Africans lack. This has

made Tenaille (2003) to assert that the newspaper has no use to the old woman, but the song is important to her because she uses it everywhere she goes.

This study has debunked patriarchal ideologies about the female body and sexuality. It has challenged orthodox African feminist's ideologies on female sexuality. Through the reading of these songs, the research has given patriarchal feminists a new set of looking glasses with which to view the female body and sexuality as complex terrains rather than binary opposites. In addition, it has shown that there is a need for patriarchal feminism to revisit its construction and performance of femininities and masculinities and view its merits and disadvantages for both homosexual and heterosexual males and females. Lastly, this study has shown that heteropatriarchal feminists need to cross over or lapse boundaries between the African and European feminisms because the differences between these strands of theories undergirds them and help in understanding the complexities of the female body. There is a pressing need for heteropatriarchal African feminists to stop sulking and claiming that issues around sexual orientation and preferences are not a problem in the Swazi setting.

GLOSSARY OF SISWATI TERMS USED

Giya is a manner of dance which a married woman performs to showcase her dancing skills.

Inhlanti is a term derived from the word *kuhlanta* meaning to wash. In most cases an *inhlanti* is the bride's young sister. Her sole purpose is to wash away her sister's shame in the family that she is married into in case she does not bear children.

Injobo refers to the three little objects dangling on the left, middle and right side of the stick on which the male shield hangs.

Kuhlambisa is a ceremony performed after *kumekeza*, where the bride gives gifts to her in-laws. The value of gifts varies with the economic standing of the bride.

Kulamuta is a Swazi customary practice where the groom is authorized to have a sexual relationship and to marry his wife's younger sister.

Kumekeza is a Swazi traditional marriage rite performed after the *umtsimba* on the bride by the bridal party. The bride is woken up in the morning, put tin the cattle byre to wail until morning. This ceremony is accompanied by a set of songs that paint a gloomy picture of married life, warn the bride about the hardships of married life and also tell the in-laws to handle the bride with care.

Kusisa is a form of sustenance system in Swazi rural areas. This is performed in two different ways. A poor person in dire need of livestock [cattle] to feed his family approaches the rich man and asks him to give him part of his stock to look after so that he can benefit from its produce. Alternatively, a rich person with livestock approaches a man who lives in areas with good grazing lands and asks him to look after his livestock. In both cases the livestock is loaned to the caretakers. In the later form of loaning, the owner pays the caretaker in form of livestock or any other form of remuneration.

Lutsango is a Swazi women's regiment for married women.

Sitsambo is a song genre. The word *sitsambo* is a noun derived from the verb *tsamba* [manner of dance].

Teka marks the initial stage of siSwati traditional marriage rite. During this stage, the bride is woken up in the middle of the night, taken to the cattle byre to wail until morning. After the wailing, she is smeared with red ochre termed *libovu.*

Umtsimba is a siSwati traditional marriage rite performed by the bride and her bridal party at the groom's homestead after the groom has paid the *lobolo* cattle. It is during this ceremony that the bride joins the groom's family as a legally married wife according to the siSwati customary law and practice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agawu, Kofi. 'African Music as Text', *Research in African Literatures* 32(2)2001

_____ 'Introduction', *Research in African Literatures* 32(2)2001

Allen, Lara. 'Music and Politics in Africa' in *Social Dynamics* 30(2)2004, 1-15

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. Cambridge, Mass.: the M.I.T. Press, 1965

Barber, Karin. (ed) *Readings in Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997

Brown, Richard. *Society as Text.* Illinois: Illinois University Press, 1987

Brunner, Dubose. *Between the Masks: Resisting the Politics of Essentialism*. New York Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998

Bryce, Jane. "Women and Modern African Fiction", Barber, Karin. (ed) in *Readings in Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997

Chitauro, Moreblessings, Dube, C. and Gunner L. "Song, Story and Nation: Women as Singer and Actresses in Zimbabwe", in Gunner, Liz. (ed) *Politics and Performance: Theatre, Song and Performance in Sothern Africa*. Cape Town: CTP Book Printers, 1994

Cock, Jacklyn. "Book Review of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases. Making Sense of International Politics*", *Agenda*, No.11, 1991

Connell, John and Chris, Gibson. *Sound Tracks*: *Popular Music, Identity and Place*. London: Rout ledge, 2003

Cornwall, Andrea. *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Indianapolis: Indian University Press, 2005

Coward, R. *Sexuality and Social Relations*. Routlegde: London, 1983

Davies, Carole Boyce and Graves Anne Adams (eds). *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1986

Dupont-Mkhonza, Sarah. "Private/Public Worlds of Conflict: The Case of Swazi Women's Song", in Vilakati Joyce, Mundia J.S. and Mkhonza Sarah (eds) in *Democracy, Transformation, Conflict and Public Policy in Swaziland.* Kwaluseni: Organization for Social Science Research (OSSREA) Swaziland Chapter, 2003

_____ *Narratives of Domestic Workers and the Role of Language in their Experiences in Swaziland*. Michigan: Michigan University. PhD. Thesis 1996

Ernst, Lisa. (ed) *Broken Bodies and Dreams: Violence Against Women Exposed*. Nairobi: United Nations' Offices, 2005

Fabian, Johannes. "Popular Culture in Africa: Findings and Conjectures", Barber, Karin. (ed) in *Readings in Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997

Furniss,Graham and Liz, Gunner (eds). *Power, Marginality and Oral African Literature.* Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995

Grassi, Rosanra and Deblois, Peter. *Composition and Literature*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc., 1984

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994

Gunner, Liz. "Clashes of Interests: Gender, Status and Power in Zulu Praise poetry", Gunner, Liz and Graham, Furniss (ed), in *Power, Marginality and Oral African Literature*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995

_____ "Wrestling with the Present, Beckoning to the Past: Contemporary Zulu Radio Drama", Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 26, No.2, 2000

Gqola, Pumla. “Yindaba Kaban’ Uba’ Ndilahl’ Umlenze?”, *Agenda*, 63, 2005

Hall, Stuart (et al). *Culture, Media and Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, *1972-79*. London: University of Birmingham, 1980

Hewett, Heather. “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation”, *English in Africa*, Vol. 32, 2005

Horrocks, Roger. *An Introduction to the Study of Sexuality*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997

Hudson-Weems, Clenora. “Africana Womanism”, Obioma, Nnaemeka (ed) in *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power from Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998

Mikeli, Gwendolyn (ed). *African Feminism: Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998

Kanduza, Ackson. “Intellectuals in Swazi Politics”, Vilakati Joyce, Mundia J.S. and Dupont-Mkhonza (eds) in *Democracy, Transformation*, *Conflict and Public Policy in Swaziland*. Kwaluseni: OSSREA Swaziland Chapter, 2003

Kuper, Hilda. *The Swazi: A South African Kingdom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986

Lewis, Desiree. “Against the Grain: Black Women and Sexuality”, *Agenda*, 63, 2005

Mamba, Gloria. *Traditional/Oral Literature*. Kwaluseni: I.D.E., 2008

Marwick, B. *The Swazi.* Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Mdluli, Sisana R. “Voicing Their Perceptions: Swazi Women’s Folk Songs” in *Muziki* 4 (1)2007

Mina, Louise. “Questioning Heterosexism: Dead End Debate or a Valid Change” *Agenda,* 7, 1991

Mohanty, Chandra. “Under Western Eyes: Feminist scholarship and Colonial

Discourse", Tripp, A. (ed) in *Gender*. New York: Palgrave, 2000

Motsa-Dladla, Thulisile. *And still they Dance and Sing: The significance and Meaning of Swazi Women's Traditional* Songs. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Saint Mary's University, Halifax

Molara, O. "The Female Writer and Her Commitment", *African Literature Today*, 15, 1987

Morgan, Ruth and Nkabinde, Nkunzi. "This has Happened since Ancient Times…Its Something You Are Born with: Same Sex Sangomas in South Africa" *Agenda* Vol.67, 2005

Mutonya, Maina. *The Politics of Everyday Life in Gikuyu Music of Kenya (1990-2000*). University of Witwatersrand. PhD. Thesis.2006

Muyisiwa, Mickias and Chirere, Memory. "The Nature of Fatherhood and Manhood in Zimbabwean Texts of Pre-Colonial and Colonial Setting", Muponde Robert and Muchemwa Z. Kizito (eds), in *Manning the Nation: Father Figure in Zimbabwean Literature*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2007

Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997

Nhlapho, T. Nhlapho, T. *Marriage and Divorce in Swazi Law and Custom*. Mbabane: Websters, 1992

Nnaemeka, Obioma. (ed) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power from Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998

Lorentzen, J. "Violence Without a Subject", *Agenda,* 37, 1998

Pereira, Charmaine. "Between Knowing and Imagining-What Space for Feminism Scholarship in Africa" *Feminist Africa: Intellectual Politics*, Issue 1 Nov/Dec 2002

Scott, James. *Weapon of the Weak*: *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. London Yale University Press, 1985

Shilling, Chris. *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society*. London: Sage Publication, 2005

Sibanda, Silindiwe. *You Don't Get to Sing a Song When You Have Nothing to Say: Oliver Mtukudzi's Music as a Vehicle for Socio-Political Commentary.* University of Witwatersrand. M.A. Thesis, 2004

Sokupa, Vuyo and Zvomuya, Percy. "The Princess's Polygamy Slur", *Mail and Guardian*. September, 01, 2006

Spector, Morrisa. *Speaking and Subalternity: Gayatri Spivak and the Question of the (Gendered) Subaltern*. University of Witwatersrand. M.A. Thesis, 2001

Tenaille*, Frank. Music is the Weapon of the Future: Fifty Years of African Popular Music*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2002

Vail, Leroy and White Landeg. *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History.* Charlottesville: London University Press, 1991

Zigira, C.A.B. "HIV/AIDS Prevention, Gender and the Challenge of Tradition", Vilakati Joyce, Mundia J.S. and Dupont-Mkhonza Sarah (eds) in *Democracy, Transformation, Conflict and Public Policy in Swaziland*. Kwaluseni: OSSREA Swaziland Chapter, 2003