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Psychodynamic Perspectives on the Master-Servant Relationship and its Representation in the Work of Doris Lessing, Es'kia Mphahlele and Nadine Gordimer.

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ABSTRACT

The master-servant relationship in South Africa is examined in the light of Melanie Klein's psychodynamic theories. It is argued that mechanisms of defence identified by Klein, primarily denial, splitting and projection, as well as depressive guilt, operate in the master-servant relationship in this country. The first chapter clarifies the theoretical approach to i) the individual and society, ii) literature and social analysis and iii) psychoanalysis and literature.

It is argued that individuals are at one and the same time both public and private entities, made by and making the society they live in. The notion that group behaviour is individual behaviour writ large is rejected and the way in which the master-servant relationship is used as a microcosm of the larger relationship between black and white in South Africa is explained.

It is also argued that literature, not bound to specifics of time and place in the way statistics are, yet still rooted in the looser flow of everyday life as experienced by individuals, provides the social analyst with special access to the dynamics of a society.

The value of a psychoanalytic approach to literature lies in the light psychoanalysis sheds on the function of metaphor,

particularly the metaphor of the human body, and phantasy.

In the explication of Klein's theories, the importance of phantasy, both on an individual and a collective level, is stressed. The way in which denial, projection, splitting and guilt operate in South African society is then examined with illustrations drawn from various sources, such as the media and the statements of politicians, but primarily from the fiction of Doris Lessing, Es'kia Mphahlele and Nadine Gordimer. Furthermore, it it is pointed out how patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism can be interpreted in the light of the dynamics proposed by Klein; it is argued that South Africa is a patriarchal, capitalist and colonial society and the effects that this has on the writing of Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer are examined.

A framework for a reading of Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer is then established. Colonial literature, and the literary device of irony are examined. Links are drawn between irony, the metaphor of the body, the rejection of the notion of the purely private individual, and the functioning of denial, splitting and projection.

In the subsequent three chapters, each devoted to a single writer, the theme of failures in recognition is carried through. Each writer is studied to emphasize different aspects of the arguments that have been developed in the preceding chapters. The tensions of patriarchy and colonialism are most clearly seen in the work of Lessing. Gordimer subverts the popularly-accepted division between public and private and provides a historical perspective on the master-servant relationship. Mphahlele, like Gordimer, gives us many examples of how a self is fractured and warped in the domination and subordination that obtains in the

domestic scene. Like Gordimer, he uses irony a great deal to make his point. These three writers from divergent backgrounds resort to similar techniques and metaphors to express a similar vision.

This study interprets the link between the individual and society, and between a society and its literature in terms of a psychodynamic theory. The struggle for a sense of wholeness is an individual and a collective enterprise. The struggle for a South African literature is the struggle for a South African identity.

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An authentic national liberation exists only to the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation.

Frantz Fanon

INTRODUCTION

The central argument of the thesis

Most South Africans live largely in what a Kleinian psychoanalyst would call a paranoid-schizoid state. That is to to say the social life of South Africans, particularly as regards relationships between blacks and whites, is characterised by the mechanisms of denial, splitting and projection. Representations of these mechanisms, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid state, have been provided by South African writers. In this study the Kleinian model of psychodynamic development is described and illustrations are drawn from the work of Doris Lessing, Es'kia Mphahlele and Nadine Gordimer. The existence of guilt as characteristic of what Klein called the depressive position is also much in evidence in the work of these writers. The master-servant relationship is used as a microcosm of the interaction between blacks and whites in general. Its use is qualified however: the notion that group behaviour is simply individual behaviour writ large is rejected.

The master-servant relationship is a relationship of domination and subordination, and relationships of domination and subordination can be interpreted in terms of patriarchy, colonialism or capitalism. Critics of these typifications of society, examining situations where oppression has engendered a condition of intense anxiety, have pointed out the prevalence of denial, splitting, projection and guilt. These mechanisms are

manifested as phantasies. In this dissertation phantasies are defined as those deep stories or myths (often unconscious) which govern much of our everyday perceptions and reactions and the basic psychoanalytic assumption that individuals who are brought to an understanding of their phantasies <u>may</u> establish more satisfactory behaviour patterns, is accepted.

In this dissertation it is argued that collective behaviour in South African society can be explicated in psychoanalytic terms. It is written in the hope that if South Africans gain a better understanding of their collective phantasies, they may, collectively, establish more satisfactory ways of living with each another.

The presentation of the argument

This dissertation ranges across several disciplines and it has therefore been necessary to confront some controversial and fundamental issues. For clarity I have adopted the strategy of taking the following three fundamental issues and dealing with them in Chapter One. These issues are i) the relationship between the individual and society, ii) literature and social analysis, and iii) psychoanalysis and literature.

The question of the relationship between the individual and society remains the central question of social analysis. The position adopted here is that we are socially created, but this leaves room for a great deal of individual determination. Although ego exists from birth, the way in which a coherent social ego is established is greatly affected by the relationship between mother and child, family and social circumstances. The individual exists in society, the society in the individual, and

our behaviour reflects this complex inter-relationship.

Social analysis revolves around representations of reality; a table of statistics is no less a representation of reality than a novel. Fiction, however, is conscious representation of a particular kind and its use in social analysis should be handled in a particular way. Notwithstanding these particularities, I refer to writers whose work is presented here as social analysts.

I claim that psychoanalytic theory provides special techniques and vocabularly for examining meaning. Psychoanalysis, writing a novel, and literary criticism, although not of the same status, are all interpretative acts. What the literary critic can learn from psychoanalysis is how to develop a sensitivity to metaphor and phantasies. What the psychoanalyst can do is to use literary texts as if they are a dream or a phantasy to illustrate psychodynamic mechanisms.

Chapter Two presents the use made of Kleinian psychoanalytic theory. The idea of phantasies, those deep stories we live by, is fundamental to Kleinian analysis. It is logical therefore to begin with a brief recapping of the notion of phantasy. The notion of "positions" provides the context in which to discuss denial, splitting and projection, and guilt.

By the term "position" rather than "stage" or "phase" Klein meant a complex of perceptions and actions arising out of a completely different orientation to reality. Although she suggested a chronology of positions, she did not mean to imply that they were discrete. In this dissertation we are concerned with the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive positions. As these concepts are presented they are illustrated with statements of politicians

and observations by Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer.

Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer write out of a patriarchal, capitalist and colonial society. Although the dynamics of these different social structures vary, in some ways they interact and are mutually reinforcing. In Chapter Two I show how, when these modes are oppressive, the mechanisms of denial, splitting, projection and guilt, as theorized by Klein, arise. Lessing particularly describes how women can be oppressed in the context of more general racial domination and subordination. Mphahlele gives us examples of the loss of coherent identity involved in the colonial enterprise, whilst Gordimer brings into question the liberal ideology that espouses capitalism. These writers, however, are not seen only in their relationship to a particular social structure; they are each the product of all of them.

In Chapter Three the framework in which these writers are examined is presented. Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer are, with some qualification, colonial writers, and in this chapter I explore some of the characteristics of colonial fiction. I conclude by offering comments on irony in South African literature.

The last three chapters are devoted to looking at each author's work in its own right in the light of established themes. Their common concern is a vision that is not distorted by oppressive stereotypes, a vision which allows us to truly see and recognize one another; or at least, if this appears too utopian a vision, a vision which allows us to have a co-operative working understanding of each other.

The limitations of the study

This dissertation aims to apply a particular model of human behaviour to South African society. I do not offer a comprehensive explanation of South African society, much less of patriarchy, capitalism or colonialism. Nevertheless, since it covers an extremely wide field it has been necessary to establish the following limits.

I do not venture into the debate concerning the universal applicability of psychoanalytic theory; I am speaking of whites and blacks in westernized Southern Africa.

Psychoanalytic criticism arises as an issue in this dissertation because we are investigating, from a psychoanalytic point of view, a relationship charactertised by anxiety <u>and</u> the representation of this relationship in a body of literature. The dissertation is not a work of psychoanalytic criticism as such, and major areas in the field, such as the French school (Lacan, Derrida, Bersani, Hartman, Girard, Kristeva) are not referred to. The French school is quite idiosyncratic and does not easily correlate with the object-relations approach I have adopted. Discussion is limited to the provision of a terminology, the function of metaphor and the importance of the body as a metaphor.

All the writers I have chosen started publishing in the late 1940's. I discuss only Lessing's African writings, and therefore do not go beyond <u>African Stories</u> which she published in 1964. All the short stories by Lessing referred to in this work appear in this volume. (The inclusion of Doris Lessing under the rubric of South African writers is justified at the level of analysis

offered in this dissertation. The term "Southern" is unnecessary and cumbersome (Lee, 1983). This must not be taken to imply that there were no distinctive features in the conditions under which Lessing wrote (Chennels, 1980)). I end my discussion of Mphahlele's work with "Mrs Plum" published in 1967, and again in The Unbroken Song (1981). All of his stories referred to appear in this volume. It is only with Gordimer's work that I venture into the 1970's - I conclude my examination of her work with July's People, which was published in 1981.

These writers offer a balance between similarity and diversity. They all use similar forms - the short story and the novel. They have all been fairly eloquent commentators on their fiction and the South African situation and began writing in the same period. Within these rather external parameters, they offer a complex diversity in terms of rural/urban, black/white, male/female, present/absent (exile). Despite this diversity they offer similar accounts of, and come to common conclusions about, this country's psychic reality.

The value of adopting a psychoanalytic perspective in an inter-disciplinary study has been pointed out by Freud. Summing up, in the thirty-fourth lecture of the New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933), what he viewed as the main merits of psychoanalysis, Freud recommended it to our interest "not as a method of treatment, but on account of the information it gives us about what concerns human beings most of all - their own nature - and on account of the connections it discloses between the most different of their activities".

CHAPTER ONE

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

This chapter falls into three distinct parts dealing with the relationships between the individual and society, fiction and social analysis, and psychoanalysis and literature. I will begin by defining some basic terms.

"Society" is a vague term even in the sociologist's vocabulary. In this disseration it is used in a way analogous to the term "nation", to denote a group of people reproducing themselves, linked through interaction and thus sharing certain cultural items and taking part in certain common customs and who can be territorially located.

"Culture" usually refers to that which is socially, as opposed to genetically, transmitted. The term, according to Raymond Williams (1976:87), is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language". He identifies three broad categories of usage:

> i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development
> ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general
> iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the words and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity

Anthropological definitions of culture usually include its

material as well as its ideational and learnt aspects. Sociologists usually use the term in an explicit ideational sense in order to distinguish it from "society".

"Culture" in this dissertation will be used in the way sociologists usually use it to refer to a particular way of life of a particular people in a particular period and place. Thus we shall speak of a white madam in South Africa misapprehending the nature of her society as she follows the prescriptions of her culture and considers a black maid to exist outside or at the edge of her world.

In considering the intellectual activity of human beings, or their attempt to understand their society and human nature, the term "ideology" shall be employed. Like "culture" the term has a tortuous history in English. In this work the term is employed mainly in reference to literature and in a sense derived from Terence Eagleton's (1976:54) definition of "a dominant ideological formation" (GI) which he defines as follows:

> A relatively coherent set of 'discourses' of values, representations and beliefs which, realised in certain material apparatuses and related to the structures of material production, so reflect the experiential relations of individual subjects to their social conditions as to guarantee those misperceptions of the 'real' which contribute to the reproduction of the dominant social relations.

Eagleton stresses that this does not denote "some abstraction or 'ideal type' of 'ideology in general', but that particular dominated ensemble of ideologies to be found in any social formation". He goes on (58) to define "authorial ideology" as follows:

> The effect of the author's specific mode of biographical insertion into general ideology (GI), a

> mode of insertion over-determined by a series of distinct factors: social class, sex, race, nationality, religion, geographical region and so on.

In the South African context the factor of political category or race needs to be specified. One may extend the denotation of Eagleton's "authorial ideology" (AuI) to any individual's ideology.

> This formation [AuI] is never to be treated in isolation from GI, but must be studied in its articulation with it. Between the two formations of GI and AuI [or any individual's ideology], relations of effective homology, partial disjunction or severe contradiction are possible.

Thus we can speak of competing ideologies in a given culture.

The notion of phantasy, mentioned in the introduction, is fundamental to Kleinian (if not all) psychoanalysis. Although there is a literary mode identified as fantasy, we are here concerned with the psychoanalytic observation that we conduct ourselves according to ideas, feelings or "stories" of which we are not necessarily consciously aware. Julia Segal (1985:22) offers the following definition of phantasy:

> Our heads are full of phantasies. Not just <u>fantasies</u> by which I mean stories we make up to amuse ourselves, but "stories" we are deeply involved in and convinced by and which go on independently of our conscious awareness or intention. Phantasies make up the background to everything we do, think or feel: they determine our perceptions and in a sense are our perceptions.

The term can also be employed in a slightly narrower sense to symbolise certain states of being or feeling. When Klein speaks of phantasies of denial, splitting and projection a distinction must be made between the actual process of defence and its specific detailed representation. Hanna Segal (1982:17), a major

explicator of Klein's work, explains this in the following way:

> For instance, it is possible to say that an individual at a given moment is using the processes of projection and introjection as mechanisms of defence. But the processes themselves will be experienced by him in terms of phantasies which will express what he feels himself to be taking in or putting on, the way in which he does this and the results which he feels these actions to have.
>
> Patients frequently describe their experience of the process of repression, for instance, by speaking of a dam inside them which may burst under the pressure of something like a torrent. What an observer can describe as a mechanism is experienced and described by the person himself as a detailed phantasy.

Phantasies, in the sense of stories by which we live and which organise our perceptions, are important when we consider the individual and society. I shall argue that despite the strenuous attempts that have been made to separate the different groups in South Africa, on the level of phantasy we remain deeply involved with one another. In this regard we enter the realm of collective phantasy.

In considering the involvement of ourselves with one another, the term "Other" shall be employed. We shall speak of "primary Other" and by this we shall usually mean the mother. More generally it shall refer to a major influential figure in the life of a Self. In its most general sense Other is simply that which is not-me or not-us. The notion of phantasy is of some consequence here: the primary Other is internalised in the Self <u>on the level of phantasy</u>.

The Individual and Society

In <u>Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego</u> (1921:69), Freud writes:

> In the individual's life, someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent: and so from the very first individual psychology in the extended but entirely justified sense of the words, is at the same time social psychology as well.

Freud was writing at a time when social psychology began to assume its modern form.[1] The terms of the debate concerning the relationship between the individual and the group had already been set out by Gustave Le Bon in The Crowd (1896). Le Bon developed a notion of the "popular mind" (as he phrased it in the subtitle of his book), and proposed that people were psychologically transformed in the crowd; their conscious individual personalities were submerged in a "group mind". In the two seminal works in modern social psychology the concept of the the group mind was rejected. F H Allport in Social Psychology (1924) argued that the individual was the sole psychological reality and that the group was merely a nominal fallacy. M Sherif in The Psychology of Social Norms (1936) argued that individuals adopted different behaviour in groups because the group had a phenomenological reality for its members which could not be reduced to the sum of its parts.

Individually-oriented and socially-oriented explanations of large-scale social practices continued to compete in theories of intergroup behaviour. Adorno et al (1950) explained prejudice in terms of a pathological personality syndrome; it represented the externalisation of unconscious hostilities and fears. M Sherif and CW Sherif (1953) attacked all attempts to "individualize" prejudice. To them it was the product of a rational social process, as was social conflict itself. The classic work on the subject, GW Allport's The Nature of Prejudice

(1954), argued that racial prejudice, and by implication prejudice <u>per se</u>, could be dispelled by contact under the right conditions.

According to Turner and Giles (1981:11) the dyad has tended to replace the group as the unit of analysis in social psychology. The contemporary emphasis is on interpersonal relationships and individual processes. Nevertheless grave doubts remain as to the extent to which interpersonal analyses provides insight into intergroup behaviour.

In this dissertation I follow the dyadic individualist tradition, but do not propose that the explanation for social or group behaviour is soley explicable in terms of the individual. I follow the tradition of Berger and Luckman (1967:211) who propose that society "is part of a human world made by men, inhabited by men, and in turn, making men, in an ongoing historical process".

Although we give due weight to the social construction of the individual, Regis Debray (1983:129) has correctly and poetically stated:

> The group is a sultry passion, and our poor knowledge of individual passions - those minor incitements to crime - helps to explain why we are still in the dark about the collective.

Debray has perhaps overstated the case; there are many plausible explanations of collective behaviour. However, the problem of relating individual behaviour to pervasive social phenomena remains. Since I do not propose that individual experience <u>alone</u> can explain large-scale social action, I find no need to contest the claims of "social psychological" theories:

> Many of the 'individual' theories start from general descriptions of psychological processes which are assumed to operate in individuals in a way which is independent of the effects of social interaction and social context. The social context and interaction are assumed to affect these processes, but only in the sense that society provides a variety of settings in which 'basic' individual laws of motivation or cognition are uniformly displayed. In contrast, 'social psychological' theories tend to start from individuals in groups, rather than individuals tout court. They do not necessarily contradict the 'preliminary' individual laws such as those, for example, applying to frustration and aggression or to cognitive dissonance. But they stress the need to take into account the fact that group behaviour - and even more so inter-group behaviour - is displayed in situations in which we are not dealing with random collections of individuals who somehow came to act in unison because they all happen to be in a similar psychological state. (Henri Tajfel, 1978:403)

Tajfel and Turner's conclusion (1979:39) that there is some factor or process inherent in the intergroup situation itself is accepted. An exploration of such factors falls outside the scope of this dissertation. There is, however, one line of investigation which is pertinent, namely the work of the Kleinian psychologist Wilfred Bion.

According to Dicks (1970:309),Bion made a "massive conceptual contribution to the theory and practice of group relations". In 1948 Bion started taking groups at the Tavistock Clinic. "He treated the whole group as the patient, giving interpretations to the group and not the individuals" (de Board, 1978:37). This allowed him to identify what he called a "basic assumption group". There were three such groups.

The first is a group which works on the basic assumption of dependency. This group assumes the leader will supply nourishment, material and spiritual, and protection. Its members display inadequate and immature behaviour, acting as if ignorant and unable to contribute to the group. The leader is held to be

omnipotent and omniscient, one who can solve all problems as if by magic.

The second group operates on the <u>pairing</u> <u>assumption</u>. It is characterised by a hope that a messiah will deliver them from their anxiety and fears. This messiah may be the idea that the coming season will be better that the present one. Of course, it is important that the hope remains unborn, or unrealised. "Only by remaining a hope does hope exist" (Bion, 1968:152).

The third group assumes it has met "to fight something or run away from it. It is prepared to do either indifferently" (Bion, 1968:152) and <u>flight</u> <u>or</u> <u>fight</u> seem to be the only techniques of self-preservation understood by the group. The leader of this group is crucial. He or she must lead the group against a common enemy, inventing one if necessary. Followers are spurred on to courage and self-sacrifice. The basis of this leadership is paranoia: "They" are endangering the group and "they" must be destroyed.

What these groups have in common is the care they take to insulate themselves from reality and maintain their basic assumption. The mechanisms employed by the group are not mutually exclusive, and it is clear that South African white society behaves like one of Bion's groups. Bion believed that the source of the main emotional drives in the group arise through processes described by Melanie Klein, i.e., projection, splitting and a particular form of denial, phantasies of omnipotence. De Board, an explicator of Bion's work, has written (1978:46) that these basic assumptions

> are not in fact basic irreducible behavourial

> phenomena. They are specific expressions of psychotic anxiety within the group and are defence mechanisms against this anxiety.

This is a valuable insight, but it led to unjustifiable claims. According to de Board, Freud's explanation of bonding in the church by introjection and Ferenczi's explanation of bonding in the army through projection and transference proved the centrality of introjection and projection in group behaviour. In line with the insights of another Kleinian psychologist, Paula Heimann, who wrote that "These mechanisms of introjection and projection represent not only an essential function of the ego, they are the roots of the ego, the instruments for its very foundation" (1952:126), de Board went on to claim that:

> ...the concepts of identification by introjection and projection...[became] central and basic to a development of a theory of group behaviour. They also began to reveal that group behaviour is individual behaviour writ large. (1978:24)

Group behaviour is not simply individual behaviour writ large. We are conscious of our membership of groups or categories - gender, class and political groups, and act as members of those groups.

In terms of South Africa, the importance of Kleinian psychodynamics lies in appreciating <u>the phantasy level</u> at which groups "see" each other. The dialectical nature of the relationship between self (or ingroup) and other (or outgroup) has long been recognized in South Africa. Olive Schreiner, in 1891, wrote that "there is a subtle and very real bond which unites all South Africans, and differentiates us from all other people in the world. <u>This bond is our mixture of races itself</u>" (Krige, 1968:122-3)[2]. Nadine Gordimer has been more specific:

> The greatest single factor in the making of our mores in South Africa was and is and will be the colour question... It's far more than a matter of prejudice or discrimination or conflict of loyalties - we have built a morality on it. We have gone deeper, we have created our own sense of sin and our own form of tragedy. We have added hazards of our own to man's fate, and to save his soul he must wrestle not only with the usual lust, greed and pride but also with a set of demons marked "made in South Africa". (1960:17)

On another occasion she was even more succinct and brought together the notion of society in the individual and the representation of the individual: "To paraphrase, one might say (too often), politics is character in South Africa" (1965:22-3).

The point here is that we are dealing with phantasies about the Other, both individual and collective, and beliefs and feelings attached to representations of the Other. Leo Kuper makes the important and subtle distinction:

> My argument then is that racial discrimination is associated not so much with cultural differences between the races, as with particular perceptions or beliefs about those differences, as they come to be elaborated in ideologies. (1974:28)

This supports Stephen Watson's suggestion that:

> In a psychological sense it may be said South Africa is held together by a nexus of peoples "dreaming" each other in terms of the myths that the distance between them creates. (1980)

We thus return to Freud's point that "in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved". In this respect it can be appreciated that:

> [The theories of Freud] constitute a necessary corrective to those "structural" theories which explain all social action in terms of the external processes determined by essentially economic forces. Within such theories, questions of the rationality or non-rationality of <u>individuals</u> become subordinate to the logic of <u>systems</u>. (Bocock, 1983:8)

It is clear then that, although we cannot proceed on the assumption that group behaviour is individual behaviour writ large, there is a sense in which we can view a representative dyadic relationship such as the master-servant relationship in South Africa as a microcosm of the larger relationship between whites and blacks. This is the position taken by Michael G Whisson and William Weil in Domestic Servants: A Microcosm of "the race problem" (1971:2):

> The broad social problem was often the individual or family problem writ large - the problem of how to have cheap labour available when required, whilst eliminating the human element with its recreational and other social needs.

Such a relationship requires the denial of the humanity of the Other. In other words, the other person is not recognized as a whole person, but is denied and subjected to a split perception and projection. These mechanisms of denial, splitting and projection are learnt in the first relationship we have, the one with the primary Other in our lives, our mother. The genesis of these mechanisms, arising out of the problem of how to introject the good without the bad, will be explained in the next chapter.

Whether one is functioning as a master or a servant one can use the same basic mechanisms of defence. Madams and maids act both as individuals and members of a category. We can understand something of how they act by intra-psychic analysis; but they also act as members of a white served category and a black serving category. They may therefore present themselves to each other not only as individuals but as members of a category, and will regulate their behaviour according to the given mores, to an

extent internalised as individual behaviour, concerning such relationships.

Literature and social analysis

The central issues in this section are the nature of a social fact and representations of reality. On the question of the status of literary texts in social analysis it could be argued that novels are already in themselves social analyses and it would be better to root one's own social analysis in more direct observations such as journals, diaries, newspapers and concrete statistics. To some extent this is done. The important point however, is that a table of statistics is also, like a novel, a representation of reality. Just as it has been so cogently argued in historiography that the facts do not speak for themselves (Carr, 1961) so it is for sociology. The historian, the sociologist and the novelist are all in a sense "story-tellers", insofar as they have shaped data. However, even whilst it must be borne in mind that a social analyst cannot be free from subjectivity, the sense in which they may be considered like novelists to be "story-tellers" must be rigourously distinguished. The historian and the sociologist aspire to an impersonal objectivity in the interests of an objective account, fiction is not offered as an objective view of society. As such, its imaginative content must be appreciated. This does not imply that the social scientist and the writer are presenting accounts of reality which will be in conflict with each other; rather, they are attempting to tell a truth in a different way.

The issue revolves round the nature of a social fact. The novelist's explicit project is to tell stories. He sets himself up quite consciously as a medium and attempts to achieve the

subjectivity of various positions in his society. He also has a different audience in mind. His purpose is to entertain as well as inform, and the rigours of the scientific method do not apply. Despite these differences the point remains that the historian, the sociologist and the novelist are all attempting to tell "the facts" of a certain situation. It is in this qualified sense that a novelist may be considered to be a social analyst.

There are, broadly speaking, two ways in which the social analyst may use fiction. One is to examine the ideology of the fiction and thereby come to some conclusions about the reality in which the writer lived or lives; the other is to "mine" the work for straight-foward descriptions and to categorize and quantify the more external characteristics of a body of fiction. The former is usually considered more of a literary than sociological enterprise, whilst the reverse holds for the latter.

In his Documents of Life (1983) Kenneth Plummer calls the work of Thomas and Znaniecki The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (1958) "the first major sociological life history" (64). In The Polish Peasant Thomas and Znaniecki claim that life histories constitute "the perfect type of sociological material" because they allow access to "the personal material necessary to characterise the life of a social group" (1,832-3). According to Plummer "the central value of life documents - and the job they can best do - is in the tapping of ordinary, ambiguous personal meanings" (82). In other words, the value of life histories is that they allow the gaps and inconsistencies in an individual life which would not be easily accessible by the scientific method, to be charted. The scientific method, with its criteria of objectivity, quantification, verifiability, replication and so

on, is concerned with establishing facts of a particular kind.

With reference to such facts, Gordimer has pointed out, "The facts are always less than what really happens" (1976:614). Life histories go some way towards grasping the un-get-at-able (the phrase is Gordimer's) aspects of a life. Gordimer makes a similar claim for fiction to that made by the authors of The Polish Peasant:

> If you want to know the facts of the retreat from Moscow in 1815, you may read a history book; if you want to know what war is like, and how people of a certain time and background dealt with it as their personal situation, you must read War and Peace. (1973:7)

On another occasion she said:

> I mean the facts are just on the surface - it's what makes the fact. If you get a law like Group Areas, under which various population groups are moved from one part of the country to another, uprooted from their homes and so on, well somebody may give you the figures, how many people are moved, how many jobs were lost. But, to me, it doesn't tell you nearly as much as the story of one individual who lived through it. (1976a:514)

Both claims that Gordimer supports - the power of fiction to fill in the gaps and the worth of focussing on an individual - need to be qualified. With regard to the power of fiction to "fill in the gaps", it must be noted that novelists are themselves historical subjects and that novels express ideological positions. The world in a novel is a representation of a particular and limited consciousness of a world.

However, the novelist is not bound to present only his or her own ideological position. According to Gordimer the writer "must set himself to be a kind of medium through which the attitude of

the society he lives in comes to light" (1976b: Intro).

Writers construct fictional types intended to be representatives of social and historical movements. To this end the author constructs "a figure who engages in a highly individualised and extreme form with the social and historical possibilities and necessities of his/her situation, as the novelist preceives them" (Clingman, 1981:166). This individualisation and extreme engagement enables the writer to create a character. The distinction between the literary perspective and the notion of stereotypes must be clearly drawn:

> A distinction [needs to be made] between the creation of a dramatic 'type', which meant achieving the subjectivity of another person or group, and the creation of stereotypes which were essentially weapons in the struggle for power constantly being waged in society. (John McGraith, quoted by Tajfel in Turner and Giles, 1981:145)

In terms of the novelist perceiving "social and historical possibilities and necessities" Gordimer has suggested that the novelist can go further than the historian. Asked by Diana Cooper-Clarke (Gordimer, 1983:54) about the aesthetic requirements of "the novel as history", Gordimer replied:

> The requirements there are not just truth to events, you could check the dates in any history, but an attempt to discover what people think and feel and most important, the most important requirement to my mind, would be to make a connection between their personal attitudes and actions and the pressure of the historical period that shaped such actions... I think that is where the novelist goes much further than the historian. The historian can tell you the events and can trace how the event came about through power shifts in the world. But the novelist is concerned with the power shifts within the history of individuals who make up history.

As an example of what she is talking about, Gordimer goes on to cite Lionel Burger's future biographer talking to Rosa Burger and

the consequent meshing of documentation with personal anecdote.

We may accept that the writer is not bound to present only his or her own ideological position. The complex question then arises of how a writer comes to question the dominant ideology. One pertinent consideration however, seems to be that a person can, due to individual circumstances which place them "on the outside", gain some sort of transcendent perspective. In this regard we can consider that both Lessing and Gordimer did not attend school as teenagers. Mphahlele has documented his struggle for an education and has a powerful memory symbolic of his position. He remembers (in Manganyi,1981:5) visiting hismother, at her place of work and says "I realised that I was in unnatural circumstances. I was always in her backroom and never saw the inside of the house." Lessing, attempting to answer just this question, speaks of "a lucky series of psychological chances" (1957:15-16).

An ideology is a site of struggle and a place of competing perceptions. As such it is not a monolithic and coherent object, but is shot through with contradictions with allow for individuals to position themselves at varying distances from the certain aspects of the ideology. Naturally the individual's ideology is also likely to be shot through with contradictions. As individuals, unhappy with certain aspects of the dominant ideology reject them and seek to establish coherent personal ideologies, they may come to hold an entirely distinct ideology opposed to the dominant one. From this position ideology may be seen to have other characteristics; it has hegemonic, mediatory and constitutive functions.

We may now consider how ideology enters a text. Literature is first of all language. Raymond Williams (1977:55) makes the interesting point that bearers of language with written texts saw speech as derived: "Language use could then hardly ever be seen as itself active and constitutive". Alfred Schutz, in The Phenomenology of the Social World, (in Bantock, 1975) has observed:

> The typifying medium par excellance by which socially-derived knowledge is transmitted is the vocabularly and syntax of everyday language.

Eagleton, speaking of language and how it is used in literature, is able to claim that: "The linguistic is always at base the politico-linguistic" (1976:54). According to Eagleton, the politico-linguistic is a sphere of struggle and literature exists in this sphere:

> Literature is an agent as well as effect of such struggle, a crucial mechanism by which the language and ideology of an imperialist class establishes its hegemony, or by which a subordinated state, class or region preserves and perpetuates at the ideological level an historical identity shattered or eroded at the political. (1975:54-55)

Anthony Chennels (1982:xvi), in his work on the Southern Rhodesian novel, shows how certain authors wrote in a way which contributed towards "the readiness with which most whites agreed to be misled" when it came to the Zimbabwe War of Liberation. They achieved this by what he calls mythopoesis, that is, raising to the status of myth certain desirable (on the part of the settlers) ideas or visions, such as the myth of the empty land, the myth of the freedom of nature and the myth of a Rhodesian identity. Such writers were certainly agents in the reproduction of the dominant ideology. Lessing is identified by Chennels as

one of the few intelligent critics of this ideology and what he says of The Grass is Singing illustrates the complexities of agency, reflection and criticism. He says:

> [This novel] is a magnificent mythopoesis of the gulf [between white and black] and yet much of its power is derived from the sardonic authorial instrusions that demytholigise the settler's right to the status they have claimed for themselves. (412)

I have touched on the subject of history in speaking of social facts. On the nature of an historical fact, E H Carr (1961) writes:

> What is an historical fact?... It used to be said that the facts speak for themselves. This is of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides which facts to give the floor and in what order or context.

What we understand as history is an ideological version of history. Those producing literary texts take history and do to it what historians do to facts. History, as Eagleton says (1976:72) enters the text as ideology. The point has also been made elsewhere (Macherey, 1978):

> The literary work must be studied in a double perspective: in relation to history, and in relation to an ideological version of that history. It cannot be reduced to either one of these two terms.

There is a reductionist tendency in considering ideology and literature which must be resisted; whilst the hegemonic and mediatory role of literature is apparent, literature, and art in general, can not be reduced to ideology.

In terms of social analysis, it is precisely this indeterminate place of literature that makes of it a valuable tool. Fiction, unlike statistical information or reportage, is rooted in

everyday life yet detached enough to offer abstractions or realistic models.

> [Literature] is a mode of access more immediate than that of science and more coherent than that normally available in daily living itself. Literature presents itself in this sense as 'midway' between the distancing rigour of scientific knowledge and the vivid but loose contingencies of the 'lived' itself. (Eagleton, 1976:101)

The work of the writers I am looking at is firmly grounded in their social reality. It is the texture of everyday life that provides them with their raw material. Lessing has told the tale (Vambe, 1972:xviii) of a woman she knew who nursed a black child and was heartbroken when it died. However, when this woman was told of a farmer who had horrifically abused a black labourer accused of stealing a bar of soap, the woman was most impressed and said "That's the way to treat them." It is this split perception that perhaps inspired "Little Tembi" (Lessing, 1964). This story describes how Jane MacCluster nurses infant Tembi back to life. She then has children of her own and forgets about Tembi. Tembi however, demands that his presence be acknowledged and finally, as a teenager, he resorts to petty pilfering in order to make his presence felt. He is finally caught and sent to prison. Many years after Gordimer wrote "Something for the time being" (1960) which describes the firing of an ANC supporter who insisted on wearing his ANC badge, a worker, Isaac Phoko, was fired in the Cape for insisting on wearing his UDF badge (Grassroots, June 1985). In "Mrs Plum" Mphahlele describes Karabo's perplexity at Mrs Plum's readiness to go to jail rather than pay a fine. Recently a Ms P Makanye expressed her perplexity at her employer's readiness to go to jail rather than pay a fine for illegally employing her (The Cape Times, October 29, 1985:9).

Furthermore, fiction often offers descriptions of interactions which are not described in other disciplines. Few white South Africans are not aware of the practice of the madam passing on clothes to the maid. Yet it is only recently that the feelings which surround such actions have been explored in sociology and then largely from the maid's point of view (Jacklyn Cock, 1980). Yet Gordimer in "Six Feet of the Country", "Happy Event" (1956) and "Ah, woe is me" (1954), Mphahlele in "Mrs Plum" (1980) and Lessing in "A Home for the Highland Cattle" (1964) have explored this practice and its implications in some detail. It is not simply that they have described it, but that they have described it in fiction, where the feelings involved and the metaphoric implications can be speculated upon.[3]

Psychoanalysis and literature

In 1922 Freud defined psychoanalysis as "the name (1) of a procedure for the investigation of mental processes which are almost inaccessible in any other way, (2) of a method (based upon that investigation) for the treatment of neurotic disorders, and (3) of a collection of psychological information obtained along those lines, which is gradually being accumulated into a new scientific discipline" (1922). It is the third element of this definition which is pertinent to the present work. Whether or not psychoanalysis is a positivist science is contestable (Wright, 1984:9). However, as a body of information which may be usefully employed by the literary critic, it has given birth to a special field of enquiry, begun by Freud himself as early as 1898, which may be considered a discipline in its own right.[4] It is a specialization that has been marked by crude reductionism and defensiveness; in general, and this is certainly true of the

early period, literary critics made better use of psychoanalysis than analysts made of literature.[5]

(a) Terminology

Lionel Trilling begins his essay "Freud and Literature", written in 1947 (1950) with the much-quoted statement Freud made on his 70th birthday:

> The poets and the philosophers before me discovered the unconscious. What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied.[6]

Trilling's opening comment more accurately reflects the nature of Freud's achievement:

> The Freudian psychology is the only systematic account of the human mind, which in point of subtlety and complexity, of interest and tragic power, deserves to stand beside the chaotic mass of psychological insights which literature has accumulated through the centuries. (emphasis added)

By providing a systematic account, Freud provided a terminology - he made possible a coherent discourse about the human mind. Naturally, being in possession of a discourse allowed for insights which were not hitherto expressible; nevertheless I emphasize Trilling's use of "beside", for Freudian insight neither stands "above" nor is it subordinate to literary insight. Indeed, psychoanalysis is practised on the assumption that psychoanalytic insights are apprehendable by the person in the street. What is needed on the part of the analysand is insight, not technical training.

The provision of a language or a discourse is a point taken up by Karen Ann Butery (1982:40) who uses Horneyan psychology to analyse the Victorian heroine in fiction: "Horneyan psychology

contributes to literary criticism by enriching our understanding of the conflicts underlying the struggles of fictional characters and providing a terminology to talk about them". Would any contemporary reader of the following passage from Sons and Lovers (published in 1913, the year that The London Psychoanalytic Society was founded) understand it without using terms such as Oedipal complex, identification, repression, denial and splitting?

> He looked round. A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them forever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice. Being the sons of mother whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman; for a woman was like their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person. (1960:341)

Lawrence went on to illustrate what Freud called the "Madonna and Prostitute" complex, one of the best-known examples of splitting, denial and projection. What is of note here is that Lawrence claimed (and there is no reason to disbelieve him) that he had written the first drafts of Sons and Lovers (which, significantly enough, originally had a different title - Paul Morel) before reading Freud.

What has polarized critics and analysts is the question of conscious and unconscious meanings. On the one hand the critic E D Hirsch declares that "meaning is an affair of consciousness" whilst Sandor Ferenczi argues that "what is related to consciousness only becomes comprehensible when the meaning behind is plumbed". (Quoted in Skura, 1981:3). Of course, the fact is that:

> There is no single neatly definable meaning of which we are directly and all-encompassingly conscious in all its manifestation, nor is there any such thing as a meaning of which we are totally unconscious. There are, rather, different ways of being aware of things and different aspects of a text which compel a certain kind of awareness. Rather than looking only for unconscious or conscious meaning, the analyst describes a whole range of what has been called "modes of consciousness", or modes of representation. Rather than simply discovering the unconscious, Freud discovered the variety of ways in which we become aware of ourselves and our world and the means by which we represent both. (Skura, 3)

It is at precisely this point - the means by which we represent ourselves and our world - that the value of employing psychoanalytic concepts is established. In South Africa we have a social fabric infused with the dynamics of denial, splitting, projection and guilt: we have a literature littered with returning corpses, the unsaid, the unheard, the unseen as well as schizophrenic characters with delusions of omnipotent power. Authors are creating characters and narratives that correspond to the society that they, the authors, think they live in. That society is inimical to a coherent sense of identity, and writers portray the struggles of characters to forge an identity.[7] Psychoanalysis provides the terminology and concepts to discuss this struggle.

An important distinction must be made at this point. The deployment of psychoanalytic terminology is not psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis as a practice is a dynamic relationship between two people. One cannot accurately speak of psychoanalysing an author or fictional character or a text. As theory, psychoanalysis provides facts of a particular kind; they are contingent and provisional, usually presented as metaphors and embedded in a narrative structure. In literary criticism the text

is given once and for all. Insofar as it is made to yield different meanings, this is a process performed by the critic only. In psychoanalysis there are two dynamic parties in the process. A fictional character does not have an unconscious in the psychoanalytic sense of the word. Although we may speculate upon the motives and intentions of Mehring (in The Conservationist), July (in July's People), Mary Turner (in The Grass is Singing) and Mrs Plum, we are not psychoanalyzing, but interpreting a static illustration.

The more contemporary resurgence of "character analysis" takes place in an ambience where the traditional distinctions between analyzing character, author and reader has begun to give way. The results, according to Skura (80), can be confusing, and she cites Frederick Crew's study of Hawthorne in which plots and landscape are analysed as signs both of Hawthorne's and of his character's conflicts. As Skura says, "It is not clear just whom Crews is trying to psychoanalyze" (Skura 80).

The crux of the similarity between analyst and critic lies in the fact that they both not only note primitive and unconscious elements, but attempt to weave them into the texture of conscious experience. It is this, says Skura, that makes the poets the predecessors of Freud. (Skura 4)

We must then return to the determinations of text and form. Even if, to take a point of view quite different to that of Skura's, "structure and theme are primarily determined by the author's craftmanship, whereas characterization often grows out of his psychological intuitions" (Butery, 1982:40), characters must be explained in terms of the world in which they are presented, and

the text must be explained in terms of the world in which it is presented. Characters act as authorial creations, subject to the the author's psychological insights and technical skills as well as dominant and authorial ideology.

Fiction in psychoanalysis is most obvious in the case studies. Steven Marcus (1974) in an analysis of Freud's "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1901), better known as the case of Dora, investigates the fictional nature of this case study. Ironically enough, what draws the analyst and critic together - examining how unconscious or latent meaning (sub- or extra-textual material) is worked into the texture of conscious or manifest experience (text) - also drives them apart. For the critic must consider specifically literary devices and the determinations of literary form. Still, it is possible to overstate the difference between critic and analyst, for if we do not grasp the fact that psychoanalysis is a narrative act, we will be blind to Freud's most basic metaphor - the body - and we will fail to understand the attractions of psychoanalytic criticism and psycho-history.

> Literature, history and psychoanalysis belong to a common family, perhaps even to a somewhat incestuous one. The historian Hayden White has pointed out how historians may be organised by the literary categories of comedy, romance, irony or tragedy; and the clinician Roy Schaffer has translated Freud's scientific language of force, energy and apparatus into "a historical, experimental intentionalistic model". In all three disciplines, moreover, the favoured mode of explaining is <u>telling a story</u>. For all three the original data are interpretation, whether they are documents, texts or dreams. Their facts are not like pebbles on a beach; they are acts of mind. (Albin, 1980)

The importance of appreciating "the story" or "the narrative" becomes clear when we consider the hidden stories, or phantasies, by which we live; this will be done in the next chapter.

(b) Metaphor and the body[8]

It is often difficult in any discipline to distinguish terminology and metaphor. Bruno Bettelheim (1985), insisting on the humanistic nature of Freud's work, has written:

> Of all the metaphors that Freud used, probably none had more far-reaching consequences than the metaphor of mental illness, and - derived from it - the metaphor of psychoanalysis as the treatment and cure of mental illness. Freud evoked the image of illness and its treatment to enable us to comrehend how certain disturbances influence the psyche, what causes them, and how they may be dealt with. If this metaphor is not recognised as such, but, rather, taken as referring to objective facts, we forfeit a real understanding of the unconscious and its workings. In this metaphor, the body stands for the soul.

He goes on to detail the difference between Naturwissenschaften (natural sciences) and, opposed in method and content, Geistewissenschaften, the literal meaning of which he gives as "sciences of the spirit". According to Bettelheim, in much of the German world, psychology fell into the realm of the latter; in the English-speaking world, particularly America, it fell into the realm of the former. The importance of this distinction for this dissertation is obvious; this thesis is a work of Geistewissenschaft.

The importance of the body is insisted upon by Elizabeth Wright (1984:2-3), although her sensitivity to its metaphoric dimension is not obvious:

> Only through its effects do we come to know the unconscious: through the logic of symptoms and dreams, through jokes and 'Freudian slips', through the pattern of children's play, and most crucially in the mutually affective relationship which human beings develop as a consequence of their past total helplessness and dependence on another person. These emotions,

> regenerated in the analytic situation, may be taken as evidence that no experience the body has is ever totally erased from the mind.
>
> The effects produced in a body by its perilous entry via language into culture take the form of repetitions and patterned interactions from which laws can be derived, thereby making the unconscious a legitimate object of a special science.

Wright goes on to say that "if there is a single key issue it is probably the question of the role of sexuality in the constitution of the self" and she sharply criticizes a "desexualised" application of psychoanalytic criticism (citing New Criticism and deconstruction) as missing an essential point:

> Clinical practice has borne out to what extent sexuality, in its wider Freudian sense, is the component of the needs of bodies which have become socialised. The literary text, the work of art, is a form of persuasion whereby bodies are speaking to bodies, not merely minds speaking to minds. (5)

It has been suggested that the most powerful metaphors are carnal metaphors and that: "the true meanings of words are bodily meanings, carnal knowledge; and the bodily meanings are the unspoken meanings (Norman O Brown, 1966:265, in Rogers, 1978). In Love's Body, Brown calls for "speech resexualised". If the presuppositions of the Kleinians is accepted it seems that we ultimately understand power in terms of our bodies being fragmented, penetrated and contained. I have found it useful to take the notions of inside/outside, fragmentation, penetration and containment, and see how they are expressed in various ways in terms of housing, clothing and food. This is what the psychoanalyst, the poet and the critic have in common; they seek to make explicit what the discourse would have hidden, and they succeed according to their sensitivity to metaphor.

Obviously a psychoanalytic appreciation of metaphor and the body

can only enhance one's sensitivity to a literature that investigates a relationship charged with anxiety. In this regard I draw attention to the statement of Gramsci, used to preface _July's People_, and to Freud's definition of a symptom. Gramsci wrote:

> The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.

Freud once defined a symptom as "that place in a conversation in which a word should have been spoken" (Schneiderman, 1980:7).

CHAPTER TWO

A PSYCHODYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Freud assumed that adult neurosis was rooted in a childhood neurosis existing at the time of the Oedpidal complex. In "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918), known as the Wolf Man case, he showed how the structure of an infantile neurosis could be revealed. The case of Little Hans (1909), in which the father's analysis of the little boy led to an abatement of the boy's neurotic fear of horses, confirmed Freud's hypothesis. Despite such findings, the analysis of children did not thrive. One problem had to do with the widely accepted notion of "childhood innocence", but a greater difficulty concerned the application of psychoanalytic technique to children. In was in this regard that Melanie Klein made a crucial contribution to psychoanalytic theory.

Melanie Klein was born in Vienna in 1882, but it was only in 1910 that she first encountered Freud's work. She became an analysand of Ferenczi and with his encouragement started to analyse children. In 1920 she met Karl Abraham at a psychoanalytic congress in The Hague. She considered herself a pupil of Abraham, who in 1924 was to say that the future of psychoanalysis lay in play technique. In 1922 she moved to Berlin and established a psychoanalytic practice with adults and children. Life in Berlin was difficult for Klein, because prevailing opinion supported Anna Freud who held that the techniques of

psychoanalysis should not be applied to children. In 1925 Klein met Ernest Jones at a conference in Salzburg and impressed him with her first paper on the technique of child analysis (1926) and was later invited to give some lectures in England. Finally she left Berlin and in 1927 arrived in London with her technique of child analysis, which she called play analysis, fully worked out. She continued working in London until her death in 1960.

Before explaining play analysis and the importance of phantasy, it is necessary to explain the Kleinian use of the term 'object'. For Freud, the object was anything by means of which an instinct could achieve gratification. For Klein the object was a psychological entity as well as a means by which the instinct could achieve gratification (Hanna Segal, 1979:49). In Kleinian terms an object could be subject to an infant's love, hatred and fear as well as being in itself loving, hating, greedy and envious. Since the infant internalised primary figures, Klein spoke of internal and external objects. These figures were sometimes subject to split perceptions. In other words, parts of them were feared and hated and whilst others parts were desired. Klein thus spoke of part objects and whole objects, internal and external.

Due to Klein's emphasis on objects her views became known as "object relations theory". According to Segal (1979:65), nowadays, when it is more usual to speak of Kleinian theory, "object relations theory" refers more to the work of Winnicott, Balint and Fairbairn. Other well-known Kleinian theorists are Paula Heimann and Susan Isaacs.

Klein wrote only one synoptic paper on her work (1952) and she was not a lucid writer. I shall therefore often refer to Hanna

Segal's exegesis of her work.

According to Hanna Segal, (1979:36), Klein's "stroke of genius lay in noticing that the child's natural mode of expressing itself was play, and that play could therefore be used as a means of communication with the child... In his play the child dramatises his phantasies". Klein argued that play could serve a similar purpose to free association in adults:

> In their play, children represent symbolically phantasies, wishes and experiences. Here they are employing the same language, the same archaic, philogenetically acquired mode of expression as we are familiar with from dreams... Symbolism is only part of it... we must take into account... all the means of representation and mechanisms employed in dreamwork" (Writings 1, 132).

Klein gave a short account of her technique in a paper presented in 1946 (1955). She has also given many vivid descriptions of her technique in action in the Psycho-Analysis of Children (1932). It became obvious that phantasy was a major force in the child's development.

The implication that phantasy continues to play an important role in the life of the adult is explored by Julia Segal (1985), whose definition of phantasies as those "deep stories" according to which we act, has already being presented. We are here concerned with the slightly different sense of the term which was presented, the sense in which a phantasy is the representation of an actual process of defence. In terms of this sense of the word, the reader is invited to recall the importance of the body as metaphor, and the crucial role language plays in socialising a body.

Our everday language is embedded with phrases which are

phantasies of mechanisms; we speak of being "stabbed in the back", "a slap in the face", "a pat on the back", getting "into" someone, someone being "under our skin", "lending a hand" and so on. Julia Segal (1985:75) draws attention to the importance of metaphor, especially bodily metaphors:

> It seems that we understand the processes of getting rid of parts of ourselves, and taking parts of others in, in terms initially of bodily processes. Metaphor is a useful pointer to the phantasies which can be involved. Prototypes for phantasies of getting rid of something painful include defecating, as in the many metaphorical uses of the word 'shit': urinating, as in 'piss off', to use one of the milder expression; breathing out, as in 'a sigh of relief'; and also many kinds of muscular movement, such as hitting out. Bodily processes we use to understand 'taking in' phantasies include eating, digesting and also breathing in, as in 'taking a deep breath'. In phantasy we seem to believe on the whole that good things should come in and bad ones go out, except when things have gone wrong.

In this dissertation we are concerned with identifying phantasies of denial, splitting and projection. It is possible for analytical purposes to distinguish the notions of denial, splitting and projection; in practice, however, they interact in many different ways. In order to understand this interaction, it is necessary to see them in the context of the Kleinian notion of positions.

The Positions[1]

In presenting the notion of "position" I shall develop the concepts of denial, splitting and projection. In subsequent sections, I shall return to a more detailed discussion of each one, and illustrate it with examples from the statements of politicians and the work of Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer.

Klein argued that infants exist in various "positions"; first the paranoid-schizoid position, then the narcissistic position, then the depressive position. The paranoid-schizoid position is occupied in the first three or four months, and the depressive position in the second half of the first year. The term "position" must be understood as an attitude or stance, rather than a discrete phase that lies chronologically between two other positions. Klein's term "implies a specific configuration of object relations, anxieties and defences which persist throughout life" (Hanna Segal, 1982:ix).

In the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant has no concept of time or space; the position is characterised by the infant's unawareness of persons, his relationship being to part objects, and by the prevalence of splitting processes and paranoid anxiety. In this position, reference to good or bad objects refer to states of being for the infant because of projective identification with the object.

Klein introduced the concept of projective identification to describe when split off parts of the self or bodily products are, in phantasy, projected into the object.

The first primary object for the infant is the breast, later the mother. The end of this paranoid-schizoid position is marked by the narcissistic or borderline position. This is a result of the split between inner or outer reality brought about by the infant seeing and hearing the mother as an object separate from itself. What happens in the narcissistic position is the appearance of time and space and the separation of visual and auditory <u>object</u> perception from bodily narcissistic perception;

that is, the beginning of object-relations as opposed to the projective identification with the object.

Her theory of the paranoid-schizoid position was developed because Klein, unlike Freud, credits the infant with ego at birth. Hence, according to Klein, the experience of anxiety and use of defence mechanisms is possible from birth. The main anxiety that the infant feels is the operation of the death instinct. When the infant is hungry it is gnawed by its own hunger, and the lack of the good object (breast) is felt as persecution, as an attack by bad objects. Because the early ego is weak, under the impact of anxiety it tends to disintegrate. Omnipotent denial, splitting, projection and introjection are the first mechanisms of defence. Because of the life instinct the ego splits off and projects the death instinct; the life instinct creates an ideal object and in this way a primitive organisation emerges. The ego is split into libidinal and destructive parts and relates to a similarly split object. The ego's aims at this stage are to introject and identify with its ideal object and to keep at bay the persecutors, who contain the projected destructive impulses. The leading anxiety is that these persecutors will destroy the self and the ideal object. The leading defence mechanism is increasing the split between the ideal and the bad object entailing excessive idealisation and paranoia.

As Hanna Segal has put it (1982:26), in the paranoid-schizoid position:

> The infant's aim is to try to acquire, to keep inside and to identify with the ideal object, seen as life-giving and protective, and to keep out the bad objects and those parts of the self which contain the death instinct. The leading anxiety in the paranoid-schizoid

> position is that the persecutory object or objects will get inside the ego and overwhelm and annihiliate both the ideal object and the self. These features of the anxiety and object-relationships, experienced during this phase of development, led Melanie Klein to call it the paranoid-schizoid position, since the leading anxiety is paranoid and the state of the ego and its objects is characterised by splitting, which is schizoid.

In situations of anxiety the split between the ideal and the persecutory objects is widened and projection and introjection are used in order to keep them far apart, and both under control.

The paranoid-schizoid position is a developmental step and it is overcome by the introjection or the identification with the ideal breast.

The emergence out of the paranoid-schizoid position and the increasing tendency towards integration brings with it feelings of guilt. As the child begins to recognize the mother as a whole person, the child itself is becoming more whole. He or she begins to realise that it is the same person - him- or herself - who hates and loves the same person - the mother. The child is then faced with conflicts pertaining to his or her own ambivalence. As Segal puts it:

> [Whereas] in the paranoid-schizoid position, the main anxiety is that the ego will be destroyed by the bad object or objects, in the depressive position, anxieties spring from ambivalence, and the child's main anxiety is that his own destructive impulses have destroyed or will destroy, the objects that he loves and totally depends on.

The depressive position is reached around the sixth month of life and it is gradually overcome in the first year, though it can recur especially in states of mourning and depression. According to Hanna Segal the depressive position never fully supercedes the paranoid-schizoid position:

> The integration achieved is never complete and defences against the depressive conflict bring about regression to paranoid-schizoid phenomena, so that the individual at all times may oscillate between the two. Problems met with in later stages, as, for instance, the Oedipus complex, can be tackled within a paranoid-schizoid or depressive pattern of relationships, anxieties and defences, and neurotic defences can be evolved by a paranoid-schizoid or manic-depressive personality. The way in which object relations are integrated in the depressive position remains the basis of the personality structure. What happens in later development is that depressive anxieties are modified and become gradually less severe.

In the depressive position the child apprehends the mother as a whole object; the splitting of the object into a good and bad object is attenuated, with libinal and hostile instincts now focussed on the same object. Anxiety and guilt are associated with the phantasised danger of the subject destroying and losing the mother as a result of his own sadism. This anxiety is combatted by manic defences or the distribution or inhibition of aggressiveness.

Guilt arises when the infant who can remember and retain love for the good object even while hating it, is exposed to feelings of mourning and pining for the good object, "a characteristic depressive experience which arises through his own destructiveness". The depressive position is crucial in that it marks the infant's ability to become aware of his or her own impulses and phantasies, and to distinguish between phantasy and external reality. The child discovers more ways of affecting external reality. It is important to note that "the depressive position is never fully worked through. The anxieties pertaining to ambivalence and guilt, as well as situations of loss, which reawaken depressive experiences, are always with us" (Segal, 1982;80).

In Klein's view, although some paranoid and depressive anxieties remain active within the personality, as the ego is integrated and establishes a relatively stable relationship to reality, neurotic defences take over from psychotic ones, and later the neurotic ones are in turn superceded by reparation, sublimation and creativity.

We shall now consider the notions of denial, splitting and projection and see how they can be understood in the context of South African society.

Denial

Omnipotent denial refers to the infant's ability to replace actual people or objects with a phantasy. Both splitting and projection aid and abet denial. As a phenomenon that persists into normal adult life, denial is modified into a less absolute and more varied form. We learn to refuse to recognise people and situations - one could say we learn to absent them - in a more sophisticated fashion.

Denial seems at first to be fairly straightforward: we are saying that something does not exist or is not happening. But the "is not" of denial contains an acknowldgement; something "is" before it is "not". At root then, denial must make a subject uneasy, because for a subject to deny that "It is so" the subject must acknowledge or entertain the possiblity that "It could be so." A negative cannot exist on its own. It is obvious, as one considers synonyms for deny; gainsay, reject, disown, repudiate, renounce, refuse, withhold, forbid, that some sort of presence is necessary for denial to make sense. Something must be said for

it to be gainsaid, something must be at least considered before it can be rejected, something must be desired before it can be withheld or renounced, and so on. Denial is more subtle than it at first seems to be, for denial immediately invokes its opposite - acknowledgement.

The denial spoken of in this dissertation has to with the denial of the Other, i.e., the not-self, or not-us. In this respect, the etymological roots of the word "other" are of some interest. Freud, for obvious reasons, was quite taken with what he called the antithetical meaning of primal words (1910).

"Other" is an index word and has no substance in itself. R K Papadoupolis (1980:14), examining "The Dialectic of the Other" in the psychology of C G Jung, writes:

> The 'other' has deep roots in the Indo-European languages. 'Allos' is related to the Latin _alter_, _alius_, _alienus_ (Liddell and Scott 1901). _Alienus_ is, of course, the root of _alienation_ - otherness, estrangement. In Hebrew _acher_ means other, different, foreign. 'Allos' belongs to the same family as the Sanskrit _ant-aras_ - other "of many with a sense of difference" (Benfey 1866). Other meanings of ant-aras are: "the interior, _the main substance_, difference". Benfey in his Sanskrit-English Dictionary relates, in turn, ant-ara to the Latin _interior_, _alter_, _ulterior_, _ultra_. Chantraine (1970) finds that 'heteros' relates to the sanskrit _eka-ta_ - harmony, conjunction, _eka-ka_ - solitarily, same, and finally, _eka-chitta-ta_ - fixing one's mind only on one object: unanimity. Benfey again relates the sanskrit root _eka_ to the latin _aequus_ - equal.

"Other" then includes some contradictory meanings. According to the _OED_ "the other" as pronoun is "that which (in relation to something already mentioned) constitutes the other part of the universe of being". Papadoupolis suggests that the inherent duality of meaning in "the other" can be comprehended as follows:

> If the rest is added to the existing part, then a

> wholeness, a totality, will be achieved. But if the rest is not added then there will be a separation, a division. So, the very act of realization of an existing other in the psyche creates a separation into a me and an other. When that separation is overcome then there will be unity, wholeness and harmony.

In other words, and this is the sense in which I use the term, the Other constitutes that part of the whole which is not "this", "us" or "self". Any attempt to deny the Other is therefore an denial of the self. That is to say, when a master or servant deny the humanity of the Other, they are forced to deny their own humanity, in other words, their own wholeness as humans. The mere acknowledgment of existence does not overcome denial, for to merely acknowledge the existence of the Other as Other, is not integrating, or, to put it differently, does not involve recognition.

It would seem that a great deal of our happiness in this world revolves around our ability or power to recognise others. At times of acute anxiety we are likely to invoke those first-learnt mechanisms of defence - splitting and projection. It would appear that the greater the anxiety, the more crude the defence: It is therefore useful to focus on occasions of trauma in order to more easily expose the underlying dynamics.

During the 1976 Soweto riots, John Vorster, then Prime Minister of South Africa, actually questioned whether or not there was a crisis in South Africa and suggested that the country could look forward to a rosy future [2]. Nearly ten years later, P W Botha as President of South Africa again adopted the same approach, and his government having declared a state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts, claimed that South Afric's only problem was foreign debt.[3]

In both cases the statements were widely reported in the English press as examples of the government's inability to acknowledge what was happening in the country. However, whereas Vorster's comments provoked an outcry and he was widely and severly criticised, Botha's comment had little such effect. It was as if, in the intervening years, the English press had come to take for granted the government's inability to accept South African reality.

The problem is that "South African reality" is virtually indefinable and any one group in South Africa is capable of apprehending only one aspect of the elephant.[4] Whilst Vorster, Botha and others were showing that denial was one important element of this reality, a similar point was being made in a different way by Nelson Mandela, imprisoned leader of the ANC. It was quite clear in 1985 that Mandela was a major figure in South African politics and was growing in stature, despite an incarceration of 24 years.[5] It also became obvious towards the end of 1985 that the ANC had, in the eyes of many important voting South Africans, a crucial role to play in the country's future - yet the movement is banned and its leaders have been in exile for many years. This supports the view that absence, expressed by banning, imprisonment and exile, is a pervasive factor in South African society. It is part of the same complex as denial.

An aspect of South African society which obviously has a great deal to do with denial and absence is censorship. Much has been written on the debilitating effect of censorship on the individual and collective imagination.[6] Whilst in effect censorship absents and is enforced in the interests of denial, it

introduces a slightly different slant on the notions of absence and denial; that of prohibition.

There is no fact of South African life that is not touched by a largely unwelcome legislation that intrudes into the most personal and intimate spheres of individual life, and the overwhelming characteristic of this legislation is its vague, yet authoritarian and prohibitive nature. It is by no means enabling legislation. What prohibition, denial and absence have in common is that they are negations, and as such bring forth their other terms. In other words, there is a quality to South African life that can be expressed thus: could be but can't be, is but isn't, here but not here.

What the state apparatus and legislation is geared towards is the denial of blacks as human beings. This denial is not total, and it is successful only insofar as the split perception by whites of blacks is maintained. If blacks were not in some way <u>sensed</u> as people there would have been no prohibitory sex laws. However, the only <u>formal</u> recognition they have in the white world is as labour units. If this failure of recognition could be total we would not be dealing with a human relationship. It is because the black and white partners <u>could</u> recognise each other as human beings that denial comes into play. The advantages to the oppressor of diminishing the humanity of the oppressed is obvious - it makes the justification of the oppressors' exploitation of the oppressed easier. The denial on the part of the oppressed is defensive. The denial on the part of both parties is reinforced by the fact that the other party presents him- or herself as less than human.

There is, in other words, a sort of presence-in-absence on the part of both parties in the master-servant relationship. The relationship is intimate, yet it demands that each party does not acknowledge knowing certain things about the other. Many social analysts have commented on this not knowing as a common phenomenon in the colonial master-servant relationship, Lessing (1950:21) quite explicitly:

> When it came to the point, one never had contact with natives, except in the master-servant relationship. One never knew them in their own lives, as human beings.

Gordimer has also drawn attention to "knowing" Africans and its connection with censorship. In an article entitled "How not to know the African" (1966) she describes a course of lectures advertised in a Johannesburg newspsper entitled "Know the African":

> From the description given, it was clear that these lectures were designed for White people who have the only recognised relationship with coloured people in our country - that of White employer to Black labour force - and who might find it useful, from the point of view of efficiency, to get to know just enough human facts about these units of labour to get them to give of their best.
>
> This sort of study of 'the African' as a strange creature whom one must know how to 'handle' in the eight hours he spends at work is apparently the limit of getting to 'know the African' permissable to South Africans, nowadays. For that same week (April, 1966) there appeared in the newspaper an announcement of the ban, under the 1965 Suppression of Communism Amendment Act, on the utterings and writings of 46 South Africans living abroad, and this list included all those black South African writers of any note not already silenced by other bans.

Gordimer has also drawn attention to the way whites "see" blacks, "which includes not seeing" (Gordimer, 1983:21).

The denial of a people's humanity leads to the oppressed being

unable in turn to know their oppressors "in their own lives, as human beings" and leads to an inability to "see" them. Mphahlele has described this denial and its effect on his feelings and on his fiction. In an interview with N C Manganyi (Manganyi, 1981:5) he recalled "how the people my mother worked for were just so impersonal when they looked at me... I just didn't seem to exist... Their faces were always a blur and I could never recognise them as people myself". In the first edition of The African Image (1962:29) he wrote that he first came to know the white man at the point of an index finger or the end of a boot - as a servant to him.

Of course, not all whites denied the humanity of their servants, but even the most well-meaning liberalism has its blank spots. South African writers have shown through their portrayal of various characters that the denial of blacks is not confined to a hard core of political reactionaries, but is embedded in the very texture of South African social life and is practised by those who consider themselves enlightened.

Nineteen-eighty four marked a point of departure for many whites who had not yet come to terms with accepting the fact that they shared their world with "foreign blacks". For various reasons the South Africa government was forced to to acknowledge a non-pure-white South Africa and a new constitution was adopted. It was a time of crisis for the government and several politicians and commentators made statements trying to capture the essential dynamics, the basic fears and aspirations, of "the masses' they claimed to represent. One such statement was made by Albert Nothnagel, National Party MP for Innesdal, at the beginning of 1984 with the new constitution impending:

> It is no longer a question of whether blacks are permanently in white South Africa, but of how we can develop structures which will ensure that we and our children will reach the other side. (The Cape Times, February 10, 1984)

A pure-white South Africa has never existed and it has never been a realistic possibility. What has existed is an idea of and a desire for a pure white South Africa. The idea has survived despite constant and intimate contradictions, personified (in the limited sense in which I can use that word) by black servants preparing white's food, making white's beds, bringing up white's children and living in white's suburbs. Whites who have been believing in a whites-only South Africa have had to live out an intense contradiction. Blacks, whose presence is constantly required, are at the same time considered temporary sojourners.

Nothnagel, like Vorster and Botha, denies; but Nothnagel's statement serves to clarify a certain dimension in the notion of denial - that of the split perception of people. Blacks as units of labour have always being acknowledged in Nothnagel's world; as people they have had lives outside his world. Or, to put it in terms I have already used, a distinction is made between blacks sensed as people, and their formal existence. Nothnagel's dilemma is how to put together the unit of labour and the person from whom that unit of labour has been abstracted, and have a working black person in his world.

The terms of the problem, as Nothnagel and others like him have seen it, remain blacks in white South Africa. It is normal enough for a community to speak of keeping foreigners out of their territory, but when those supposedly kept out have never been, historically or geographically, foreigners, the way in

which they are perceived as foreign has to do with levels of feelings and desire, or phantasy, rather than material circumstances.[7] The notion of something or somebody being in or out of one's world is one of the most fundamental discriminations we make, both collectively and individually. Communities are constituted as such by the boundaries they form between themselves and others just as an individual is formed by establishing an identity separate from the primary others in its life.

The point here is that boundaries exist central to the bounding entity. A community defines others in terms of not-us. Likewise, the distinction between master and servant is crucial to the identities of both the master and the servant. In this regard, South Africa, as a single society, suffers the myth of a divided society, or separate nations on their path to selfhood. Thus, the white madam who sees herself in the centre of a sea of whiteness on the edge of which exist blacks (mainly servants) is misapprehending her society; what she sees as happening at the edge of her world, between her (white) world and another (black) world, is in fact at the centre of her society.

Splitting and projection

It is impossible to discuss the processes of splitting, introjection and projection separately. In the discussion of positions it became clear that introjection and projection are the crucial means through which the ego is established. In the discussion of theories of group behaviour in Chapter One, the Kleinian psychologist Paula Heimann was quoted as saying that these mechanisms "are the roots of the ego, the instruments for its

very foundation". We are here speaking of the creation of an identity, which is established through identification with the primary Others in our lives.

Freud showed the intrinsic connection between identification and introjection in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). According to Klein, Freud's later discovery of the super-ego (Freud, 1923), which he ascribed to the introjection of the father and identification with him, "led to the recognition that identification as a sequel to introjection is part of normal development" (Klein, 1955:141). This led Klein to develop the notion of projective identification.

Klein first suggested the term "projective identification" in "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" (1946). Projective identification arises during the first three to four months of life when splitting is at its height and persecutory anxiety dominates. It is very much part of a complex enmeshed with denial. We are here speaking of the paranoid-schizoid position, where, according to Klein:

> The ego is still largely unintegrated and is therefore liable to split itself, its emotions and its internal and external objects ... splitting is also one of the fundamental defences against persecutory anxiety. Other defences arising at this stage are idealization, denial, and omnipotent control of internal and external objects. Identification by projection implies a combination of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them on to (or rather into) another person.

In normal development, in the second quarter of the first year, persecutory anxiety diminishes and depressive anxiey comes to the fore, entailing sorrow and guilt.

In her paper "On Identification" (1955), Klein examines a novel

to illustrate projective identification. The novel, _If I Were You_, by the French novelist Julian Green, describes how Fabian Especel has magic power to "become" someone else by saying a word in their ears. He "becomes" a series of people, and according to Klein it is the choice of people that is of particular interest as they possess those parts which Fabian feels are missing in his own nature (152). Of course, what Fabian discovers is that projective identification and introjection are closely bound up together.

Infants at some stage during the paranoid-schizoid position phantasise filling their mother with their faeces or urine, or phantasise a good or bad penis in a good breast, i.e., their aggression onto their ideal. The aims of projective identification are manifold; getting rid of unwanted parts of oneself, a greedy possession and scooping out of the object, and control of the new object. Projective identification is the basis of narcissism.

It cannot be emphasised enough that both projection and splitting are normal developmental steps and must not be miscontrued (as the Freudian concept of repression is so often misconstrued); they are not negative in themselves but form the basis of healthy psychological and emotional abilities such as, respectively, empathy and discrimination. However, when the anxiety is excessive, excessive splitting left unresolved gives rise to severe pathology, usually expressed in the schizophrenic group of illnesses. In its extreme psychotic form, projective identification may result in a person imagining him- or herself to be Christ or Napoleon.

Lessing's anecdote about the woman who nursed a black child and

was heartbroken when it died, yet approved of the horrific abuse of a black labourer who allegedly stole a bar of soap, is an excellent example of splitting. The anecdote, which I suggested may have inspired the story of "Little Tembi", besides being an example of the self splitting the Other, is an example of the self splitting the self. Lessing's point in recounting the tale is that: "We all know this by now; that it is possible, indeed, common, for groups and nations to behave like monsters while preserving a flattering image of themselves" (Introduction to Vambe, 1972:xix).

In terms of projection, Mphahlele has described the act of imputing to the Other qualities of the self in his presentation of Miss Pringle in "Dinner at Eight". Miss Pringle, like Jane MacCluster in Lessing's "Little Tembi", has a great need to be needed. She "sees" blacks as children reliant upon her. Miss Pringle says of her work: "So much more fun working with blacks than with whites, anyhow. Too independent - that's the way with whites..." (45). Jane MacCluster says of her work: "They are just like children and appreciate what you do for them" (Lessing, 1964:122). Another projection concerns the rights of tenure. When settlers felt unease over their right to the land they questioned the right of the indigenes to be there; the indigenes were moved off the land and the farmer was then "free" to assume that he was occupying empty land. The process is described by Lessing in "The Old Chief Mshlanga" (1964). Unease over rights of tenure is more thoroughly explored in The Conservationist (Gordimer, 1974) where Mehring is forced to relinquish his notion of a right to the land. Labour is also subject to projection. Mary Turner (in The Grass is Singing, Lessing, 1950), who staves off having nothing

to do since she senses idleness as something dangerous, becomes obsessed with keeping her servants occupied. According to Lessing, whenever members of the served classes gathered to relax, they spoke of nothing but the servants' laziness (GIS, 92). In "Home for the Highland Cattle" (1964) the leisured madams of 138 Cecil John Rhodes Vista constantly worry that their servants are getting away with not working. The settler, having robbed and deceived the indigenes to secure a life of leisure complains that natives are thieves, liars and inherently lazy.

This projection has been noted in a different context. Octavo Mannoni (1964:127) notes that:

> This feeling of superiority [on the part of Europeans] is easily maintained by processes of projection, which liberate (sic) the Europeans. In the eyes of those who have had to give up trying to make a place for themselves in Europe commensurate with their ambitions, the Malagasy worker is incompetent. To those who would like to live by deceiving him, he is lying and deceitful, whilst to those who relish the leisures of colonial life he is, above all, lazy. Naturally, too, his pretensions are ridiculous in the eyes of the upstart, and so on...

Lessing has also noted the feeling of superiority that whites are taught - "A white Rhodesian or South African has sucked in with his bottle-milk that he is better than a black man, and has the right to order him about" (Vambe, xvii). Language is perhaps the most sensitive register of "ridiculous pretensions", and the young protagonist of "The Old Chief Mshlanga" (1964) recalls how the efforts of blacks to speak English were occasions for ridicule. The successful efforts however are threatening and Mary Turner provides an example of the settler's unease over mission education: "He spoke in English, which as a rule she would have flamed into a temper over; she thought it an impertinence" (1950:189).

Guilt

Guilt may be isolated for separate discussion because it is not one of the dynamics proper to the paranoid-schizoid position. (The reader is reminded however, that the positions and their defences are not absolutely discrete.) Guilt is a fundamental theme in the work of Gordimer and Lessing.

Although Klein laid an emphasis on the child's aggressive impulses, she only adopted Freud's concept of the life and death instincts some years after Freud presented it (in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920)). The first clear reference to the death instinct in Klein's work was in "The Early Development of Conscience in the Child" (1933). In this paper she makes a clear distinction between anxiety and guilt. Anxiety pertains to the persecutory fear of the super-ego into which the child's aggression was projected, whereas guilt arises later when the severity of the super-ego has been mitigated and concern for the object becomes stronger than anxiety. The concept played a large part in "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict and of Super-Ego Formation" (1932), in which Klein discussed the infant's life from roughly the middle of the first year to the third year of life. Guilt is therefore a phenomenon proper to the depressive position.

The fact that guilt arises out of a concern for the object is illustrated by Gordimer's story "Is There Nowhere Else Where We can Meet" (1949, 1953), the story that she chose to head her two retrospective collections (1975, 1976). The story describes the mugging of a white girl by a black man on a veld path. The girl

concerns herself with the red eyes, sweat and fissured feet of her assailant and does not report the assault. That guilt can have a paralysing effect on the one feeling it - quite literally, as many case histories illustrate - is common knowledge. The difficult question to answer seems to be how does guilt, in the context of oppression, arise? On one level we can suggest that since the red eyes, sweat and fissured feet speak of hard labour, the young protagonist is struck by her freedom from physical labour. This in itself however is not enough. Freedom from physical labour needs to be made to mean something and become questionable before it can engender guilt. We seem to be in an <u>impasse</u>, for freedom from labour usually means privilege, and privilege is gained in order to free oneself from labour. However, many categories of people are "freed" from labour under certain conditions; children, prisoners, the mentally and physically sick and women. What is characteristic of these categories of people is that they are not granted public power. It seems that freedom from labour can be correlated with the loss of power to take effective consequential public action. Thus, "privilege" takes on a different hue, and this may throw some light on the girl's inability to act. The point becomes clearer if we assume that what is taking place is the reversal, such as described by Mary Daly (1978), common in exploitative situations. What Daly calls "reversal" is a variation of projection, and here we see again the thorough enmeshment of processes which I have isolated for the sake of discussion. Reversal, at least in Western terms, can be understood as follows. In terms of sexual domination, the actual woman belongs to a highly exploited class, whereas the ideal woman, in an era of farm labour has lily-white hands, in an era of factory labour is bronzed by the sun; in

terms of class the actual labourer is quite often literally worked to death, whereas the ideal labourer quaffs a pint after a good day's work that has done his character and moral fibre no end of good and he is the custodian of all that is solid and meaningful in life; in terms of race, the actual black person is feared and loathed as a thieving liar and oppressed, whereas the ideal native is a simple, happy, genuine soul, willing and kind with a great sense of rhythm to boot.

The difficulty we have in responding to disability arises out of seeing the Not-me nature of the other person. The in fact arbitrary <u>natural</u> status of particular individuals is denied. At the same time, there is an attempt to naturalise the <u>social consequences</u> of their state; for example, blacks are poor because "they breed too much". It is the refusal to acknowledge that the rape victim/woman/black labourer/paraplegic/retarded person <u>as victim</u> is a social creation and therefore not arbitrary, that leads to denial and guilt. We have a material, experienced knowledge of physical vulnerability: when we are asked to believe that the social misery of others is "natural" we know that we deceive ourselves, and we feel guilty.

Guilt does not always paralyse - often it just makes us feel rather ineffectual. When the madam in "Ah, woe is me" (Gordimer, 1952) meets Janet, the daughter of her maid who, fearful of her mother's impending death, bursts into tears, the madam asks herself, "What could I do for her? What could I do?" and offers her her hankerchief. The madam cannot do the "normal" thing - hug, comfort, succour the child. She does not have any means of reparation appropiate to the relationship. Ella Plaistow (in "Happy Event"), watching Lena going slowly across the yard to

her room, feels "a horrible conflict of agitation and shame, for what she did not know. But if I go after her, she seemed to answer herself, what can I say to her?" The role of paralysing guilt surfaces again in Gordimer's work in Burger's Daughter (1979), but with an important difference. Rosa explains her departure for overseas in terms of feeling powerless at the sight of a black man beating a donkey. However, she returns to work as a physiotherapist for black victims of the 1976 Soweto riots - an obvious gesture of reparation for her former general lack of action.

It is the child's powers of reparation that enable it to overcome the debilitating guilt that its terrifying phantasies have brought about. Such reparation allows the child to develop relationships in which the Self and Other is more fully recognized. Paula Heimann (1952:153) has described how the mechanisms I have discussed inter-relate and she provides at least part of the explanation for the alarming self-complacency shown by Vorster, Botha and others:

> I wish to refer to the pathological condition in adult life, in which the patient uses the mechanisms of splitting in order to secure his belief that he himself is good, whilst the other person is bad. The delusional aspects of paranoid conditions show clearly the role played by denial. As is well known, delusional jealousy and fear of persecution are based on denial and projection. It appears that in these conditions it is above all the sense of guilt which the patient cannot tolerate and against which he sets going the defences of denial, splitting and projecting... a person's intolerance of the sense of guilt is essentially his intolerance of admitting, even to himself, that something of him is bad, which he cannot disown by treating it as a foreign object inside himself. The result of the technique of delusional jealousy is two-fold: fear of presecution by the person who is chosen for such projection and a conviction of the goodness of what is felt to be the self. It might be said that the individual pays the penalty of persecution for self-complacency.

I hope I have outlined sufficient evidence to support the contention that groups may collectively pay the penalty of persecution for self-complacency.

The Wider Social Context

Early infantile phantasies continue to operate in some form or another in the everyday life of adults. By being aware of how the mechanisms of denial, splitting and projection are represented as phantasies, and of the connections between phantasies, metaphors and myths, we can better understand how the situation of oppression in South Africa is maintained at the psychological level.

The master-servant relationship is not purely an economic arrangement. In South Africa, even as an economic relationship, it has been particularly affected by colonialism. Furthermore, it does not exist in isolation from the relationship of domination and subordination that exists between men and women. Any attempt therefore, to try and grasp the complexity of the master-servant relationship must pay at least some attention to its capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal aspects.

Without arguing any cause and effect relationship between capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, (and acknowledging that an explanation of the genesis of these phenomena falls outside the scope of this dissertation) it can be seen how these different aspects of social intercourse can be mutually reinforcing in terms of domination and subordination. Some critiques of these social structures can be understood in terms of denial, splitting, projection and guilt, and reference to these critiques will not only enrich an analysis of the master-

servant relationship, but provide more texture to an analysis of how the writers under discussion express their social context.

For the purposes of this dissertation, certain critiques of patriarchy are particularly useful because they deal with the issue of domination and power in terms of 'otherness' and on the level of phantasy. I have already discussed how the servant may be seen, by the master, as the 'not-me' or 'otherness' of the master. In terms of phantasy, the issue of power is a complex one. Certainly the patriarch, the capitalist and the colonial may possess real power, ranging from the power of life and death to the possession of primary resources. However, this is quite a different power to that gained by self-awareness and self-acknowledgement. What is often the case is that power over others is maintained at the cost of persecutory anxiety. In terms of personal growth the ability to dominate others has a certain hollow quality about it. I shall now proceed to a discussion of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism, showing how, in each case, one arrives at this 'hollowness'.

In this dissertation I subscribe to the assertion held by some feminist theoreticians (Azizah Al-Hibri, 1981:190; Carol Ehrlich, 1981; Michelle Rosaldo, 1974; Nancy Chodorow, 1974; Sherry B Ortner, 1974) that there is a male principle of domination which arises because of the pre-rational separation of male infants from the primary Other in their lives - the mother, who also comes to be seen as a degraded Other. This gives rise to the denial of relation and dependence, and the mechanisms of splitting and projection. The elements of such a mentality find their extreme expression in what Susan Griffin (1981) calls "the pornographic mind".

According to Susan Harding (1981:146) social analysis has been vexed by the lack of attention paid to "the differences which the material conditions of the division of labour in the family make in the nature of the social beings who emerge from families into the public world".[8] She points out that the crucial aspects of the material conditions are that, "It is women who care for infants - and thus always a woman from whom we separate and individuate ourselves, and that women are immensely devalued" (146). These crucial aspects of social conditioning have not been examined because they appear to be what "nature provides, rather than what culture constructs." (See also Ortner for the view that women, exluded from projects of cultural transcendence, are seen as more 'natural' than 'cultural'.)

According to Harding, the necessary theoretical reformation can be built up from the work of the object-relations analysts of post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, and by focussing on the psychological as opposed to the biological factors surrounding the birth of an individual. The implication of women being the primary caretakers of infants is that:

> By the time we get to know [men] we can deal relatively rationally with the fact that they have interests and desires which conflict with ours and with the fact of their imperfection as objects of desire. The initial, horrible discovery that humans are imperfect, that they have wills of their own, that they frustrate our projects - this discovery has been made about a woman, about the person on whom we were dependant for survival, about the person from whom we were having difficulty distinguishing and separating ourselves; and these discoveries were made before we had learned to deal with life rationally. (Harding, 151.)

The important elements in this observation are, firstly, that we learn of frustration in relation to women. This is quite

different to the Freudian perspective. Certainly the lesson that our desires have to be curtailed is learnt not only in relation to women. According to Freud a great deal of frustration arises as we have to come to terms with the 'father-figure' or 'law-giver'. Phantasy definitely plays a part in coping with this frustration, but the repression that arises is part of the civilizing process, and the law is presented, and the law-giver represents himself, as a rational principle that exists for the sake of the collective interest. Harding is speaking of a frustration that we experience without having rational understanding at our disposal, a frustration which gives rise to anger, fear and feelings of revenge, which can only be coped with on the level of phantasy.

Harding goes on to say (152) that the fact that being a woman is less highly valued than being a man results in what she calls the "stereotypical masculine personality":

> [This personality] develops through separation from its first other - a devalued woman in interaction with whom he first experiences his own body and her body. Her body becomes the first model for the bodies of others, of persons who are perceived as unlike himself.

Separation, devaluation and difference are the context of male phantasies surrounding the body. The fact that the infant, as he enters rational and collective social life, leaves behind his "pre-rational and nourishing interactions with a woman" gives rise, according to Harding, to "the frantic maintenance of dualisms between mind and body, between culture and nature, between highly-valued self and devalued others".

As Harding develops the notion of "the stereotypical male personality", she describes the place of denial, splitting and

projection in patriarchal ideology:

> Thus infant boys' psychological birth in families with our division of labour by gender produces men who will be excessively rationalistic, who will need to dominate not only others but also their feelings, their physical bodies, and other bodies - nature - in general. They will be excessively competitive and concerned primarily with their own projects. They will maintain an excessive separation or distance from the concerns of those around them, especially those unlike themselves. It produces misogyny and male-bonding as prototypes of appropriate social relations with other perceived to be respectively unlike and like themselves. And, as Jane Flax argues, our division of labour by gender itself produces the repression of infantile experience in both boys and girls and consequently a great deal of covert adult acting out of unresolved infantile projects. (152)

The stereotypical male personality, or the patriarchal mind, finds its quintessential expression in what Susan Griffin (1981) calls "the pornographic mind". The value of Griffin's formulation of "the pornographic mind" is that denial, splitting and projection, as a consequence of separation from and fear of the object, as well as revenge against the object, is made clear. Furthermore, the notion of presence-in-absence is spelt out. Griffin describes the pornographic mind as follows:

> And now this mind, which is so terrified of woman and nature, and the force of Eros, must separate itself from what it fears. Now it will call itself 'culture' and oppose itself to woman and nature. For now culture shall become an instrument of revenge against the power of nature embodied in the image of a woman. And so now, within this mind which has become 'culture', woman will either be excluded, and her presence made an absence, a kind of death of the mind, or she shall be humiliated, so that the images we come to know of woman will be degraded images...

In Griffin's analysis the elements of neurosis and psychosis such as repetition compulsion and the reversal of reality are more apparent. The pornographic mind is in a state of rebellion. However, as Griffin points out, "to run away from the enemy is to

call upon oneself the fate of one day meeting that enemy in oneself. A rebellion ultimately imitates that which it rebels against, until the rebel comes to understand himself" (1981:16):

> What advertises itself as nakedness is shrouded. What is called passion is the death of feeling. What is called desire is degradation. And the pornographic mind hallucinates. (16)

The importance of the metaphor of the body cannot be underestimated, and the reader is invited to recall the discussion of bodily metaphors above in the light of the following:

> The pornographer rejects knowledge of his own body. This is part of his mind he would forget. But he cannot reject this knowledge entirely. It comes back to him through his own body: through desire. Just as he pushes away a part of himself, he desires it. What he hates and fears, what he would loath, he desires. He is in terrible conflict with himself. Instead he comes to imagine that he struggles with a woman ... The pornographer protests that he is compelled by desire. (Griffin, 20, 28)

I shall appropriate the phrase "the death of feeling" from Griffin's discourse because she accurately describes the phenomenon I am seeking to point out - that is is the repression of the feeling of vulnerability in men that ultimately creates and maintains, in settler ideology, a single category of "Otherness" out of nature, woman and indigenes.

In the discussion on denial I spoke of the "present/absent" nature of blacks in the dominant ideology of South Africa, where blacks are sensed as people but formally are units of labour. The conflict is to have reality and not have reality. This conflictofmind, the paradox ofdomination, is played out most clearly in what Griffin calls "the pornographic object's most quintessential form" - the pornographic doll, the air-filled plastic copy of a woman, made to replace woman and to give man

pleasure without the discomfort of female presence.

In colonisation we find repeated the conflicts and reversals of reality that are central to pornography. There is, on the part of the coloniser, a reference to a metropolitan centre elsewhere, and he is likely to consider himself to be at the edge of civilisation. Following the thread of these two implications, one arrives at a discussion of the split colonial mind and the phantasies of an empty land.

In the following paragraphs I shall examine thepossibility of interpreting colonisation as an unresolved infantile project par excellance. Like women, the colonized people came to be seen as Other and inferior. The obvious parallel with woman is made clear in the way the child analogy is used to justify the treatment of both woman and native.

Philip D Curtin (1972 :xi), tracing the genesis of colonial ideology in European thought, points out "an aspect common to almost every subdivision of the imperialist ideology":

> The ultimate foundation of that ideology was a conception of the world largely based on self-identification - and identification of "the other people"... The uncivilised ... lived beyond the seas or beyond the Urals. (xiii)

O Mannoni (1964:104) has described the European view of natives in terms of split perception. He suggests that the Western European, coming out of an individualistic competitive society, had an inferiority complex, problems with authority, great difficulty in coming to terms with others and suffered a split self. In this split self, the image of the Other fell into two parts, which receded rather than coalesced; on the one hand

monstrous terrifying creatures, on the other hand gracious beings bereft of will and purpose.[9] We can draw a clear parallel here with Harding's description of the stereotypical male personality; "excessively competitive and concerned primarily with their own projects, [maintaining] an excessive separation or distance from those around them, especially those unlike themselves". The mechanisms of splitting, idealisation and the fear of the persecutory object can also be identified in Mannoni's observation.

A writer on European imperialism, Raymond F Betts (1976), has pointed out some of the more subtle cultural tensions in this period which gave rise to a competitive and conflictual outlook on the world.[10] The fear that USA and Russia would threaten European supremacy was expressed in ideologies that enshrined ideas of competition and conflict. According to Betts "the most popular and pervasive of these ideologies was nationalism":

> European states were anthropomorphised, endowed with the aggressive spirit and selfish disposition that late nineteenth century social scientists and many of their descendants assumed to be the basis of human nature. (12)

If the suppositions of the feminist theoreticians I have referred to are accepted, these social scientists and their descendants, Freud being one of them, were confusing human nature with patriarchal ideology.

The moral confusion which flowed from attempts to justify this "aggressive spirit and selfish disposition" was expressed by Jules Harmand, a French theorist of empire, in 1910:

> [Conquest] is immoral, but the truth is that it is forced immorality... nature condemns us to perish or to conquer. (in Betts, 12-13)

Non-expansion meant cultural atrophy; the frontier became a crux of survival. The American Frederick Jackson Turner produced his famous frontier thesis in 1893, and in 1907 Lord Curzon delivered his Royal lecture on the frontier.

For Lord Curzon, the frontier could be not only economically revitalising but almost mystically so:

> Outside the English university no school of character exists to compare with the Frontier, and character there is molded, not by attrition with fellow men in arts or studies of peace, but in the furnace of responsibility and on the anvil of self-reliance. Along many a thousand miles of remote border are to be found out twentieth-century Marcher Lords. The breadth of the Frontier has entered into their nostrils and infused their being. (in Betts, 16)

Thus there developed a frontier psychology, a "colonial personality". The use of metaphors such as "attrition", "furnace of responsibility" and "anvil of self-reliance", implying as they do the death of feeling and a lack of relatedness, and language reminiscent of mystical impregnation will strike a mind already alerted by Harmand's "enforced immorality" as familiar - we are in the presence of "the pornographic mind".

The impulses of "exerting power over" and "being in awe of" are clear in another of Lord Curzon's statements. He remembers a guest speaker at Eton saying that:

> The rulers of that great dominion [India] were drawn from the men of our own people ... Ever since that day ... the fascination and, if I may say so, the sacredness of India have grown upon me. (Betts 25)

It may by now be more understandable how the British <u>rule</u> of <u>sacred</u> India can be described as the British rape of India.

The ethic of possession and exploitation in colonialism made it possible for men like Charlie Slatter (in The Grass is Singing) to achieve a status and wealth that they could never have achieved at home (England). In order for them to achieve this position of power and dominance it was necessary for land and black labour to be seen as utilitarian objects, and Lessing's treatment of Slatter makes clear the moral invidiousness of his position. Slatter, Dick Turner's neighbour who destroys the land by over-intensive tobacco farming, scorns Turner's personal relationship to the land. (Possession did not always entail exploitation. In the opening sentence of "The Old Chief Mshlanga" we learn that "every white farm was largely unused" (Lessing, 1964:45) - nevertheless it is possessed.)

For the settlers, the land was something alien which they acted upon and from which they extracted benefits, against which they struggled and on which they relied. They had, in other words, an ambivalent attitude towards their surroundings. They hoped their stay would be temporary, for "home" was somewhere else.[11]

The land is used by many of Lessing's characters to provide a space in which they attempt to get some sense of self and ease a burden of not fitting into or not wanting to fit into their given society. Most of them fail. This need not surprise us: their enterprise is founded on denial, and, suffering from reminiscences, they are bound to meet that which they would escape.

The parallel between the settler's treatment of the land and the treatment of women in patriarchal ideology lies in the denial of vulnerability and a refusal to engage in a relationship of recognition. Both the land and women are seen as incubators for

seed and, because of the fear of dependency, just as women are split into the madonna and the whore so the land is idealised and exploited.

There is an important difference between white women and black women in settler ideology. White women occupy a definite role with regard to servants, and this is made clear in "Leopard George":

> He was a good host, the house was beautiful, and his servants were the envy of every housewife; perhaps this was what people found it difficult to forgive him, the perfection of his servants... For a bachelor to have such well-trained servants was a provocation to the women of the district; and when they teased him about the perfection of his arrangements, their voices had an edge on them. They used to say; 'You damned old bachelor, you'. And he would reply, with calm good-humour: "Yes, I must think about getting me a wife." (189)

This is a statement about how women, in patriarchal ideology, and more specifically in settler ideology, are conflated with servants, and consequently, blacks. Serving a master confers upon oneself something of the status of that master. George is a highly desirable object: "nothing if not a catch", and this is as true for servants as it is for women. Women, in a patriarchal white society, are kept at such a distance from the patriarchal power centres, that they occupy, in the eyes of the settler, a similar position to the native; it seems, therefore, quite natural to the settler that, as Charlie Slatter (in The Grass is Singing) observes, "women don't know how to handle niggers", for, in a sense, they are "niggers".

In pursuing the notion of how, in patriarchal ideology, a single category of Otherness is created out of women, nature and blacks, we can refer to several stories. Since I am to some extent

anticipating the contents of Chapter Five I shall be brief.

The entities are conflated in various combinations. Again, "Leopard George" provides an appropriate illustration. When Leopard George rejects his mistress after discovering she is Old Smoke's wife, she refuses to leave. She stands in the moonlight in the bush, and trembles with fear: "And this girl had no right to tremble with fright. That, obscurely, was what he felt" (198). She has no "right" to fear, for she is of the bush; the implication being that as she expresses her fear, she separates herself from the bush, creating a split between native/woman and nature. For the young protagonist in "The Old Chief Mshlanga" (Lessing, 1964:45), "The black people on the farm were as remote as the trees and the rocks... they changed, season by season". Since they are animate however, they are associated with animals: "They were an amorphous black mass, mingling and thinning and massing like tadpoles" and "If a native came into sight along the kaffir paths half a mile away, the dogs would flush him up a tree as if he were a bird" (46). Of course, the most potent example, which will be dealt with in some detail in Chapter Five, is that of Mary Turner in The Grass is Singing. As Moses advances towards her to kill her, Mary's thought is that "the bush avenged itself".

Another issue is how women are manipulated into identifying with patriarchal ideology. An example is Jane McCluster in "Little Tembi". Jane McCluster starts a clinic on the farm within a month of arriving. She throws herself into it to fill the gap left by the disappointment that she will not, at least for some years, have a baby. Willie McCLuster is pleased with the project, "it would save money in the long run by cutting down illness in the

compound" (122). Jane eventually organises the feeding of the labour force; "Willie was glad to have her help ... there was no doubt that Willie's natives were healthier than most and he got far more work out of them" (123). Jane, who saves Little Tembi's life, nurtures him and makes him a favourite, but eventually denies the relationship of dependence that she had created. When Little Tembi is finally caught pilfering, Jane asks Willie "But what did he want?" Beforehand, she had gone to the edge of the bush surrounding the house, and called Tembi - an action reminiscent of Leopard George's and Mary Turner's perception of the bush as "native".

What emerges from many of Lessing's stories is that settler women are essentially adjuncts in a male enterprise. What they seem to have in common with nature is the status of utilitarian objects. In Kleinian terms, women, like nature, are are seen as containers both of good, desirable things and projected impulses. In this sense it is a woman as a phantasy object which is required by a man in order to complete his inner landscape. This is clear in Dick's motivation to marry Mary (in GIS). When Dick first sees Mary she is haloed in light in the darkened cinema. After the show he is asked to take her home and does not recognise her as the woman he saw in the cinema. When he later returns to town, having found out the name of the woman in the cinema, and takes her out, he has to recover the woman of his phantasy, and by the time the evening is over he has done so. The actual condition of Dick's relationship to Mary, a relationship which Griffin would call pornographic, is obvious: "He repeated to himself again, but with a thrill of satisfaction in his abasement, "I had no right" (GIS, 67, emphasis added).

Whilst on the one hand white women are reduced to phantasy objects in the settler/patriarchal mind, on the other hand they must not be lumped together with that other mass of humanity which is also reduced to the status of object, "the native". Compared to white men, white women's contact with blacks or indigenes is far more personal and continuous, and takes place in a more intimate place - the home. Yet white women are intimately part of the patriarchal settler. They are therefore under much greater pressure to deny the personal relation than males. Women, despite their experience of intimacy with natives, know that their survival in the reality of settler patriarchal domination rests on their identification with the patriarchal settler.

Because women are most threatened by the personal relationship between black and white, their imitation of patriarchal behaviour is more personalised and may be more harsh than the patriarchs'. Mary Turner is an excellent example of this. Women in patriarchal settler ideology first suffer being denied by the patriarch then suffer the consequences of identifying with the patriarch.

The way in which Lord Curzon saw the frontier became the stuff of colonial literature. Life on the frontier was romantic and idealist. But, as Betts points out:

> Such an existence, however, was neither the reality nor the dream of a Tommy Atkins. Rather this was a world created for and by an intellectual elite and latter-day mystics who found their native Europe dull and constraining. (17)

Furthermore, imperialism only enjoyed sporadic whole-hearted support in Britain; for example at the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, at the reports of Henry Stanley's explorations in

Africa, the Fashoda incident in 1898 and at the death of General Gordon at Khartoum in 1885. In reality it had only a few supporters who were, in the main, philosophically nationalistic intellectuals and academics and, of course, businessmen.

Colonial literature thus had an intensely ideological or persuasive function. Given this ideological necessity, and the resonances between the pornographic and colonial mind, it is not surprising that we find appearances being the opposite of reality at the heart of colonial mythology. Betts cites an example of this which also serves to indicate the authoritarianism, fascism and sadism that often lurked in the deeper recesses of an imperialistic mind.

In 1903 the French author Eugene Melchior de Vogue published his romantic novel entitled Le maitre de la mere. The hero, Captain Louis Tournoel, active in Central Africa, is described by De Vogue as "continuing the chivalrous follies of his ancestors who fought the Crusades and the Revolution, those liberators of the Holy Sepulchre and of mankind...". Betts points out that:

> In the same year, and in the same geographical region selected by de Vogue as the setting for his novel, a major colonial scandal was uncovered: the Gaud-Togue affair. Gaud and Toque, two junior French administrators were accused of starving and murdering African porters. They were further accused of sadistic acts which would have taxed the imagination of the author of a Gothic novel. How far removed from de Vogue's vision was the dreadful reality of colonial life at Fort Crampel in Central Africa. (243-4)

Finally, Betts (31) provides a superb image, worthy of Shelley, which expresses imperialism:

> Like the bronze statues of rulers standing in colonial squares around the world, empire was much larger than life, but it also rang hollow.

In terms of capitalism, Paul Baran has pointed out (1958:233) some of the special effects of monopoly capitalism on people's perception. According to Baran, under monopoly capitalism people "do not understand and feel injustice, inequality and exploitation as such, do not want to struggle against them but treat them as aspects of the natural order of things." This "naturalisation" of oppression by the oppressed has been commented upon by Griffin . Baran goes on to pinpoint more exactly the nature of this reversal in capitalism, and in doing so he mentions the characteristics of the stereotypical male personality described above:

> The actual wants of men in the societies of advanced capitalism are determined by aggressive drives, are directed towards the attaintment of individual privileges and the exploitation of others, towards frivolous consumption and barren entertainment. With bourgeois taboos and moral injunctions internalised, people steeped in the culture of monopoly capitalism do not want what they need and do not need what they want.

Analysis of the forces of production is not sufficient to understand this confusion of needs and wants. According to Wilhelm Reich (1972:284) a policy that seeks to establish the rule of labour over capital must not only be based on "a recognition of those movements and changes which occur objectively and independently of our will as a result of a development of the productive forces", but it must also, "simultaneously and on the same level, take into account what happens 'in people's heads', i.e., in the psychical structures of the human beings who are subjected to these processes and who actually carry them out."

The recognition that productive forces independent of our will

have a shaping influence on our lives and that our consciousness plays tricks with reality and "naturalises" undesirable cicumstances, has inspired attempts to marry the best of Marx and Freud. Richard Lichtmann (1982:20) points out that "both Marx and Freud severely limit the credibility that can be assigned to the 'rational' accounts that men and women provide of their own activity". The important point is the categorical distinction between appearance and reality which is "absolutely crucial" to the views of human existence held by Marx and Freud. The theme is obvious in The Grass is Singing and is a strong one throughout the work of the writers I am examining.

The so-called freedom of capitalism is supposedly best-expressed in the market place, where individuals freely exchange goods and services under conditions of equality. The exchange of goods and the transfer of ownership or possession is an important part of the master-servant relationship. By focussing on this relationship we may examine the conceptual gymnastics required to keep the notion of "free exchange" intact. The point about exchange value is that it is an abstraction - R200 is not a month's domestic labour, nor a bicycle nor a suit. There are many stories where Gordimer illustrates the damage done by the blinding supremacy of exchange value in personal relationships. To my mind, this is what "The Train from Rhodesia" (1960) is about. In this story a young couple on a train which has stopped at a small station are approached by a poor man selling a wooden elephant. The young man bargains with the poor man who, when the train is pulling out of the station, parts with the elephant for less than he wanted. Both the buyer and the seller of the artifact are dehumanised by the bargaining process. The young man, oblivious to this and proud of his bargaining prowess, gives

the elephant to his wife and is puzzled by her lack of enthusiasm. His wife, having observed his dehumanisation, finds her pleasure of possession tainted.

This story, and others, such as "Horn of Plenty", "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet" and "Happy Event" suggest that Gordimer is subverting the liberal economic assertion that the market place allows for the greatest possible equality and freedom and therefore the greatest possible opportunity for unshackled personal intercourse. What these stories suggest is that the market place is inherently acquisitive and competitive and therefore contains a tendency to violence.

The liberal ideology that has been so supportive of capitalism has as one of its cornerstones the split between public and private self. Many critics of patriarchy have pointed out that it is in terms of this split that capital and patriarchy are intensely mutually supportive. Having noted the varying degrees of awkwardness and obliviousness with which goods between masters and servants are exchanged, Gordimer has been quite explicit about what this means, and has brought the issues of capital and patriarchy together in "The Bridegroom" (1960). This story describes the last night that the white foreman of a road gang spends with his gang before he gets married and brings back his wife. He is forced into an awkward acknowledgment of his pleasure at the koeksusters of Piet his personal servant and at the ganger's music. At the same time he is aware of the taboos that life with his new wife will entail.

A connection between critiques of patriarchy and capitalism may be made in terms of the notions of public and private. Rosaldo

(1974) argues that women, confined to the domestic sphere, do not have access to the sorts of authority, prestige, and cultural values that are the prerogatives of men(8). Heidi Hartman (1981:15), author of the leading article in The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate of Class and Patriarchy, maintains that "the material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power", and that "men maintain this control by exluding women from access to some essential productive resources". Thus, monopoly capitalism, in so far as it supports the notion of a double self, one public, one private, reinforces the maintenance of patriarchy.

Obviously domestic service, whether as a wage-labour arrangement or not, is crucial to the present discussion. With one outstanding exception there has been little research on domestic work in South Africa considering its economic and social importance. The exception is Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation by Jacklyn Cock.[13] Cock has observed (1980:73) that domestic service, viewed in the light of the last 200 years of South African history, is a "kaleidoscopic institution" which has involved slaves, all ethnic groups and both sexes. She points out that by the time the 1820 settlers arrived the important elements of exploitation, oppression, conflict and denial already infused the relationship which was already loaded with legal prohibitions. Domestic work was important in the colonial economy:

> Domestic work constituted an initial point of incorporation whereby the conquered population was absorbed into the colonial economy. This economy was structured by the capitalistic mode of production ... This involved the separation of Africans from ownership of property in the means of production and a constant

> dependence upon employment by the owners of such property, as a wage labour. (Cock, 1980:197)

We are now in a position to appreciate the abiding importance of the master-servant relationship, and the complexities involved in a literary presentation of this relationship.

CHAPTER THREE

COLONIAL LITERATURE AND IRONY

The purpose of this chapter is to present two literary elements in the perspective from which the work of Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer is examined. It serves as a transition between the first two and last three chapters of this dissertation.

These writers have all written "colonial literature". In the first section of this chapter we shall consider the dimensions of such a literature. In discussing colonialism in the previous chapter I mentioned the ideological function of literature, and in Chapter One I discussed the place of ideology in a fictional text. I also described how psychoanalysis provides us with a terminology to discuss a literature that is littered with corpses, the unsaid, the unseen and the unheard. In Chapter Two the point was made that boundaries or frontiers are central to the identity of an individual or cultural group. In this chapter "colonial literature" shall be considered in the light of the above points. I conclude by paying particular attention to irony in South African literature.

Colonial Literature

Critical works concerned with literature and the colonial experience deal mostly with writers of the metropole or with writers who are responding to the experience of being colonized.[1]

The main themes in the discussion of colonial literature seem to

be as follows. As far as writers of the colonizing power or metropole are concerned there is the argument of whether or not they wrote expressing the idea of empire or whether or not they "reacted in the way any artist would - by finding in it a means through which to express his own artistic vision" (Sandison, 1967:195). Martin Green (1979:3) offers the argument that:

> The adventure tales that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more after Robinson Crusoe were, in fact, the energizing myth of English imperialism. They were, collectively, the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night, and, in the form of dreams, they charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer and rule.

This is similar to the argument that a certain perception of the colonies provided some writers with a metaphor for taking "the archetypal night journey, by returning to pure nature uninhabited by man...[a] return to a free unconscious state, [to] liberate the repressed primitive element in themselves" (Meyers, 1973:3). Here we are dealing with "a colonial mentality", and the difficulty of defining colonial literature in terms of such an attitude becomes apparent. In this regard, one could suggest, as Green does, Shakespeare or Defoe as starting points (he chooses Defoe). The reader may also recall Mannoni's choice of Shakespeare or Defoe as prototypes of the "colonial mind". Meyers, on the other hand, argues that "The colonial genre is virtually invented and introduced into English literature by Kipling in the 1880's..." (vii).

The difference between Green and Meyers is more than just one of period. Green is considering "dreams of adventure", whereas Meyers considers this one of two large streams in colonial fiction. The subject of his work is the other stream, colonial

novels "that deal with questions of cultural conflict and race relations and offer a valuable humanistic approach to the problems of colonialism" (viii). He includes in this stream Alan Paton's _Cry, the Beloved Country_, Doris Lessing's _The Grass is Singing_, and Nadine Gordimer's _A World of Strangers_.

It seems to me that South African literature cannot be adequately dealt with as literature written in reference to a metropole, nor as the product of the colonized. It has a particularly complex relationship to the concept of nation and the literature and its language is "scarred, fissured and divided by the cataclysms of political history" (the phrase is Eagleton's) in a very particular way. South African writers describe what it is to be, at the same time and in the same place, both colonized and colonizer, with ambivalent attitudes towards both the colonizing and colonized cultures, neither of which can, in any case, be clearly seen.

The relationship between nation and literature is a complex one, and it is perhaps simplest to begin by considering language. South Africa is an excellent example of Eagleton's point that the "linguistic is always at base the politico-linguistic". The names of Acts of Parliament, of government departments, and everyday terminology such as "homeland", "terrorist", "international", "African" and so on, all bear witness to the fact. The connection between national identity and language is made by Eagleton (1976:55) in the following way:

> Language is a zone in which the contradictory unity of imperial and indigenous, dominant and subordinate social classes is articulated and reproduced in the contradictory unity of a 'common language' itself. The moment of consolidation of the 'nation state' is of paradigmatic significance here - a moment in which the hegemony of a 'national' class reflects itself in the

linguistic coherence essential to its integrative centralising state apparatusses.

In what sense can we speak of a national literature in South Africa? Even if one considers only South African English literature, one cannot speak of a unified body of literature. None of the attempts to establish the boundaries of a South African English literature recognizing such diverse writers as Sarah Gertrude Millin, Laurence van der Post, and J M Coetzee (not to mention Andre Brink or Miriam Tlali) are successful. Perhaps the most useful categorisation is the "myth-tracking" approach suggested by Stephen Gray (1979).

It would appear that a major subject of South African literature is the very identity of being a South African subject.[2] The relationship of South African literature to colonialism has a very particular character. Unlike metropolitan writers, South African writers cannot portray a character "taking the archetypal night journey" to the colonies - he is already there. Indeed, what these writers sometimes describe is the opposite - Rosa Burger and Martha Quest go to Europe in search of identity. White writers, at least, do not have a non-colonial history to retrieve. An alternative metaphor that these writers may use to describe the effort of establishing an identity is to describe trips to the interior. As such these characters do not go to the frontier, they <u>are</u> the frontier. If, as Green suggests, "for all the nations of the West, the big question of the day involves not in recouping but in renouncing... Can we renounce our nature as predators?" then the subjects of South African literature must recognize that they are themselves the subjects of their own predations.

Of course it is in the very nature of the "The Quest" to meet "The Self". If Dan Jacobson's point (1971:7) that "A colonial culture is one which has no memory" is borne in mind, it will be appreciated that characters in South African fiction have to imagine a past and a future. They themselves become the narrative structures; the self creating the self becomes a narrative act, the body a primal metaphor.

Perhaps we should expect of colonial characters that they have to imagine a past and a future since the colonies themselves are acts of the imagination. John Noyes (1984:3) makes the important point that "It is only through colonization that [the colonized] are consitututed as a group". Naturally, the question of boundaries is crucial. What Sandison says of empire - "no one sat down in Whitehall and said, 'Let's have an empire'" - is in fact exactly what happened as far as colonies, certainly in Africa, were concerned; European statesmen sat down and said "let's have colonies", and without much regard to people, language or geography they proceeded to make them. These products of the imagination were then made to function as constituting agents, especially for those who lived in them.

The fact that the people of the colonies then had to fashion some sort of identity returns us to the problem of national literature. In the analysis of the fact that such an identity had to be established over and against terms laid down by the metropole, the deployment of psychoanalytic concepts is attractive. An identity in the colonies had to be secured somewhere in the fracture between "seperate from" and "in terms of" a primary Other.

I have claimed that Lessing, Mphahlele and Gordimer can be referred to as social analysts. What is presented in the novel however, is their analysis resynthesized into narrative. In this respect Eagleton (1976:101) has written that the models of behaviour offered in literature:

> tend simultaneously to conceal and naturalise themselves standing in apparently intimate, spontaneous relation to the 'materials' they produce... The function of criticism is to refuse the spontaneous presence of the work.

Even for writers extremely critical of the dominant ideology their freedom from this ideology would be a matter of degree - their narratives will be inscribed with the assumptions and cultural prejudices of the society they live in.

Gordimer has spoken of this issue in terms of writers from one racial group writing about members of another group. In an appendix to her 1961 essay "The Novel and the Nation in South Africa" written in 1972, she modified her earlier claim that whites could write authentically about a black world:

> I now believe that Georg Lukacs is right when he says that a writer, in imaginative creation and the intuition that comes with it, cannot go beyond the potential of his own experience. That potential is very wide; but living in a society that has been as deeply and calculatedly compartmentalized as South Africa has been under the colour bar, the writers' potential has unscalable limitations. (1973:52)

The problem of absence as inscribed into the work is often reflected in the difficulty that one writer from one group will have in attempting to present the consciousness of a character from the other group. It is a well-worn question in South African literature. Alan Paton, in 1957, noted that:

> Laurens van der Post has remarked that the Afrikaner is unable to see the African as a person and it is my own opinion that the African is unable to see the Afrikaner as a person. This to my mind is a tremendous handicap in the writing of a South African story. (1957:150)

Nearly thirty years later Gordimer contested Andre Brink's opinion that if you are white you cannot present convincingly depictions of black characters:

> For over 350 years we have been kept apart in some ways, but locked together in many others... For generations whites and blacks have worked alongside one another. Observing each other, absorbing each other's "vibes". We know a great deal that is never spoken and this is a whole area rich in material for any novelist. (1984:28)

Mphahlele has clearly declared (1973:14, quoted in Chapter Two in the discussion on denial) that his struggle to create white characters was not worth the frustrations and that "If any critic tells me my white characters are caricatures or only monsters, he is welcome to the opinion".

Whether it is successful or not the struggle by South African writers to present the Other is going to call for particular techniques. Toby Hood, the protagonist in Gordimer's novel _A World of Strangers_ (1958) expresses the problem of the absent Other as follows:

> I passed from one world to another but neither was real to me. For in each what sign was there that the other existed? (Gordimer, 1958:197)

A frequent literary device is metaphor, and it is interesting that Gordimer pays such great attention to the talismatic nature of things, or to put it another way, to objects as signs. The reader may refer to the part played by the nightgown in her short story "Happy Event".

A major metaphor for the notion of present-yet-absent is the problematic corpse. It is a common theme in South African literature - one thinks of Mary Turner's body being first presented as a corpse, of Mphahlele's short story, "The Suitcase" (1981), of Gordimer's "Happy Event" and "Six Feet of the Country" and of course of The Conservationist. The metaphor does not always function in the same way and the differences are important, but what is of interest here is the constant appearance of what is supposed to be absent. Another metaphor for this phenomenon is theft, and here one thinks of "Little Tembi" who, banished from Jane MacCluster's mind, makes his presence known by petty pilfering. Mary Turner, in the fields with Dick, cannot help being obsessed by the thought that the servant may be handling her things, and she is constantly on the lookout for thievery.

Bruno Betteleheim, as I pointed out in Chapter One, has made the point that it is often not sufficiently appreciated that Freud treated the body as a metaphor. This point is of great interest when we consider irony.

Gordimer (1980:21) has noted the particular importance of irony for South African writers:

> In a society like that of South Africa, where a decent legal life is impossible, a society whose very essence is false values and mutual distrust, irony lends itself to you when you analyse what happens.

An excellent example of the deployment of irony is Mphahlele's "Dinner at Eight". Mzondi misunderstands Miss Pringle's motive in inviting him to dinner; she is simply being patronising, but he suspects that she intends to trap him and turn him over to the

police for a robbery he did not commit. The police, who are watching Miss Pringle's flat because they suspect "immorality" in the form of illegal sexual relations between Mzondi and Miss Pringle, finally enter the flat to discover she has been murdered. Mzondi, who murdered her to protect the money he had made through illegal liquor brewing which was intended for his daughter, dies outside the flat without any identification, making it impossible for his daughter to receive the money.

According to Manganyi (1977:84) "Racism becomes understandable within the context of the alienation from the body both in the historical development of society and in the process of individuation". He offers unqualified support for Fisher (1973) who has observed that: "I think we will fail in our efforts to eradicate racist behaviour until we cope with the irrational body anxiety that feeds it".

Manganyi stresses (1977:56-62) the importance of the representation of the body image and acknowledges the debt that this recognition owes to psychoanalytic theory, particularly the work of Melanie Klein.[3]

A link between fictional representations of the body and irony may be made in terms of a private and public notion of the self, and it has been made in terms particularly pertinent to the South African context, albeit from an unexpected quarter. Wayne C Booth (1983:719) opens his essay "The Empire of Irony" with the observation that the word "irony" seems to have lost any useful meaning, and suggests that "we should be suspicious of any terms that are used as frequently, as broadly, and with as little evidence of thought as is now true of the 'ironic' family". Since

I shall speak of ironic plots, structural irony, ironic titles and since I wish to make particular observations about the reversals of meaning, I would like to make it clear what I mean by irony.

The word is based on the Greek for dissimulation or ignorance purposely affected. It is out of this sense that we have derived the notion of tragic irony where the hero, subjected to cruel twists of fate, is also in some sense held responsible for not knowing, or wilful ignorance. In this sense, the term resonates with the psychodynamic concept of repression or denial. Writers create characters who illustrate this idea. Thus, Miss Pringle's death in "Dinner at Eight" illustrates the OED's second definition of irony; "a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things". Another OED definition provides a further important discrimination of meaning. Irony is "a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used" (emphasis added). I stress that it is the opposite and not simply a different meaning. Here we make another connection with psychodynamicobservations. Freud observed that patients frequently said the exact opposite of what they meant. These reversals of meaning sometimes took place in the context of the subject imputing to the Other those unwanted parts of the self, without recognizing the essential oneness of Other and Self.

There are a whole series of acts and words in this country which carry ironic overtones. The Extension of University Education Act in fact limits university education, The Department of Community Development and Co-operation was known for the destruction of communities and lack of co-operation, homelands

are, in fact, to many, strangelands and so on. It may be said that settler ideology is inherently ironic, for it entails projection or the reversal of reality; the settlers arrived, robbed the indigenes of their land, and concluded that "all natives are thieves"; they justified their theft with a complex web of deception and concluded that "all natives are liars"; they sought to free themselves as far as possible from labour, and concluded that "all natives are lazy" and in a particularly South African twist to the process, when they felt their tenure to be precarious they concluded that "all natives are temporary sojourners". Bearing in mind that the overwhelming characteristic of this society is its dividedness, I am delighted to discover that Booth goes on to speak of ironic communication as communication of the deepest kind, an "ensoulment", and then speaks of his favourite cosmologists as follows:

> As you would expect, I find most inviting those new cosmologists who talk explicitly about irony and who can use it themselves in great abundance. And I find it curious when I make a list of those they turn out to share another profound characteristic: they all find it necessary to develop a radical critique of traditional notions of the individual private self, the self that is bordered by the skin. (735)[4]

When Gordimer (1982) was asked How well do South Africa's blacks and whites understand each other? she replied:

> At a certain deep level they understand each other only too well. But there is a dangerous assumption among whites, particualrly at the official level, that they "know the black man".

If whites do not "know the black man" who is the black man that they understand "only too well"? Is the barrier to knowing only skin deep?

CHAPTER FOUR

SOME SORT OF VISION:
DORIS LESSING AND DOMINATION AND SUBORDINATION
IN THE OLD CHIEF'S COUNTRY

The first part of the title of this chapter is taken from The Grass is Singing (GIS). Tony Marston, left alone in the house, is trying to come to terms with the events of the morning:

> Passing his hand over his forehead, he tried desperately and for the last time, to achieve some sort of vision that would lift the murder above the confusions and complexities of the morning, and make of it, perhaps, a symbol, or warning. But he failed. (GIS, 33)

Betsy Draine (1983:8) suggests that Marston has "set a prospectus for the novel":

> The vision and symbolic significance that Marston fails to achieve in the first chapters of the novel, Lessing supplies for him in the chapters that follow.

This is the prospectus that informs many of Lessing's African stories. It isn't always a murder she is seeking to resolve, but rather to explain a relationship that is often a murderous one. To this end she is always trying out new symbolic patterns. This is a timeless exercise, a manipulation of internal and external worlds. More than twenty years after writing The Grass is Singing, Lessing wrote, in a preface to The Sun Between Their Feet (1973):

> As for stories like these - which I always think of

> under the heading of This Was the Old Chief's Country, the title of my first collection of stories - when I write one, it is as if I open a gate into a landscape which is always there. Time has nothing to do with it. A certain kind of pulse starts beating, and I recognise it: it is time I wrote another story from that landscape, external and internal at the same time, which was once the Old Chief's Country.

"A landscape, internal and external at the same time", is a dense and complicated metaphor, and some of its implications were dealt with in Chapter Two. I shall now extend the discussion in terms of phantasies of an empty land and the notions of denial, absence and exile. The discussion is presented in this chapter because Lessing is an eloquent commentator on the myth of the empty landscape, yet her own perception is marked by this myth.

A clear distinction must be made between the land as it was and the land as it was perceived. The land as it was, was subject to a split perception and selectively seen and not seen. A clear example of this was given in Chapter Two; Mrs Gale (in "The De Wets come to Kloof Grange") sees the distant hills but not the nearby river. At the same time, a phantasied landscape was also subject to splitting. On the one hand it was seen as empty and full of promise, on the other hand as threatening and full of menace. In this regard Lessing has made a revealing statement concerning her own perceptions, showing how even the most respectful attitude to the African landscape can bear within it the elements of denial and projection. In Going Home (1957:13) she remembers a man who chose to die alone in the African landscape and she says of him, with admiration: "He did not come to take what he could get from the country. This man loved Africa for its own sake, and for what is best in it: its emptiness, its promise. It is still uncreated" (13). She goes on to say "Because it is empty we can dream". This is an extraordinary statement

from one who has struggled to recognise the African landscape and who has on one occasion (1961) suggested it is "indifferent to us" and on another occasion (1958) admitted that "even the best of us [whites]" use Africa to hang our egos on. Africa is not empty and uncreated - this is reminiscent of the pornographer; it is there to be recognized.

Such a statement - "because it is empty we can dream" - from Lessing is startling because she has been able to describe this failure to see the landscape. In the opening paragraph of Old Chief Mshlanga (1964:45) the young protagonist's eyes are "sightless for anything but a pale willowed river, a pale gleaming castle". She holds a Northern landscape in her mind: "Because of this, for many years it was the veld that seemed unreal, the sun was a foreign sun, and the wind spoke a strange language". The landscape functions as a sensitive register of the girl's perceptions about herself and where she is:

> Soon I carried a gun in a different spirit; I used it for shooting food and not to give me confidence. And now the dogs learnt better manners. When I saw a native approaching, we offered and took greetings; and slowly that other landscape in my mind faded and my feet struck directly on the African soil, and I saw the shapes of tree and hill clearly, and the black people moved back, as it were, out of my life: it was as if I stood aside to watch a slow intimate dance of landscape and men, a veld dance, whose steps I could not learn. (48-49)

What she has to learn is that "one cannot call a country to heel like a dog" (53).

Mrs Gale in "The De Wets come to Kloof Grange", experiences a curious twist to the phenomenon; foreign landscape is literally imported in the form of roses, vivid lawns and a watergarden with gold fish and water lilies, whilst a certain aspect of the real

landscape - distant hills - is acknowledged. Mrs Gale often sits in this garden "lost in adoration of the hill across the river. Not of the river itself, no, she thought of that with a sense of danger, for there, below her, in that green-crowded gully, were suddenly the tropics; palm trees, a slow brown river... crocodiles, leopards,... an intoxicating heady smell... she had learnt to ignore it, and to ignore the river, while she watched the hills" (1964:104).

The irony of "No Witchcraft for sale" is built on the fact that "The Farquars might tread on that plant fifty times a day as they passed from house to garden, from cow kraal to mielie field, but they would never know it" (1964:68).

Even Leopard George comes feel the menace of the landscape he loves and Major Carruthers feels it as a land of grey, sucking menace.

Lessing's metaphor - "a landscape which is always there. Time has nothing to do with it" - also gives us a clue to one of the key elements of Lessing's African writing; a sense of stasis, of a pattern repeated, a characteristic which sharply differentiates her from Gordimer.[1]

Lessing has offered an explanation in terms of creative process for this characteristic of her fiction in the Preface to Volume II of Collected African Stories (1973):

> In what order has one written this or that?
>
> This seems to be a question of much interest to scholars. I don't see why. No one who understands anything about how artists work - and there is surely no excuse not to, since artists of all kinds write so plentifully about our creative processes - could ask such a question at all. You can think about a story for

> years, and then write it down in an hour. You may work out the shape of a novel for decades, before spending a few months working on it.

She has said in a more general context that;

> We are more like other people than we would like to believe. The same people occur again and again in our lives. Situations do. Any moment of time is so complicated. (Lessing, 1974a)

This is certainly one of the factors that leads to that quality of nightmarish repetition in her work.

But there is a deeper reason for this quality in Lessing's writing and it springs from the tension between the materialist and idealist explanation of action. Many critics have worked on this paradox in her work and it is a paradox built into the very structure of The Grass is Singing. Lessing herself has declared that her themes have been constant since GIS. In an interview in 1980, she reiterated the statement from her 1957 essay "The Small Personal Voice". She said in that essay of her Children of Violence series: "I was at pains to state the theme very clearly: that this is a study of the individual conscience in its relation with the collective." In 1980 she repeated "I always write about the individual and that which surrounds him" (Draine, 1983:xiii)

Draine (1983:4) says that in casting GIS in a tragic form - "a dangerous formal choice" - Lessing exposes the first level of contradiction in her text:

> Lessing's attempt to achieve fullness of understanding at the personal and psychological level is at odds with her desire for clarity of insight at the social and political level.

The problem arises because whilst Lessing knows that material circumstances must be given their due, she is also attempting to

rescue humanity from "the bonds of time, custom, history" (Thorpe, 1978:84). In a similar vein, Marion Vlastos (1976:246) writes that Lessing believes "in the rythms of nature and the order of the universe".

Rubenstein (1979:7) has observed another dimension to this tension in Lessing work:

> Though the concept of development implicit in a chronological or horizontal approach to Lessing's novels suggests a linear direction, the equally compelling pattern informing the novels - both singly and collectively - is circular. In the formal narrative design and the thematic organization of her works, the "end is the beginning".

According to Rubenstein, the contrast between a linear (logical, rational) mode and circular (mythic, symbolic) mode and the attempt to reconcile their often contrary orientations towards experience and the nature of reality "produce a central tension and energy in Lessing's fiction". (1979:8)

My own perception of this tension in Lessing's work is that she is dealing with the basic paradox of meeting the Self in the Other and she is describing characters who discover that the Other is both same and alien (cf Chapter Two, and the discussion of the Other and denial). The repetition springs from the fact that one who does not acknowledge his own feelings, is bound to "suffer reminiscences".

I have suggested that the quality of stasis and repetition in Lessing's African work distinguishes her from Gordimer. Both Lessing and Gordimer accept the centrality of the colour bar in the Southern African experience. However, whereas Gordimer seems to have taken the colour bar and its consequent injustices as her

explicit subject, saying on one occasion "politics is character", Lessing seems to have fought a different battle.

She writes, in the Preface to African Stories, that it can be limiting to be brought up in Africa and be constantly faced with fresh evidence of inhumanity and unjustice:

> There are other things in living besides injustice, even for the victims of it. I know of an African short story writer whose gift is for satirical comedy, and he says that he has to remind himself, when he sits down to write, that "as a human being he has the right to laugh".

Lessing goes on speak of an "atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun", a statement which I have already commented on (note 2, Chapter One). We must ask ourselves: At what level is Lessing's analysis operating? Her's seems to be ameta-analysis conducted at odds with the materiality and specific conditions of what she is describing.

Chennels (1980:412) in connection with The Grass is Singing, suggests that much of the power of her work derives from "sardonic authorial intrusions". Yet the curious sense of stasis in her work suggests that the text is marked by the effect of Lessing's absence from the scene of her writing. We miss Gordimer's sense of history. It is as if Lessing began and continued writing as if the experience she had on returning to Rhodesia and which she describes in Going Home, was a foregone conclusion. She describes people doing and saying exactly the same thing as they had been doing many years before. We must ask why evidence of people not changing was so powerful to Lessing. As Draine has observed (1983:6), of The Grass is Singing in particular: "She gives very little indication of how change -

either personal or social - might be brought about."

I African Stories

With the above discussion in mind, as well as the considerations presented in Chapters One to Four, I should now like to focus on three of Lessing's African stories that deal with the master-servant relationship itself. I begin with "Little Tembi", a story to which I have already made several references. "Little Tembi" was first mentioned as an example of a story rooted in everyday life. I suggested that it may have been inspired by the anecdote that Lessing recalls in the Introduction to Vambe's work, which tells the tale of a woman who nursed a black child and was heartbroken when it died, but who approved of the torture of a black labourer who allegedly stole a bar of soap. Jane MacCluster was cited as an example of how a woman can come to identify with patriarchal values. Tembi's pilfering was given as an example of an absence-made-presence.

The fact that Tembi is a surrogate child for Jane MacCluster is obvious. He was brought to her when she knew that she could not hope to have a child of her own for at least two years. But there is a more subtle strain to her attachment. She is one of those whites who use Africa to hand their egos on. In assessing her patronising attitude it is not always easy to distinguish it from a Eurocentric authorial attitude. We are told that although a town girl, Jane's "experience of natives was wide" (122), and later, we are told that "Having lived in the country all her life, she did not make the mistake of expecting too much; she had

that shrewd, ironical patience that achieves more with backward people than any amount of angry idealism" (123). Her husband, Willie MacCluster, who is of Scottish extraction, is described as having "kept all the fine qualities of his people unimpaired by a slowing and relaxing climate. He was shrewd vigorous, earthy, practical and kind" (122).

Jane grows to love Tembi, to the extent that sometimes a message is sent that he should be fetched to see her. From the start Jane begins to establish the typical master-servant relationship in which the servant can be called upon to minister to the needs - in this case, emotional - of the master, without being considered as a whole person. This theme is developed in the rest of the story.

Busy with her own second child, Jane "did not forget little Tembi, but thought of him rather as he had been, the little toddler whom she had loved wistfully when she was childless":

> Once she caught sight of Tembi's mother walking along one of the farm roads, leading a child by the hand and said: 'But where's Tembi?' Then she saw the child was Tembi. (126)

Jane keeps up the responsibility of the clinic and the feeding of the labourers, and looks after her children without the customary help of a native nanny. Certainly she is a busy woman, but the authorial comment - "She could not really be blamed for losing touch with little Tembi" - has a hint of that "sardonic authorial intrusion" which Chennels identifies as a powerful feature of GIS.

Tembi is able to reassert his presence through Willie's need for labour. At six years old, Tembi is employed to help his older

brother herd calves. Tembi is apparently already aware of his special status, and asks for five shillings a month. Willie expostulates that this as much as what the ten-year-olds get, but "feeling Jane's hand on his arm" he agrees to four and sixpence.

Twice Tembi falls asleep and the cattle stray into the mielie fields. The second time he is given a light beating. Thereafter Tembi begins to alienate himself from the McClusters by insisting on an increase and begging Jane for a job closer to the house. By various means he makes his desire to be close to Jane clearer and clearer, ultimately by stealing various shiny and glittering things like the baby's feeding spoon, scissors and Jane's engagement ring. The absence of articles allows Lessing to indict the settlers with: "It was a well-worn maxim that no native, no matter how friendly, could be trusted; scratch any one of them and you found a thief". (132) When Tembi is caught he is again beaten. This time Willie draws blood.

Tembi then asks Jane if he can be made nurse to her children. Jane is astonished and refuses, but employs him in a vegetable garden. Tembi is apparently satisfied and becomes an enthusiastic vegetable seller - until Jane engages his younger brother as a nurse. Tembi protests vehemently, but Jane stands firm. Shortly thereafter Tembi steals one the childrens' bicycles, and this leads to his dismissal.

Although the McClusters could not be called liberals, Tembi's dismissal provokes in Jane two emotions typical of a liberal response:

> Suddenly Jane knew that when she no longer saw Tembi's burning, pleading eyes, it would be a relief; though she said guiltily: 'Well, I suppose he can find work on one of the farms nearby.' (135)

The McClusters forget Tembi but live in what could be called liberal discomfort: "The name 'Tembi' brought uncomfortable emotions with it; and there was no reason why it should, according to their ideas of right and wrong." (136)

About four years later the robberies begin again. The question of gratitude is raised by the settlers. One day the thief enters Jane's room while she is asleep and her garden hat, her apron and a dress is taken. Jane awakes, and after spending some time frightened and taut, marches to the bush surrounding the house and calls for Tembi, "peering everywhere for those dark and urgent eyes" (139). She struggles to find the right word, "to find the right things to say so that he could trust her". She is unsuccessful. That night after supper Tembi finally presents himself, in the house. While Willie is phoning the police, Jane attempts to make sense of the situation, but Tembi just cries and makes no attempt to escape, despite Jane's eventual encouragement to do so. Willie returns, picks up the rifle, feels foolish and puts it down. Jane starts crying. Willie storms out the room, slamming the door, saying: "God damn it, everyone is mad." The police arrive and take Tembi away.

Splitting, denial, absence, guilty relief, the question of gratitude and the unsuccessful search for the right word all ensure that Jane's final question: "What did he <u>want</u>, Willie? What was he <u>wanting</u>, all this time?" (143) will be met with silence.

"No Witchcraft for Sale", despite an interesting reversal of roles, is remarkably similar to "Little Tembi". The story describes how Gideon, the Farguars' cook, saves the sight of

Teddy who has been spat in the eyes by a snake. Gideon dashes out the house and in a moment returns, chews the root of a plant, spits in Teddy's eyes and within hours the inflammation has gone. Later Gideon takes the Farguars and a visiting scientist on a wild goose chase through the bush before finally, and angrily, refusing to show them the plant.

Little Teddy was also born after the Farguars had been childless for years. He also gives rise to fleeting occasions of shallow identification across the colour bar. Gideon talks about Teddy as "the most good thing we have in our house", and because of the personal pronoun "Mrs Farguar felt a warm impulse towards her cook; and at the end of the month she raised his wages" (64). When Jane McCluster and Tembi's mother were pregnant, the two women were able to forget the difference in colour in the pleasurable anticipation of the coming children (125).

"No Witchcraft for Sale" is an intensely ironic story, and the separation of white and black gives rise to a peculiar kind of shared feeling. When Gideon sees Teddy and a black child staring curiously at each other, and observes that one will grow up to be a servant and one "a Baas", he says "It is God's will" (64). Gideon is a "mission boy" and the Farguars are religious people: "This shared feeling about God bound servant and masters even closer together." (65)

In this story natives are conflated with nature, and the landscape functions as a metaphor for knowledge and silence. Teddy's features - he has "miraculous fair hair and northern blue eyes" (64), reminding us of the protagonist of "The Old Chief Mshlanga", who held a northern landscape in her mind's eye - are

gazed at in awe by a black child "peering from the edge of the bush". Later, when Teddy frightens a black child with antics on his scooter, the child flees "back to the bush" (65).

This incident provokes the change in the relationship between Teddy and Gideon. The black child is Gideon's son, and he asks Teddy why he frightened him. Teddy replies "He's only a black boy" (65). He later brings Gideon an orange as a gesture of reconciliation; however, already, Teddy "could not bring himself to say he was sorry". With this incident the impersonal master-servant relationship is established:

> Now Gideon would not let his flesh touch the flesh of the white child. He was kind, but there was a grave formality in his voice that made Teddy pout and sulk away. Also, it made him into a man: with Gideon he was polite and carried himself formally, and if he came into the kitchen to ask for something, it was in the way a white man uses towards a servant, expecting to be obeyed. (65)

It may be noted how the body and the voice are used to register this new dimension to the relationship.

After Gideon has re-emerged from the bush with the plant and Teddy's eyesight is secured, the Farguars are in the usual dilemma provoked by the impersonal master-servant relationship: "They felt helpless because of their gratitude" (66) and they resort to the only gestures at their disposal - presents for his wife and yet another increase in wages. In this way the value of Teddy's eyesight is associated with the value of using a personal pronoun.

The fragility of the personal feelings between the Farguars and Gideon is displayed when the scientist from town arrives "salting the tail of a fabulous bush secret" (67). When Gideon is called

into the lounge and the scientist's presence is explained, he is incredulous. Like little Tembi he feels betrayed. Because of his sullen refusal to give in, the guilt that the Farquars feel is annulled by annoyance. When he does appear to give in he leads the group through the bush in the scorching heat for about two hours, then casually picks a bunch of the blue flowers that had been growing along all the paths they had come, hands it to the scientist and walks away. After some time, the incident is recalled as a joke, but the secret remains a secret.

It could be said that the bush is the main character in this story. The ultimate irony of the plot is that:

> The Farquars might tread on that plant fifty times a day as they passed from house to garden, from cow kraal to mealie field, but they would never know it. (68)

Finally, this story also displays that ambiguous authorial voice noted in "Little Tembi". Lessing writes:

> The bush is full of secrets. No one can live in Africa, or at least on the veld, without learning very soon that there is an ancient wisdom of leaf and soil and season - and, too, perhaps most important of all, of the darker tracts of the human mind - which is the black man's heritage. (66-67)

We are reminded of the "slow intimate dance of landscape and men, a very old dance, whose steps I could not learn" ("Old Chief Mshlanga", 49) but why "darker tracts of the human mind" rather than, say, "deeper", "wiser" or "more ancient"?

This story presents subtle variations on the theme of how the body, the voice, natives and nature, knowledge, silence and guilt function in registering the fractures in the relationship between master and servant.

"A Home for the Highland Cattle" is a long short story, "almost a short novel", says Lessing, in the Preface to the collection. The story is a subtle play on the notion of "home" and could be subtitled "The Making of a Madam". (The story was cited in Chapter One in connection with the madam or master passing on clothes to the servant.) Space precludes doing justice to the full flavour and complexity of this work. This reading is confined to certain aspects of the master-servant relationship as it is represented by Marina Giles and her servant, Charlie. Their relationship was cited in Chapter Two in connection with denial or non-recognition and projection.

Although the narrative pace is leisurely, a sharp sardonic tone is present, and the story is reminiscent of "The Black Madonna", which opens the collection. "The Black Madonna", says Lessing in the Preface, is "full of the bile that in fact I feel for the 'white' society in Southern Rhodesia as I knew and hated it".

The portrayal of Marina Giles, who arrives from England with her husband Philip, certainly verges on the bilious:

> At the back of Marina's mind has been a vision of herself and Philip living in a group of amiable people, pleasantly interested in the arts, who read the New Statesmen week by week, and held that discreditable phenomena like the colour bar and the black-white struggle could be solved by sufficient goodwill ... a delightful picture. (242)

When Marina "a woman who took her responsibilities seriously" inspects her servant's quarters, she exclaims *helplessly*. She feels very guilty because of the squalor and emerges from the room with relief which is as much emotional as physical. She continues her tour of inspection, casting about her "stern reformer's eye". Much later in the narrative, when Charlie, her

servant, and Theresa, his young lover - far too young, according to Marina - are frolicking in the yard, they see Marina peering from behind the curtains: "an earnest English face, apparently wrestling with some severe moral problem" (272).

Among Marina's less metaphysical problems are the relationship with her neighbours. The established tenants of 138 Cecil John Rhodes Vista, a terrace of eight two-roomed apartments, are staunch supporters of the local mores regarding the master-servant relationship. When Marina returns from her tour of inspection she stops at her back steps and calls Charlie:

> "Charlie! Come here a moment, please." It was a high voice, a little querulous. When they [her neighbours] heard the accents of that voice, saw the white glove, and noted that please, the watching women found all their worst fears confirmed. (245)

However, as Lessing ironically makes clear, Charlie presents her with an even more challenging relationship. When the amiable and cheerful young man responds, he stops before her with a polite smile, "which almost at once spread into a grin of pure friendliness" and Marina becomes conscious of "the disproportion between her strong pity for her servant, and that inveterately cheerful face" (245). Later in the narrative, when Marina is confronting her own and Charlie's residences she uses the adjective "disgraceful" and includes in this adjective Charlie's unreasonable cheerful-ness. Marina's enquiries elicit the fact that Charlie's home is in Nyasaland, hundreds of miles north.

At this point the ironic play of the idea of home becomes apparent. Lessing's treatment of the idea touches on the related concepts of transcience, commitment and absence.

Marina, as a new arrival, may be expected to characterize certain

elements of displacement. What is not expected is that Charlie does a similar thing: similar, for he has a wife and child in Nyasaland. Except for one tenant, Mrs Pond, all the residents of 138 Cecil John Rhodes Vista consider themselves temporary sojourners. The whites however, do so voluntarily. Mrs Black, a resident of years standing, remarks grimly: "My front door handle has been stuck for weeks, but I'm not going to mend it. If I start doing the place up, it means I'm here for ever." (247) As Marina concludes: "No one really lived here. They might have been here for years, without prospect of anything better, but they did not live here." (246) The whites are displaced into the colony and look foward to a further displacement into something better. The blacks are displaced from somewhere north into a location in the colony and then again into the town. Both parties are satellites in relation to the site of the relationship. They are "absent presences".

It appears that eventually it is only the picture of the highland cattle that finds a home. It is a picture of half a dozen shaggy creatures standing knee-deep in sunset-tinted pools. This picture is one of Mrs Skinner's prized possessions and is greatly admired by Charlie. It is, of course, brought over from the metropole. These Angus cattle are displaced in the first instance and then again, when Marina finally gives the painting to Charlie and it goes to the location. The highland cattle, finally present in the African landscape, are dwarfed and appear out of place.

The picture is given by Marina to Charlie, who gives it to Theresa's father as lobola for Theresa. This chain of displacement is made possible primarily because of Mrs Skinner's absence (which is what has made Marina's presence possible) and

then because Charlie shattered the glass with the enthusiastic swipes of his broom handle: Mrs Skinner on holiday and Charlie at work 'conspire' to 'release' the cattle.

Displacement, in terms of a struggle to find a physical place, is illustrated by Philip and Marina being constantly disturbed by Charlie doing his domestic chores. In fact, because of the cramped lay-out of the flat Marina "spent half her time arranging her actions so that she might not get in Charlie's way" (254): a ridiculous situation, considering the efforts the settlers make to keep blacks out of sight in locations.

There is also displacement on a psychodynamic level, although I have usually used the term projection in these circumstances. (The terms are not synonymous of course, but closely associated in terms of redirecting energy.) When Marina decides that it not worth her while unpacking, and "the furniture might remain as it was for it was too awful to waste effort on it" (248) Lessing immediately writes: "Her thoughts returned to the servants' rooms at the back: it was a disgrace. The whole system was a disgrace..."

Marina's strenuous objections to the system are never translated into a sustained plan of action and mentally she succumbs to the system. When Mrs Skinner returns, she finds that various articles besides the picture are missing. Although she has returned unexpectedly early, it is still after the Giles' have left for their new home. She makes enquiries and Mrs Pond tells her that she saw the picture being loaded onto a lorry. They conclude that its disappearance had something to do with Marina's Fabian outlook and Mrs Skinner catches Charlie, who has come to say

farewell to Theresa before setting off home, in the yard behind the tenements. At first Charlie denies knowledge of the picture, then the story comes out. The police are called and other missing articles are found in Charlie's bag: "Normally Mrs Skinner would have cuffed him and fined him five shillings. But there was this business of the picture - she told the police to take him off" (285). Charlie's return home becomes a sojourn in prison, because the picture is no longer "at home".

The story concludes with Marina, whilst shopping one morning, seeing "without really seeing them" a file of African prisoners passing her. She suddenly thinks that she perhaps recognises Charlie and Theresa amongst them, but it is Marina who finally makes herself at home:

> For a moment Marina thought: Perhaps I should follow and see? Then she thought: Nonsense, I'm seeing things, of course it can't be Charlie, he must have reached home by now... (286)

This story brings to a pitch the central questions of colonial existence. Who is at home? Who is in exile? And if in exile, exile from what? Is exile a form denial? Or is it the recognition of not being at home? In either case, what form can commitment take?

Throughout her short stories, Lessing repeatedly presents a picture of people cut off from their selves and their history. Identity is constantly being fractured by the processes of denial, splitting and projection. The urge for some sort of coherent identity entails some form of breaking out of the established mores. It is not surprising then that Lessing, in her struggle to "break out" (Rubenstein, 1979), goes into exile. It was the acting out, the making concrete, of her perception

that:

> All white-African literature is a literature of exile: not from Europe, but from Africa. (1958)

I The Grass is Singing

These issues are more apparent in GIS, where the end is the beginning, and where in pondering the meaning of Mary's death critics have come to totally different conclusions. Zak (1974:73) comes to the conclusion that "there is no tragic catharsis in the self-knowledge painfully achieved by Mary Turner", in contrast to Draine (1983:23) who suggests that Mary is redeemed by her decision to walk towards death: "Up to the last moment she is ennobled by her recognition that she must finally take responsibility for her own actions". I would to suggest here another perspective on Mary's death, built specifically on the notion of denial and offered in the light of the discussions in the previous three chapters.

The first obvious thing about The Grass is Singing is that the main character is first presented as a corpse; the second obvious thing is that her death is surrounded by a conspiracy of silence. Lessing thus immediately announces the central fact of colonial existence - denial. In Chapter Two I discussed denial in some detail and linked it to absence; absence by exile, imprisonment, death and non-recognition, and reference was made to it in terms of patriarchy and colonialism. In Chapter Three I discussed the metaphor of the body. The first chapter of GIS presents, in fiction, a compact illustration of these points.

The denial of the body is ultimately expressed in death, but the

journey towards this ultimate expression of denial is made up of many moments. Having presented the corpse, which is itself denied - during the conversation between Slatter, the Sergeant and Tony Marston, looking at it is avoided and the only time it is directly referred to is when Slatter says "Better get her out of here. It is too hot to wait" (28) - Lessing turns to describing the progression of denial, splitting, projection and guilt that led to the ultimate denial in death.

Mary's parents lived like most colonials - as exiles, historically adrift. Sage (1983:21) has commented on this quality of colonial life: "The colony - its British part at least - is populated by refugees from history who, having mislaid 'their' England, are fatally adrift, even while they appropiate the land, and become more and more determined on a 'white' Rhodesia". Mary's parents, even though they did not know England, continued to refer to England as 'Home" (37).

On the more personal level, Mary's mother treated her husband "as if he were simply not there for her" (39), and the happiest part of Mary's childhood follows after the death of her siblings. Finally the death of her parents "release" her from a childhood she "hated to remember" (42). If there is one thing that psychoanalysis has provided, it is a dramatic understanding of the fact that a history denied is a history that will be reasserted. In the description of Mary's childhood, Lessing sets down all the elements of her childhood which will haunt her; the store, the natives, nature and sexuality. For Mary, "the store was the real centre of her life" (38) and race for her meant "the office boy in the firm where she worked, other women's servants, and the amorphous mass of natives in the streets, whom she hardly

noticed...they were outside her orbit" (42). After picnics "in nature" Mary was "always profoundly relieved to get back to the hot and cold water in taps and the streets and the office" (62). Mary's denial of her sexuality is more pervasive. Sexuality, in the broadest sense of the term - the way in which Freud nearly always used it - is our primal source of identification. Klein makes it easier for us to understand this when she speaks of introjection, penetration and containment. In any event, Lessing makes no bones about its centrality in her story. Mary felt "disinclined, almost repelled, by the thought of intimacies and scenes and contacts" (43). She "had a profound distaste for sex; there had been little privacy in her home and there were things she did not care to remember" (46), and she was satisfied with her men friends who "treated her just like a good pal, with none of this silly sex business" (47). All this is so, despite the fact that her social life depended almost entirely on men. But then, Mary's whole self is subject to denial - "she was firmly convinced that thinking about oneself was morbid" (47).

Mary has no sense of self, and as such cannnot develop any means of dealing with the crisis that sets the tragedy in motion. She overhears friends talking about her unmarried state and hears one of them say "something missing somewhere" (48). Reflecting on this Mary becomes paranoid, suspecting "double meanings when none were intended" and finding "maliciousness in the glance of a person who felt nothing but affection for her" (49). For the first time in her life she begins to feel uncomfortable with men and she begins to look for someone to marry.

What has happened is that, having being thrown into a paranoid state, Mary employs the initial defence of projection: the self

shall be made whole by something out there - in this case a husband. With her idea of herself destroyed, and not being fitted to recreate herself, she was "hollow inside, empty, and into this emptiness would sweep from nowhere a vast panic, as if there were nothing in the world she could grasp hold of" (52). So, of course, when she meets Dick Turner, it might have been anybody. The reverse is equally true. Dick's desire for Mary is not for her as a person, but rather for an element which would complete his landscape. Dick falls in love with an image at the cinema when he sees the light falling across Mary's face as he is glancing around. (He is bored by the film.) Although stricken, he does not recognise the girl he is asked to take home. Now haunted, he returns to town, finds out the name of the image he fell in love with in the cinema, and arrives at Mary's hostel to take her out. He still does not 'see' Mary, but Dick "wanted to find in her the girl who had haunted him, and he had done so, by the time he had to take her home...he began to like her, because it was essential for him to love somebody" (57).

In subtle ways Lessing hints at a lack which will become deafeningly obvious at the very end of Mary's life. The silence surrounding Mary's death has already been noted; Lessing observes of Mary "If she had ever learnt to put her feelings into words..." (50) and of Dick "He did not put these feelings into words" (54). These two characters reflect the wordlessness of their sick society. Freud's definition of a symptom as a place where a word should have been spoken echoes throughout this novel. Dick is chosen by Mary because her vague feelings of inadequacy are centred on him. When she accepted him he was "adoring, self-abasing and grateful" (60). They are both, to use Griffin's term, pornographers; and as such they are "twisted and

wrong in their depths ... well-matched, making each other miserable in the way they need" (67).

When Mary goes out to Dick's farm, Lessing makes it clear that Mary will be re-encountering her childhood. Certain patterns and elements are repeated as leitmotifs. The first element is nature - Mary is forced into the veld which she had always considered with distaste and preferred in the abstract. She is forced into poverty; Dick's warning is treated as an abstraction and not related to her pinched childhood. She becomes uneasy, and begins to feel "that it was not in this house she was sitting, with her husband, but back with her mother, watching her endlessly contrive and patch and mend" (65). It was as if "her father, from his grave, had sent out his will and forced her back into the kind of life he had made her mother lead" (66).

The bed that Dick had bought - "old-fashioned, high and massive - his idea of marriage" - (66) is indicative of how he is a victim of abstraction. His guilt and thrill of satisfaction at his abasement fits Griffin's description of the pornographer perfectly. Mary is operating on the same basis - the man Dick is "flesh and blood and therefore rather ridiculous - not the creature of her imagination whom she endowed with hands and lips but left bodiless" (67). It is to be expected that they would subsequently repudiate the contacts of the first night (68).

Having established the element of denial so forcefully, Lessing goes on to explore the operation of denial in the quintessentially African relationship of white master-black servant. I presented the basis on which I view the master-servant relationship as a microcosm of a larger relationship between

black and white in South Africa in Chapter One. Draine describes in her paper how, in literature, the individual is worked into the collective, and says:

> The shape of Lessing's novel has been dictated by the tragic emotions, but not at the expense of a clear political statement. The tragedy of Mary and Moses is not merely personal; it lies in their having been trapped by the collective conscience of their respective social groupings. (24)

Lessing, in Going Home, talks about a white woman in the Tropical Diseases Hospital in London who was neurotically obsessed with colour. Apropos of this story, she says "As soon as one sets foot in a white settler country one becomes part of a mass disease; everything is seen through the colour bar" (17). On another occasion (Howe, 1966:10) she spoke of the power of the relationship to "suck in" what would not normally be appropriate:

> We have fear. I think this is not a very new remark. The relationship between the sexes everywhere, not just in Western society, is so much of a melting pot that it's like the color bar, all kinds of emotions that don't belong get sucked in. You know, I'm convinced that all sorts of emotions that have nothing to do with color get associated around the color bar. Similarly with men and women, they... any sort of loaded point sucks in anger and fear.

It is colour that makes the relationship quintessentially African. Lessing pointed out in Going Home (19-20) that if one wanted to understand the feudality of the relationship once could read about the anguish of Levin in Anna Karenina. A great deal of what goes on ought to have nothing to do with colour, but it does. So we return to Mary and Moses as a fictional microcosm:

> The relationship between Mary and Moses depicts in microcosm several forms of power relationships. On the political level it duplicates the imbalance between the oppressive white minority and the black majority in South Africa. More suggestively, on the physical level it reflects the shifting tensions of sexual dominance

> between male and female. On the psychological level it dramatizes the splits within the fragmenting personality. This correspondence between the microcosms of private relationships and the elements of individual personality on the one hand and the macrocosms within which they develop on the other becomes one of Lessing's most consistent fictional techniques. (Rubenstein, 1979:20-21)

Mary is intended to personify and dramatize certain typical characteristics of the white colonial and as such is portrayed in the extreme. She "had never come into contact with natives before" and now has to face them - "the business of struggling with natives" (70). Again language comes to the fore - she settles down with a book on "kitchen kaffir" : "This was clearly the first thing she had to learn: she was unable to make Samson understand her" (72). Master and servant are, to an extent established by the master, wordless before one another.

Her interaction with the servants represents another crisis in Mary's life and raises the mechanism of projection. Mary, who staves off idleness "as something dangerous", finally has nothing left to do. We see that Lessing is following the logical pattern of the paranoid-schizophrenic position outlined by Klein. Omnipotent denial having being unsuccessful, projection is deployed as a defence against acknowledgment and recognition. True to Mannoni's observation regarding the projection of incompetance and laziness. Mary becomes obsessed with the servants labour. Later, when the Slatters visit, Dick and Charlie discuss labour. It is an opportunity for Lessing to observe that:

> Whenever two or three farmers are gathered together, it is decreed that they should discuss nothing but the shortcomings and deficiences of their natives. They talk about their labourers with a persistent irritation sounding in their voices: individual natives they might like, but as a genus, they loathe them. They loathe

> them to the point of neurosis. They never cease complaining about their unhappy lot, having to deal with natives who are so exasperatingly indifferent to the welfare of the white man, working only to please themselves. They had no idea of the dignity of labour, no idea of improving themselves by hard work. (92)

Mary's obsession with her labourer is accompanied by a "cold, dispassionate justice", and she finally drives Samson out of service. When she observes that Dick is really sorry to see him go, Dick showing such personal feeling with regard to a black servant makes him seem really horrible to her (78).

Mary is caught in the typical bind of the denier - the paradox of wanting and not wanting reality. A subsequent servant makes her angry by not meeting her eyes (82): "It was simply as if he were not really there, only a black body ready to do her bidding. And that enraged her too" (83).

Of course, Mary is practising displacement - whilst with Dick she seems quiet, almost maternal, with the natives she is a virago (83) and her frustration reaches such a pitch that at one point she scrubs the house as if she were scrubbing the skin off a black face.

Having described the process of denial, then projection and displacement, Lessing then raises the issue of guilt. When Mary forces the servant to clean the zinc bath she forgets about his food: "She never thought of natives as people who had to eat or sleep" (89). She feels guilty, then she smothers her guilt. But her understanding comes too late, and the servant hands in his contract of service after the Slatters have left.

This incident is used by Lessing to draw together the threads that will lead to Mary's disintegration. Dick supports the

servant, to Mary's stupefaction and outrage, saying "He's a human being isn't he?" (95). Later, however, he calls the servants "lazy black savages", indicating the constant tension between the personal and impersonal relationship. Mary responds, unable to stop on the brink of disaster, in a voice "taken direct from her mother" (95). The tension between them for lasts weeks, until it rains, and then, "unresolved and unacknowledged, the conflict was put behind them, and they went on as if it had not happened" (97). Denial is followed by displacement: "For the sake of their life together she had to smother her dislike of him because of the way he had behaved, but it was not so easy to smother; it was put against the account of the native who had left, and, indirectly, against all natives" (97). Dick also falls prey to displacement - his marriage a failure, he now thinks of children (99).

There is one more aspect to their relationship that Mary can use as a shield against having to face herself; her idea of Dick as a farmer. As a man, she leaves him out of account - her attitude is fundamentally one of contempt - but as a farmer she respects him. However, in the same way as the words she had overheard about herself, which precipitated her on her path to self-knowledge, she overhears another farmer speak to Dick with a note of contempt in his voice (103). With this tone niggling in her mind, Dick embarks on a series of projects that destroy the image she has of him. As his efforts with bees, pigs, turkeys and rabbits fail, Mary finds herself more and more often accompanied by a mental image of her mother "like an older sardonic double of herself" (110). Finally, Dick opens a store on the farm, and Mary is forced to work in the institution that epitomised her childhood:

> It seemed to Mary a terrible thing, an omen and a warning that the store, the ugly menacing store of her childhood, should follow her here, even to her home. (113)

In the store, she sets the jewellery of garish glass and brass and copper swinging and twinkling "with a tightlipped smile because of the memories of her childhood ... she felt like dissolving in hopeless foreboding tears; but she said not a word (114, emphasis added).

What we have now is condensation - the store smell reminds her of her childhood and her father, but she can't explain this to Dick "for the good reason that he was now associated with the greyness and misery of her childhood, and it would have been like arguing with destiny itself" (115). It is during Mary's abortive foray into town that she admits to herself "that she had changed, in herself, not in her circumstances" (124). However, this realisation, like her memories, does not surface. When she and Dick are together again, "not even the tones of their voices changed" (125); but the trip to town marks the beginning of an inner disintegration in Mary.

Dick's illness, in Chapter Six, marks a turning point in the novel. It finally strips Dick of any possible respect in Mary's eyes; it pushes her right into truck with the farm natives; it tests her will and sense of righteousness, and finally, it makes possible the incident with the fieldworker Moses, whom she whips across the face.

In lecturing the labourers about the dignity of work, the words she uses are her father's; they well up from the part of her brain that holds her earliest memories (141). The issue of

language, that most sensitive register of social being, asserts itself again. "She hated it when they spoke to each other in dialects she did not understand" (141). We may also note the convergence of language with body: she begins to hate them, particularly their bodies (141). Their smell, that potent register of displacement, she hates "more than anything, with a violent physical repulsion". The business of controlling the object does what it can be expected to do for the mind bordering on fragmentation - for a while it holds that mind together.

The next crisis point in Mary Turner's breakdown is provoked by her seeing Moses, who by now is employed as the houseservant, washing. She becomes "rigid with hysterical emotion" because "the formal pattern of black and white, mistress and servant, had been broken by the personal relation" (177, 178). From here on, the intensity of Mary's breakdown is reflected in the increasingly hectic pace of the narrative. Later, when Moses confronts her about why he is staying ("Madame asked me to stay. I stay to help Madame. If Madame cross, I go" (188)) she can hardly answer:

> She felt the usual anger rise within her, at the tone he used to her; at the same time she was fascinated, and out of her depth; she did not know what to do with this personal relation. (189)

Because of the new relation between them, Mary feels helplessly in his power:

> Yet there was no reason why she should. Never ceasing for one moment to be conscious of his presence about the house, or standing silently at the back against the wall in the sun, her feeling was one of a strong and irrational fear, a deep uneasiness, and even - though this she did not know, would have died rather than acknowledge - of some dark attraction. (190)

Mary acts as though she would have died rather than acknowledge

this attraction; "And now she began to avoid him" (192). The problem for Mary is that although Moses was never disrespectful:

> He forced her now, to treat him as a human being; it was impossible for her to thrust him out of her mind like something unclean, as she had done with all the others in the past. She was being forced into contact, and she never ceased to be aware of him. She realised, daily, that there was something in it that was dangerous, but what it was she was unable to define. (192)

Moses' power becomes awesome:

> [Mary] watched her actions from one point of view only; would they allow Moses to strengthen that new human relationship between them, in a way she could not counter, and which she could only try to avoid. (193)

Mary experiences this as a most profound intrusion by Moses into her psyche. Or, to put it another way, Mary no longer acts out of her self, but out of Moses. What Mary unsuccessfully struggles against is the opposite of what the settlers maintain; she fails to deny Moses and to maintain a split perception of him. Her recognition of Moses heralds the end of these defences, but instead of the end of these defences heralding the onset of a coherent ego, they mark the final fragmentation of that ego.

As Mary becomes more obsessed with Moses she becomes more conscious of bodily detail. This is especially apparent in Chapter 9. Mary, "Her mind, nine-tenths of the time a soft aching blank" (183) thinks of Moses: "She could see only his big shoulder bulging beneath the cloth, and his hand hanging idly down, the fingers curled softly inwards over the pinkish brown palm". When she breaks down in front of Moses after he has told her he wants to leave, he propels her to bed, "loath to touch her, the sacrosanct white woman".

At this point, using the closing sequences of The Grass is Singing, we may begin to draw together the threads of not only this chapter of the dissertation but some of the threads of the previous chapters as well. As Mary nears her death, we see Lessing's illustration of the failure of neurotic defence mechanisms, the fragmentation of the ego under the force of paranoid-schizoid anxiety, the collapsing into each other of dream, phantasy and reality, and finally, marked by increasing bodily obsession, the loss of language.

For Mary, when Moses propels her to bed:

> It was like a nightmare where one is powerless against horror: the touch of this black man's hand on her shoulders filled her with nausea; she had never, not once in her whole life, touched the flesh of a native. (186)

Later, when she remembers what has happened, "the fear engulfed her again, a terrible dark fear":

> She shrank into the pillow with loathing, moaning out loud, as if she had been touched by excrement. And through her torment she could hear his voice, firm and kind, like a father commanding her. (187)

She begins to dream often:

> Twice she dreamed directly of the native, and on each occasion she awoke in terror as he touched her. On each occasion in her dream he had stood over her, powerful and commanding, yet kind, but forcing her into a position where she had to touch him. (192)

When Moses looks after Dick, "she could not bear to think of the black man there all night, next door, so close to her, with nothing but the thin brick wall seperating them" (197):

> Vividly she pictured the broad muscular back and shuddered. So clear was her vision of the native that

> she imagined she smelled the hot acrid scent of native bodies. (198)

Time passes, and she tosses and turns in a troubled sleep, "shuddering, as she had when she imagined that native smell" (199). Then she dreams of her father. She was playing with her parents and brother and sister before going to bed. She was taking the game very seriously and her brother and sister were laughing:

> Her father caught her head and held it in his lap... She smelt the sickly odour of beer, and through it she smelt too - her head held down in the thick stuff of his trousers - the unwashed masculine smell she always associated with him. (201)

She half-wakes, screaming. Then, still in a dream, she goes into the room to tend Dick. Again we have detailed descriptions of parts of Moses' body. When she goes into the room she sees one leg "an enourmous, more than lifesize leg, the limbs of a giant... the palm turned over and the fingers curled limply... the other leg... the skin of the sole, cracked and horny... his thick neck..." (202). As she bends over Dick, she knows that Moses awakes and is watching her. In a dreamlike sequence Moses advances "obscene and powerful, and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her." She smells the smell of her father, and nearly collapses. Moses approaches and she hears him comforting her because of Dick's death. As Moses consoles her, it was at the same time "her father, menacing and horrible, who touched her in desire" (204). Eventually Mary is forced to deny her fear, a falsehood of course, and she is "furious with herself for denying something whose possiblity should never even be admitted" (204). The possibility that should never have been admitted, is of course, the possibility of mutual recognition.

Finally, as Mary faces her death, she sees the knife in Moses' hands and wants to say something, but her mouth is stopped "by an extraordinary feeling of guilt" (253). Mary, like the neighbourhood described in Chapter One of the novel, joins the conspiracy of silence.

One could say that what kills Mary Turner is unspeakable bodily knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE: LOOKING AT MASTERS AND SERVANTS IN THE WORK OF ES'KIA MPHAHLELE

In the first edition of The African Image (1962:29), Es'kia Mphahlele wrote:

> I first came to know the white man at the point of a boot and then at the point of an index finger - as a servant to him. I know there is much more to him than his fear of me and I want to explore this other side. But then he won't let me.

In the revised edition of this work (1973:14) he wrote:

> I used to worry then, because we see each other through a keyhole - we blacks and whites in South Africa - and I cannot portray the character of a white man in the round.

In Mphahlele's writing we find an emphasis on people in relation to one another, and a concentration on the intimacies of the domestic scene; hence the metaphor of the keyhole for tunnel vision. In this chapter the themes of accessibility/inaccessibility, penetration/ containment and prohibition/permission will be quite apparent.

As far as character portrayal is concerned Mphahlele went on to say in the revised edition of The African Image:

> I get to know him (boss or foreman) only as an adult who carries on him the badge of his tribe, and perhaps more than he will ever realise, the burden and even curse of being white. I used to worry that there is so much else I do not know about this symbol of power, prosperity, privilege, that gunslinging, batonswinging

> cop, this ogre sitting judgement over a black law breaker. I wanted my portrait of him in my fiction to be fuller so I myself could begin to understand him. Over the last ten years I have ceased to care. It is not worth the trouble. The white man's inhumanity in South Africa has proved that to me. To feel his muscle in real life is to understand him. And that seems enough for now. I will still enjoy engineering my own poetic justice against him. If any critic tells me my white characters are caricatures or only monsters, he is welcome to the opinion.

Mphahele is quoted at length on this issue because I will focus on the literary nature of the representation of the master-servant relationship in this chapter more than I do in any other. In particular, I shall pay great attention to Mphahlele's use of irony.

I will concentrate on "Mrs Plum", a novella that was first published in 1967 in a collection of short stories called <u>In Corner B</u>. Several of Mphahele's short stories presage "Mrs Plum" and we can see in Mphalele's work an ideological development that culminates in a trenchant critique of the liberal madam. (All the stories I refer to, "Mrs Plum" included, appear in <u>The Unbroken Song</u> (1981), and all future references to stories refer to this edition.)

Mphahlele wrote "Mrs Plum" when in Paris, with the memory of his stay in Nigeria still fresh and the Deep South continuing to claim him (1981, Introduction). In a letter to the critic Ursula Barnett, he called it "the best thing I ever pulled off" (Barnett, 1976:110).

Norman Hodge (1981:33) calls it "a crucial work in Mphahlele's fiction, a unique piece of writing which bridges the gap between the collection of short stories - <u>Man Must Live</u>, <u>The Living and the Dead</u> and <u>In Corner B</u> - and the longer works, <u>Down Second</u>

Avenue, The Wanderers and Chirundu".

It is the story of Karabo, a young black woman who comes to Johannesburg, particularly as regards her relationship with her employer, Mrs Plum. Over the three years that Karabo is employed she "learns" and she "grows up". The story may well be, as Hodge claims it is, a bildungsroman. My interest in it, however, lies in the fact that it is specificially a story of how a black South African maid develops to a point where she sees through a white liberal madam and comes to a particular understanding of her socio-economic position in the society she enters.[1] Mphahalele invites the reader to partake in this understanding through a sometimes quite subtle manipulation of image, symbol, metaphor, plot and character. Whereas "A Home for the Highland Cattle" may be subtitled "The Making of a Madam", "Mrs Plum" could be subtitled "The Making of a Maid".

The story has precedent in Mphahalele's work both in terms of content and style. Mrs Plum is prefigured in some ways by Miss Pringle in "We'll have Dinner at Eight", which was written in South Africa, and, as far as I can establish, orginally appeared in The Living and the Dead which was first published in Ibadan by the Nigerian Ministry of Education in 1961.[2]

Miss Pringle "makes a conscientious effort to win non-white friends" (1981:43) and does charitable work for the African, moving from institution to institution. Like Mr Plum, she has a relationship with "the African" rather than with any particular African person. At the time of the story she is working at a private institution, a workshop that takes in incurable cripples to train them in some trade. Her attention is focussed on Mzondi whom she pities immensely and about whom she is extremly curious

especially since she has received a doctor's report indicating that he does not have long to live. Her confidential testimonials describe her as "a little overbearing", "a trifle tiresome", and "a queer fish" (1981:45). Mphahlele pre-empts a sympathetic understanding of Miss Pringle by making her appear insincere. Her efforts to win black friends are accompanied by "an eternal smile" (1981:43). In the conversation with Mzondi, during which she insists that he comes to dinner, she is shown to be extremely insensitive and self-absorbed, despite her apparent interest in him. Mzondi only speaks twice; once to refuse the invitation to dinner and once to refuse the invitation to sit down. So he stands while Miss Pringle goes on, "Aren't you going to change your mind this fifth time and come?" and on, "What's the matter with you black people?" and on, "do come, for my sake if not yours" and on, "only last week I had a few coloured friends and next Wednesday I"m expecting other African friends" and on, "think about it ... you may go back to your work now" (1981:44).

The characterisation of Miss Pringle is blunt and verges on caricature. Similarly, although we are told what happened to Mzondi, he is not developed as a character. The plot is bold and simple. Mzondi is arrested for illicit liquor brewing and while he is jail he is beaten to make him reveal where he has hidden three thousand pounds from a payroll robbery. We don't know if Mzondi was involved in a payroll robbery. He has hidden two hundred pounds earned from illicit liquor brewing. State witnesses lie and Mzondi is acquitted. Mphahlele is extremely fond of the irony of "right reason for wrong actions, wrong reasons for right actions". Here we find that Mphahlele irony:

Mzondi is guilty of one crime and is acquitted of another; although acquitted he has suffered severely because of the assumption that he had commited the crime. The irony continues. One day whilst in the workshops Mzondi sees a policeman visit Miss Pringle in connection with a burglary at the workshop. In his paranoid state Mzondi assumes that they are both plotting to get at his money, and that this is the reason for Miss Pringle's invitation. He goes to her office and takes up her invitation. When they get to her flat, she to satisfy her curiosity at last, he to kill her, a watchman phones the police on the assumption that they are going to be "immoral". Miss Pringle peeps out the window to check if they are being watched. Her flat is under surveillance because the police "can't think of friendship between male and female without pillows and blankets" (1981:50-51). Again we have the irony of the police engaging in wrong action for the wrong reasons, when we know Mzondi is going to kill Miss Pringle. The police will come - for the wrong reason. Before they do, however, Miss Pringle will be killed, and she will be killed by the symbol of Mzondi's reliance on her - his crutch. (At the risk of labouring the issue, the ambiguity of crutch is pregnant with meaning.) She is killed for the wrong reasons. When Mzondi, who suffered because people believed he had much more money than he actually had, leaves the building, he pays the watchman substantially more than a constable who is spying on Miss Pringle had paid him, for the opposite reason, that is, for silence, but unnecessarily, since Mzondi will himself very soon be silenced for eternity. The constable hopes to discover "immorality" and discovers immorality. In a most macabre way, one of Miss Pringle's wishes is fulfilled; we are told that she had said, "if ever I should be battered on the head

I don't want to suffer like him ... no relations, no address - one of those people who come from nowhere and pass on to nowhere ... my heart bleeds for him" (1981:45). When found dead in the morning, Mzondi is embracing a tree-trunk, and "There was nothing on him to tell who he was or where he was from" (1981:53). But the reader knows why he is there - because he does have a relative, specifically a little fat daughter in Eshowe. And, although indirectly, it is because of her that he is connected with the murder of Miss Pringle - this is the motivating reason that will not surface; some other reason will be found for Miss Pringle's bleeding head. The silence that accompanies the death of Mzondi and Miss Pringle is, of course, reminiscent of the silence surrounding the death of Mary Turner. The whole story revolves around silences, sexuality, the hidden and the misunderstood.

The deployment of such irony does not mean that Mphahlele is simply pointing to the Great Mystery of Life or the Tragedy of Humanity. The story is not a tragedy, and to attempt to empathise with character is to miss the point.[3] It seems to me that we are presented with types or non-characters suffering at the mercy of anarchistic circumstances. In other words, plot annihilates character. This technique is an apposite method of reflecting a society that reifies systems at the expense of humans. The system or set of circumstances is shown to be constantly misunderstood, uncontrollable and anarchic. This system has another important feature which is directly related to Mphahlele's irony. The misunderstanding about or of the system has a reflexive quality; the system is misunderstood and then added to or developed on the basis of these misunderstandings. Mphahlele has presented us with divergent perceptions: Miss

Pringle has one perception and follows her script, so to speak, whilst Mzondi has a different script which he follows and the police yet another. It is quite clear, as far as Mphahlele is concerned, who has the true script. His ironic plot emerges from the co-existence of these different scripts of the same situation, "written out of" the different perceptions that issue from an apartheid society.

The reflexive misunderstanding that occurs in South African society and which Mphahlele is illustrating, has several effects. One effect, that of arbitrary and useless violence and brutality, arises out of people from one group relating to stereotypes rather real individuals of another group. Thus, certain whites assume that every black man is a potential robber and rapist, a projection with which we are by now familiar. This kind of perception breeds distance, which in turn contributes to further stereotyping. In this way, violence and misunderstanding come to generate each other. Another effect of this reflexive misunderstanding is the warping of values. Because of the divided nature of South African society, many people hold that friendly black-white associations automatically imply sexual intercourse. In a different kind of society Miss Pringle's pity for and desire to contact Mzondi may be quite laudable, but in the society we have, good intentions are always in danger of vitiation. Furthermore, in a healthy society there is no danger of gross immorality, such as murder, enjoying a status similar to the 'immorality' of illegal sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse between white and black has 'immoral' status conferred upon it, and the police then act as if it is in fact immoral. A social system as perverter of morality, character as

victims of a system, and the painful, as opposed to literarily tragic, consequences for people are some of Mphahlele's abiding concerns. The deployment of an ironic symbolic structure is one of his methods, and pointing out the bankrupt basis of apparently generous social action is one of his aims.

This structural irony or ironic structure involving several different scripts and the consequent blindness on the part of whites is a very strong feature in the two other stories which prefigure "Mrs Plum" - "The Living and the Dead" and "The Master of Doornvlei". We also, in these stories, have an abundance of those images, symbols and metaphors concerning the blindness and refracted/reflected vision of characters - the different script holders in Mphahlele's drama.

"The Living and the Dead" first appeared in Africa South in the January/March issue of 1958. It was the title story for the 1961 volume that included "We'll have Dinner at Eight" and is included in The Unbroken Song. It has something in common with another story of the same period, "The Suitcase", where the main character picks up a suitcase, and thinking it might contain "something valuable", claims it as his own and guiltily carries it around for some time only to finally discover it contains a dead baby. In "The Living and the Dead" Lebona, a railway station cleaner, picks up a discarded letter which plays a crucial role in the plot. A misleading association is suggested by the narrative between the letter and the casual death, which Lebona had seen, of an unknown man. I do not want to make too great a claim for any ironic plot having a particularly South African meaning - Mphahlele uses a stock of techniques widely used by short story writers - but wish rather to suggest that he is

focussing on that aspect of South African society which forces relationships to be limited by stereotypes and caricatures. It is only in the South African context that the events and characters of "The Living and the Dead" are all too possible.[4]

The basic irony in "The Living and the Dead" is the fact that Stoffel Visser, the white master, has failed to deliver his reasons for banishing black servants from white suburbs to the appropriate minister because his own black servant, Jackson, is absent, and not available to post the letter. By presenting the misleading association between the letter, the dead man, and Jackson, Mphahlele is playing hard on the notion of limited vision. As the author of the story he is engineering an effect on the reader that the system has had on him - the reader is not allowed into the true situation, and therefore cannot have a true understanding of it. This is the situation that he described in the the first edition of The African Image which I quoted above: "I first came to know the white man at the point of a boot and then at the point of an index finger."

The fact that Visser is a stereotype and not a well-crafted character is thus not at all surprising. The story is about the apprehension of others as stereotypes as well as the presentation of oneself as a stereotype.

As a stereotype Visser is consistent with the authoritarian personality-type so often identified with facism[5]: when things go wrong Stoffel feels foolish, gets angry, and assumes it's all somebody else's fault. His arrogance ("If I feel pressed to speak you must listen") is accompanied by a tendency to reduce complex issues to cliches ("What will happen to white civilisation?") and an obsession with control, order and detail ("things must go

right to the last detail", "I must have a good breakfast every day".). Mphahlele obviously intends to castigate this mentality. From the point of view of his companion, Doppie Fourie, Visser is a complex and intelligent creature. However, we are invited through details spread over the first few pages of the story to feel at least condescension if not contempt for Fourie who distrusts complex human beings because they evade labels. It is through Fourie that Mphahlele manages the subtle manipulation of symbols and images; Jackson's letter is a label that can be pulled out of a pocket or pinned on a lapel like a badge of charity or the badge of a tribe. Badges of charity and collecting boxes are usually associated with institutions such as those in which Miss Pringle works, ones usually founded on Christian Protestant premises. Visser, secretary of the Social Affairs Committee of the Christian Protestant Party, is a Christian of the type that Mphahlele abhors: "The Church has become a symbol of the dishonesty of the West." (Mphahlele, 1950:182). In view of this opinion, and in view of what we have been led to believe through the manipulation of images such as labels and badges, it makes sense to see Visser not as inconsistent and contradictory and therefore a flawed or unsuccessful fictional character, but rather as a fairly reasonable portrayal of the type of person who acts in bad faith and therefore raises "bars of iron" to protect himself against self-knowledge, bars of iron which, as of course the images suggests, imprison him. Mphahlele presents a substantial passage of dialogue evidencing bad faith on Visser's part:

> We haven't much time to waste looking at both sides of the question like these stupids, _ou kerel_. That's why it doesn't pay anymore to pretend we're just being fair to the Kaffir by controlling him. No use even

> trying to tell him he's going to like living in enclosures.
>
> Isn't it because we know what the kaffir wants that we must call a halt to his ambitious wants? The danger, as I see it, ou kerel, isn't merely in the kaffirs' increasing anger and desperation. It also lies in our tendency as whites to believe that what we tell him is the truth. (1981:105)

Not for nothing does Visser automatically assume that every black who speaks to him is telling lies; he is an excellent illustration of projection.

Perhaps one can classify lies by omission and commission, half-truths and deliberate ambiguities as an abiding theme in Mphahlele's work. An author discussing communication "through a key-hole" is bound to be concerned with dishonesty. It is in the light of Mphahlele's portrayal of bad faith that we can understand statements like: "He got annoyed because he couldn't answer them" (the questions of the employer of Virginia, Jackson's wife, about what Visser had done since Jackson's absence) (1981:109); "Stoffel banged the receiver down" (after a policeman with a "thin sickly" voice had said, "You know what these kaffirs are") (1981:110); and "With somewhat unsteady hands Stoffel put the things [Jackson's photographs] back in the envelope" (1981:115). Now we can understand Stoffel's anger. It arises in order "to muffle the cry of shame ... There were things he would rather not think about" (1981:117).

Given such bad faith, his characters have fertile grounds for paranoia. And indeed, Stoffel does display paranoia, although perhaps in not quite so naked a form as Sarel Britz, the master of Doornvlei who sees blacks as serpents' eggs (1981:75). Having told Fourie that the danger lies in whites believing that what they tell blacks is the truth, Stoffel goes on to say:

> And this might drive us to sleep one day - a fatal day I tell you. It's necessary to keep talking, Doppie, so as to keep jolting the whites into a sharp awareness. It's dangerously easy for the public to forget and go to sleep. (1981:105)

"The Living and the Dead" is evidence of the struggle that the South African writer of one race faces when presenting a character of another race. Considering this struggle and the typical white character or facade with whom the black person comes in contact, the story may go some way towards explaining Mphahlele's sentiments expressed in The African Image, to which I have already referred: "I get to know him (boss or foreman) only as an adult who carries on him the badge of his tribe, and perhaps more than he will every realise, the burden and even curse of being white" and "If any critic tells me my white characters are caricatures or only monsters, he is welcome to the opinion."

Because of such statements, when Mphahlele would have us believe that as far as he as a black is concerned there is not much to choose between a character like Visser and a "kaffirlover" (like Miss Pringle or Mrs Plum) who hates the thought of having to forego "fat feudal comfort", he has every right to be taken seriously and not be castigated for failing to recognise the distinctions between nationalist, fascist and liberal in the South African context.

In "The Master of Doornvlei" Sarel Britz, a white farmer, relies heavily on his tyrannical black foreman, Mfukeri, to enforce the oppression of the labourers. The climax of the story is a battle between Donker, Mfukeri's bull, and Kaspar, Britz's stallion. Kaspar is badly gored and Britz shoots him, then demands that

Mfukeri shoot Donker or leaves the farm. Mfukeri probably leaves, but the end of the story does not allow us to be certain. It is useful to recap at this point and see what changes have taken place in the portrayal of characters from Miss Pringle through Visser to Britz.

There is no reason to suppose that Miss Pringle' charity stems from any liberal consciousness. It seems more likely that it stems from an extreme form of paternalism that allows her to be too blind to be frightened or paranoid. As her conversation with Mzondi indicates, she does not see or hear him. Recognition is so repressed that she is not aware of the repression. This is not the case with Visser. The climax or crux of the story is Visser realising that "he did not want to think, to feel" and Mphahlele's point is that Visser decides, "Better continue treating him [Jackson] as a name, not as another human being" (1981:117). Mphahlele is prepared to acknowledge that Visser may be the product of circumstances, a bed of attitudes planted by contemporaries and "other voices coming down through the centuries."[6] However, Visser is not emblematic of the mindless reproduction of attitudes. Unlike Miss Pringle he represents a different stage of thought, a fear that requires repression and that results in arrogance and paranoia. Although for very different reasons, Visser, like Leopard George, suffers the death of feelings.

Britz represents yet another stage of white consciousness. It seems possible that "The Master of Doornvlei" was written after "The Living and the Dead" although it was the first of the two to be published. "The Master of Doorvlei" first appeard in <u>Fighting Talk</u> in 1957; "The Living and the Dead" in <u>Africa South</u> in

January/March issue of 1958. Which story was written first is perhaps less significant than the fact that both these stories were written just prior to Mphahlele's going into exile.

What is an embryonic paranoia in Stoffel Visser is quite blatant in Britz. Britz tells his mother, "Pa was wrong ... about kaffirs being children ... one has to be on the alert with them

They're serpents' eggs, and I'm going to crush them ... I'm going to keep a sharp eye on the black swines" (1981:75). Predictably enough, where Miss Pringle may have made appeals to a god of mercy, love, hope and charity, Britz appeals to a god of justice: "I'm just to my labourers ... I often have to give up church service myself" (1981:72); "I'm just and to show it Mfukeri is not going to the fields until I've decided" (1981:74). Later we are told: "Britz kept reminding his tenant that he was just: he favoured no one above the other, he repeated it often to Mfukeri and to his mother" (1981:77.) Such insistence, which may remind the reader of Mary Turner's "cold, dispassionate justice" obviously raises the question of self-doubt. Britz's paranoia reaches ultimate heights when he imagines that Donker, meaning dark and thus symbolic of the power of blacks personified by Mfukeri, can invoke mystical power from the earth (1981:81). It is hinted that we are now, in the story as a whole, in the realm of those conditions that border on psychosis. Britz needs confirmation of his identity, and he asks Mfukeri, whom he can only expect will tell him what he wants to hear, "What do you think of me Mfukeri?" (1981:78). Here is a fundamental insecurity that neither Miss Pringle or Visser has; Miss Pringle would not credit a black African with independent thought and Visser is not concerned with what others think of him. Britz is:

"Something in him quaked. He was sensitive enough to catch the tone of the last 'baas' when Mfukeri left: it was such an indifferent echo of what 'baas' sounded like years before (1981:80).

In Sarel Britz Mphahlele has put his finger on the terror of the master and described the intransigant consciousness that all slaves eventually face in their struggle for liberation. He has also indicated an extremely important development in the black point of view of this struggle as it is being played out in South Africa. Mfukeri, the black foreman, is alienated from the workers and acts as a tyrant of behalf of white oppression; Mphahlele is shifting from colour to class analysis, and allowing a split to develop on the black side of the balance. When we move onto "Mrs Plum", we should not be surprised to find a black character sensitive to the demands of an economic relationship, but able to refuse co-option.

The ultimate lesson in "The Master of Doornvlei", however, does not lie in the portrayal of character, but elsewhere. The plot is relentlessly bleak: a bird is physically trapped in a church, and a boy ideologically trapped; both escapes, the natural and the human, end in death. The reader is reminded of Mphahlele's view of the church as "a symbol of dishonesty". The importance of the fact that the struggle is symbolised as a fight between two male animals that are traditional symbols of potency, a bull and a stallion, and that belong to Britz and Mfukeri, cannot be underestimated. The struggle for the kind of power that the Britzes of South Africa would wield is not couched in terms of a problem in human understanding - it is quite simply a brutal animalistic struggle to the death, and furthermore a struggle

where the death of one demands the death of another. The fact that the symbols are a bull and stallion calls to mind Mphahlele's comment that "when I think of strong people I don't think of men - I always think of women" (Manganyi, 1981:11). Mphahlele is undermining the traditional association between strength, physical power and potency. It appears that at this stage he no longer sees in South African society a struggle for human understanding. What he sees is a bitter and futile struggle for hollow power, power for power's sake. One can only speculate on Mphahlele's consciousness regarding the connection between separation from women, the death of feeling and the urge to dominate.

The story ends with Sarel Britz looking out of his window (laager) to the empty paddock (country) and reflecting: "He had got rid of yet another threat to his authority. But the fear remained" (1981:82). One is reminded of Stoffel Visser's iron bars and "No use even trying to tell him he's going to like living in enclosures" (1981:105). Both characters reflect the impasse in which the pornographer finds himself. On the one hand there is the attempt to banish or absent, and on the other hand an attempt to enclose or control. They also, perhaps in a more metaphorical way than Marina Giles and Charlie, illustrate how the master or Self suffers that which he would impose on the servant or Other; it is Britz and Visser who are banished and trapped. It is not surprising that at this juncture, and having been banned from teaching, Mphahlele went into exile.

Looking over these short stories, each of which in some way presages "Mrs Plum", we can see that by the time Mphahlele goes into exile certain characteristics of his art are established.

He is a realist writer, sensitive to irony, both in turn of phrase and in structure. Part of this structural irony is the portrayal of characters as victims of circumstances, which accurately reflects a society where people are victims of a system. An effort to understand the oppressive white consciousness has been made and given up and replaced with a more sophisticated recognition of what is at stake in human relationships; not the possession of power but the ability to recognise a human being. The inevitable mixture between black and white and the laughability of whites' denial of this mixture is shown up by the black party held in the white house, both in "The Living and the Dead" and "Mrs Plum". The importance of denial, absence and projection in the relationship between black and white as it exists in South Africa is clear. Other concerns, such as equating servants with animals, remind us of Lessing: Jackson is "as devoted as a trained animal" (1981:107). Miss Pringle and the police peep through windows, round corners, down corridors; Visser peeps into Jackson's letter; Britz stares through his window. This constantly reiterated metaphor - "we see each other through a keyhole - we blacks and whites in South Africa -" coupled with the progression in Mphahlele's stories from Miss Pringle who does not want to know what others (that is the blacks) think, through Visser, who is scared of what others think of him, to Britz who needs to know what the servant thinks of him, prepare us for the two major metaphors of "Mrs Plum" - the keyhole and the mirror. In "Mrs Plum" we are done with the whites' point of view - it is a black who will be doing the looking through the keyhole and into the mirror in Mphahlele's next major story on South Africa.

Mphahlele landed in Nigeria ten years after the publication of Man Must Live, his first volume of short stories. In the Epilogue to Down Second Avenue, which he finished soon after his arrival in Nigeria, he wrote:

> In ten years my perspective has changed enormously from escapist writing to protest writing and I hope, to something of a higher order, which is the ironic meeting between protest and acceptance in their widest terms. (1962:179)

He describes what he wrote between 1947 and 1957 as "chaff"

There is no doubt that "Mrs Plum" belongs to "something of a higher order" in Mphahlele' fiction. Mphahlele gives us the reason for this new mastery in the Epilogue:

> Immediately I felt the difference between writing here and in a South African social climate. Somehow it feels like just having climbed down from a vehicle that has been rocking violently for countless miles ... I now realise what a crushing cliche the South African situation can be as literary material. (1962:180)

The subsequent paragraphs, decribing himself in Lagos, are laced with words such as "spacious", "cool", "refreshing", "basking", "freedom", "release", "placid", "replenish", "worthwhile", and so on. As far the crushing cliche is concerned the reader may recall Lessing's comments on the black African writer who had to remind himself that he had a right to laugh.

Cliche notwithstanding, Mphahlele's subject in "Mrs Plum" is that particularly South African institution of black women in the domestic service of white families.

The story falls into four sections. The first describes how Karabo, a young girl from Phokeng near Rustenberg, arrives in Johannesburg to work. She leaves her first employers because

they were drunks and always forgot to pay her. She leaves her second employer because she is sexually harassed by a relative of theirs. After nine months in Johannesburg she find employment with Mrs Plum. The second section fills out the details of the employment and introduces Mrs Plum, her daughter Kate, and Dick in his role as their gardener; Karabo's white world. The third section introduces her black world, the Black Crow Club in Bree Street, the black leader Lilian Ngoyi (who is not a fictional character), Chimane who works for the family next door to Karabo, and Dick as their friend. This section shows Karabo beginning to question her situation. The fourth part tells the story.

In Karabo's third year of employment Mrs Plum throws a party to which she invites a black doctor. Both Karabo and Kate fall in love with him. Karabo eventually frees herself of her love for him since there is no future in it, and Kate does the same and replaces the doctor with a young man called Jim. In the meantime Mrs Plum has gone to Durban for the winter holidays and the servants have held a party in an employer's house. Soon after returning from Durban Mrs Plum hoses down intruding policemen and goes to jail rather than pay a fine. (The reader may recall that this incident was cited in Chapter One as an example of the rootedness of fiction in everyday life.) At this stage Chimane reveals that she is pregnant and will have an abortion because of her precarious economic situation. Karabo returns to her quarters and has a moment of self-realisation before a mirror; she then smells Madam on herself. Soon after visiting Chimane after her abortion, Karabo overhears Mrs Plum and some visitors talk about a cemetary for pets. It is not long after this that Karabo peeps through the keyhole of Mrs Plum's bedroom and sees her masturbating with her dog. The story thereafter moves rapidly to

its climax; the white residents of Greenside suspect servants of plotting to poison their pets, Mrs Plum in a fit of paranoia fires Dick, and when Karabo, already disillusioned, requests leave to attend the funeral of an uncle and Mrs Plum insists it be leave without pay, she resigns. Mrs Plum follows her to Phokeng and asks her to return. Karabo does so, with reservations.

Mphahlele has offered us the metaphor of the keyhole with the maid on one side of the door and the madam on the other, a metaphor for domestic service which plays so major a role in the larger network of relations in South Africa. It is an extraordinarily rich metaphor with complex implications to do with special access and spacial control, containment and penetration, mysteries and insight and of course to the channeling of vision, to partial vision and perspective. When one thinks of the central role that many maids play in the socialisation of white children, it is quite significant that the maids' position is so heavily structured in terms of containment/penetration, accessibility/inaccessibility and permission/prohibition. These dyads mark nodal points in the psychological development of the individual.

The activities of Karabo, Chimane and Dick must be seen in the context of the role of domestic service in South Africa and the background of dire economic necessity that has been brought about and is maintained by the law. (Pointedly enough we are not shown a single working white person except a policeman). We are told in the first paragraph of the story that, according to Mrs Plum, "everyone must follow the law, even if it hurts". This important axiom of liberalism means that anyone who breaks the law has no

right to the benefits - security, respect, recognition in an ordered world - that the law confers since breaking the law threatens everybody else's right to those benefits. However, this axiom has an important corollary - that everyone should have equal access to the same law. This corollary has never been practised in South Africa. In fact great efforts have been made to ensure exactly the opposite. Mrs Plum is caught in the classic liberal double-bind so neatly identified by Laurens Van der Post nearly forty years ago (Parker, 1978:8): "We forbid them the sort of life their life demands, and give them our law, without the sort of life our law demands." Karabo recognises her poor status vis-a-vis the law so that when the Parktown North employers forget to pay her, she "protects herself" by leaving. It is her only realistic option. When she is sexually harassed by the Belgravia employer's relative she does the same. Her friend Rebone also has no real redress against sexual harassment. The point is made by Lilian Ngoyi: "We were to learn, she said, that the world would never be safe for black people until they were in the government with the power to make laws".

Lilian Ngoyi is the spokesperson for those on one side of the keyhole while Mrs Plum and Kate speak for those on the other. Mphahlele makes it quite clear just how far apart the two worlds are. When Karabo is learning about the white world Kate tells her that the aim of Mrs Plum's activity is: "So that a few of your people should one day be among those who rule this country and get more money for what they do for the white man" (1981:221). Later, Karabo learns from Lilian Ngoyi that "A master and a servant can never be friends" (1981:227). Mphahlele has patterned "Mrs Plum" along the lines of Karabo in

connection between names, dogs and recognition. In a penultimate anecdote before the story of Karabo's third year, a neighbour of Mrs Plum reports that Dick has been careless with the dogs in the street: "When he left, the white man said, come Rusty, the boy is waiting to clean you. Dogs with names, men without I thought." (1981:234) This is a compact and strategically placed observation that recalls the concerns stated in the first paragraph of the story: "My madam's name was Mrs Plum. She loved dogs and Africans" A sensitivity to names is a hallmark of Mphahlele's writing, and we are reminded of Stoffel Visser's reaction to Jackson.

The use of the terms "girl" or "boy" instead of individual names, and the granting of individual names to pets is a central issue in the unequal relationship between whites and blacks in this country. As the employer's stereotyped view of servants developed, the African was often viewed as an animal, or at least sub-human, at best as a child. As Cock points out "the child analogy (is) often a component of racist, sexist and classist ideologies" (1980:22). Little girls need to be looked after, little boys are not sexually threatening. When Karabo says "My madam's name is Mrs Plum" she is accepting the primacy of the function of a person over the individuality or personality of that person. In another place at another time she may have said "I once did housework for a person called Mrs Plum". One of Mrs Plum's impressive attributes, as far as Karabo is concerned, is that she "spoke as if she knew a name is a big thing" unlike the Belgravia employers who allowed their children to address Karabo as "You Black Girl". The use of a person's name interferes with the ability to treat them as a unit of a category. When names

her world moving towards a self-realisation and displaying a set of admirable values, and Mrs Plum in her world displaying a sterile set of values that indicate a static and blinkered perception.

Before Karabo begins her story proper Mphahlele discusses names and the habit of calling men "boys". It is Dick's job to look after Monty and Malan who are introduced immediately after Chimane tells Karabo the story of Moruti KK's dog who upsets a stall outside the Black Crow in its search for food. Chimane comments that: "That is a good African dog. A dog must look for its own food when it is not time for meals. Not like these stupid spoiled angels the whites keep giving tea and biscuits" (1981:230). Dick appreciates the story immensely and "nearly rolled on the ground laughing." Monty and Malan are washed often, brushed and sprayed; they sleep on pink linen and carry covers on their backs. Mrs Plum is not sure of Dick and often checks up on how he cares for her sweethearts. According to Jacklyn Cock, looking after the dogs and cats is one of the most hated aspects of domestic service. Degradation and need often produce particularly pathetic perceptions; one domestic worker reported that what she hated most was "Cooking the dogs' food and not eating it" (Cock, 1980:64). Dick certainly smarts under his treatment and tells Karabo, "One day when you have time you should look into Madam's bedroom when she has put a notice outside her door". It should be borne in mind that for a person who has no surplus income and who struggles to maintain the rudiments of human dignity or even simply to survive the ability to afford a pet must appear in a profoundly different perspective to that of the owner. The fact that employers are usually quite oblivious to all this is noted by Karabo. She also notes the

becomes generic like Jim for black men, it is not very far from saying "cookie" or "girl" or "boy".

The recognition of the individual is, in a characteristically perverse fashion, the Achilles heel of liberalism in this country, and Mphahlele bites it hard. Kate asks her mother why she invites so many Africans to the house since, after all, "A few will do at a time" (1981:235). Mrs Plum says they come because they want a drink for nothing. This does not affect her love for Africans which is, as the opening statement of the story suggests, akin to her love for dogs. Clearly, loving Africans is an absurd idea, and Mphahlele refuses to present an homogenous African world.[7] Like Mfukeri, Sarel Britz's foreman, Mrs Plum's black visitors are quite alienated from the black working class. Karabo says: "They spoke such different English... They looked at me as if I was right down there" (1981:235). She goes on to fall in love with one of these visitors, a doctor who distinguishes himself by "recognising" her. Kate also falls in love with him but we are invited to suspect her motives. Kate's love for the doctor, which may be simply adolescent rebellion, has the important function of showing Mrs Plum being unable to cope with the practical consequences of her social theory. Mphahlele himself points out that the Afrikaner abhors the blacks as a group but can accept a black as an individual "as long as he keeps in his place", whereas the English support the group but abhor the individual (Mphahlele, 1962:42). Abhorrence of the individual seems perverse in those who espouse liberalism, which has as its cornerstone the rights and protection of the individual. Kate's behaviour also spurs the development of Karabo - in the face of Kate's confusion and questioning she asserts her privacy and tells Kate: "What I think about it is my business"

(19181:239).

Events begin to move fast. There is a party thrown by a "houseboy" who wins two hundred pounds on the horses. Besides indicating a black world of communal festivity it allows Mphahlele to have another jab at the law; as the lucky host points out, "There is no law that we cannot have parties, is there? So we can feel free. Our use of this house is the master's business. If I had asked he would have thought me mad" (1981:24) A similar process of the oppressed asserting ownership over the symbols of their oppression is described at the beginning of the story, when the maids dress up in the same kinds of clothes as the madams.

Shortly after coming back from holiday Mrs Plum "assaults" policemen searching for blacks without passes by hosing them down. She goes to jail rather than pay the fine. This leads Karabo to wonder just what Mrs Plum believes about her, Dick, Chimane and all the other black people. We can see Karabo about to reassess her place in relation to Mrs Plum's white world.

Before this reassessment takes place some of the important differences between that white world and her black one are highlighted and we are reminded of the economic conditions described by Cock. Chimane tells Karabo about her madam's mother-in-law who has to cook for herself while Chimane cooks for the family. Mphahlele then presents a black community suffering. Chimane tells Karabo she is pregnant. She can't think of marriage because "if I marry now who will look after [my people] when I am the only child ... It is not like those days gone past when we had land and our mother could go to the fields until the

child was ready to arrive" (1981:246). The tenor of the black world is dramatised by the entry into the interior consciousness of Karabo:

> The light goes out in my mind and I cannot think of the right answer. How many times have I feared the same thing! Luck and the mercy of the gods that is all I live by, that is all we live by - all of us.

She goes back into the house where Dick discovers her talking to the dogs - she has just kicked Malan away from her. She goes to her room where she discovers that she smells like madam and throws her cosmetics away. She wanders back into the house where the smell of it makes her sick and she sees Dick cleaning the bath. "Why cannot people wash the dirt of their own bodies out of the bath?" she asks and reflects that she has held "worse things from her [Mrs Plum's] body time without number". She goes back to her room and stands before her mirror and asks herself, "Is this Karabo this?" (1981:248)

The next Thursday Karabo and Dick go to see Chimane who is recovering from the abortion. On the way Dick talks of his sister and how he supports her, emphasising again the dire economic straits of the domestic and preparing us for the blow of Dick being fired. When she is with Chimane, Chimane's aunt laments with the heavily symbolic phrase: "She has allowed a worm to cut the roots." When Karabo rejoins her employer she overhears the conversation about "sem-". Naturally the use of this phoneme suggests semen, coming as it does after the description of an abortion. But the conversation is about a cemetery for dogs. The white world, by this stage shown to be at least absurd if not contemptible, is further ridiculed or disgraced by the story of Chimane's madam's mother-in-law who

went to her own room because the only available chair was occupied by the cat and her daughter-in-law said it must not be driven away. Immediately following this we are told of the domestics' rotating money lottery.

Mphahlele has set up a certain rhythmic pattern. The view of the white world as impersonal, sterile, estranged, abstract, a world of economically independent individuals, is contrasted with the black world of communal support, birth and death, practical issues and individual economic dependence. The contrast becomes increasingly rapid as we approach the denouement of the story where the hints - from as far back as Karabo saying "there was something special in the dog business in Madam's house. The way in which she loved them maybe" (1981:231) - are clarified; she looks through the keyhole and sees Mrs Plum masturbating with Malan. (1981:252)

Her observation about Malan - "silent like a thing to be owned without any choice it can make to belong to another" - has a depth of perception and is phrased with an elegance that is at first quite curious; but of course it is a signal for us to make that connection that underpins Mphahlele's whole work - a connection between dogs, Africans and white South Africa. The point is that most white South Africans have a sterile relationship to their world that is fundamentally abusive. It is an object-relationship which denies the other. We reach a realm laced with the evidence of psychosis. The paranoia that whites show over their pets and which leads to Dick's dismissal can be viewed in terms of psychodynamic theory as follows. From a stage of neurosis and obsession we move to a concern with narcissism, marked by images of mirrors, cosmetics and finally masturbation.

The narrative is characterized by rapid reversals from one side of the keyhole to the other, which is followed by an example of paranoia, a whole paragraph devoted to lies and the image of a woman strongly suggestive of a schizoid condition. When Karabo looks at Mrs Plum, she observes:

> But never had I seen her face like this before. The eyes, the nostrils, the lips, the teeth seemed to be full of hate, tired, fixed on doing something bad, and yet there was something on that face that told me she wanted me on her side. (1981:254)

The disturbed relationship to reality is reinforced by the surrealist description of Karabo's trip home, but not before Mphahlele has taken one last swipe at the unloving crudity of the sterile white world; Karabo's need to go home to acknowledge the death of an uncle who loved her is weighed up against her place in the economic structure in terms of her benefits to the bourgeoisie, and it is found by a liberal to be of lesser importance.

The conclusion of "Mrs Plum" at first seems to promise a radical departure from the basic structure of the maid/madam relationship. In terms of there being different worlds on either side of a key hole, the major difference, one so obvious that it is easy to overlook, is that in the maid/madam relationship the madam is at home, the maid is at work. Mrs Plum is at home in Greenside, Karabo is from "Phokeng, my home, very far away near Rustenberg" (1981:216). The situation here provides an interesting contrast to the situation in "A Home for the Highland Cattle". Home may mean where you sleep each night or it may mean where your family lives. For many first-generation South African "home" could mean the country their parents came from. Many blacks in South Africa today have been presented with a "home"

with which they have no connection at all. In any real meaning of home, people usually mean a feeling of identity even if that identification is vehemently resented. A live-in domestic worker is not at home, nor is she going through the process of establishing her independence. She is a migrant labourer and faces the fragmented sensibility of an exile. In terms of the home the radical asymmetry of the maid/madam relationship is clear. The maid is in the home of the madam and may know it as well as her own; the madam often has no idea what the maid's home looks like or where it is. It is also possible, moreover, that the maid can find her way around the employers' belongings in a way that makes her at home, whilst the employers aren't. In terms of being in an alien place, whether the madam is actually always home, or whether she is a working woman makes no difference. The maid will still experience all the anxiety of an alien sense of space, of unkown artifacts and procedures and have to cope with a different classification of reality. These considerations must of course be linked to the discussion above of the implications of the keyhole as a metaphor.

When therefore Mrs Plum is seen to acknowledge need to the extent of entering Karabo's world it is quite amusing to be given evidence of Karabo's conditioning; "I remembered she might want to sit ... there are things I never think a white person can want to do at our homes ... like sitting, drinking water or entering the house" (1981:259-260). (These are very pointed ironic examples.) Karabo's attitude does not come out of the blue; she began to think some time previously that "This woman is easy to understand, she is like all other white women," (1981:228) and some time afterwards observed that: "In winter so many families

went away that the dogs remained the masters and madams" (1981:238). Mphahlele is bringing to a climax the fundamental theme of his story, indeed of his work, which is the mutual recognition of human beings. Miss Pringle/Mzondi, Stoffel Visser/Jackson, Sarel Britz/Mfukeri and Mrs Plum/Karabo indicate different stages in his treatment of the theme.

There are certain aspects to the dynamic of recognition that are worth isolating. One of these is the spatial reference (to which I have already referred in terms of homes and Mrs Plum going to Phokeng): Mphahlele describes white suburbs as being "full of blackness" (1918:217). Within these suburbs there are 'black spots' attached to every white house, just as to every white city and dorp there is attached a black location. "White" South Africa has its black homelands. (In "A Home for the Highland Cattle", Lessing describes how Marina, when investigating the servants quarters, comes to the sanitary lane, a "black street" that runs between the white streets of the suburbs.) What exists, despite the strenuous efforts of the South African government over the last few decades, is not whiteness in one place and blackness in another but two dimensions of existence, two realities, two networks, that are co-existent. Place-names are a significant factor in this double-network. If one is black, one may say "from Galashewe to Kwa Thema." If one is white one may describe the same trip as from "Kimbereley to Springs". The whole force of this point is the ambiguity - Galashewe is not Kimberley, it is the location that serves Kimberley. Many people who know exactly where Vereeniging is, do not know where Sharpville is, even though they know the name and why it is notorious. The ambiguity of the word "near" used to describe Phokeng, which is now in Bophuthatswana, as "near Rustenberg" is

significant.

White suburbs "full of blackness", black parties in white houses, and now Mrs Plum in Phokeng and Karabo considering the fact that she never imagines a white person want to sit, drink water, or enter the house when visiting for the first time: clearly Mphahlele is playing hard on the theme of interpenetration, containment, inside and outside. These are significant themes when one considers the role of introjection and projection in establishing an identity.

In order to appreciate the climax of "Mrs Plum" we must bear in mind the intimacies of apparently very public issues such as homelands, suburbs, houses and food. Interpenetration, containment, inside and outside, are basic dynamics in the construction of an identity. We have or do not have the power to take things into us or keep things out of us, or to put ourselves into something or keep ourselves out of something. Here is the fourth paragraph of "Mrs Plum":

> At Easter time so many of us went home for a long weekend to see our people and to eat chicken and sour milk and morogo - wild spinach. We also took home sugar and condensed milk and tea and coffee and sweets and custard powder and tinned food. (1981:217)

Mphahlele gives us a list of what Karabo is and what she can become. Eating is an example of an intensely intimate activity that is at the same time quite public. Clothing is another: "Then we dress the way of many white madams and girls. I think we look really smart" (1981:218). One's identity with a group is established by things such as food and clothing. The desire to identify oneself with a group cannot be more clearly indicated than by encasing oneself in the appearance of that group: hence

the use of uniforms, whether voluntarily donned like blue jeans and T-shirts, or imposed, like army apparel. (One is reminded of Klein's analysis of Julian Green's novel If I were you, which was discussed in Chapter Two as an illustration of projective identification.) What is taking place here is the structuring of identity and desire. By involving themselves in hire-purchase agreements in order to buy the kinds of clothes the madams wear, these black women reinforce their perception that the madam is in control of what is desirable. Once one's desire is structured it is very difficult to be set free. This is why Karabo is at first unhappy about and wants to stop Kate from telling her "Things a white woman does not tell a black servant" (1981:219). It is also another explanation for why Karabo is reluctant to join Mrs Plum at the table (1981:223). She does not want the structure that she knows, the one that she has been socialised into and is comfortable with, to be disturbed. This highly personal mode of insertion is simply the more intense manifestation of what all these women have done by inserting themselves into Igoli, the white man's city. Given the dominant ideology in this country some of Mphahlele's readers may be tempted to interpret the latter action of those women as an advantageous exercise of choice in the free enterprise system: this is nonsense, as Mphahlele shows us with Karabo and Chimane, for whom the alternative would be to watch loved ones starve. However, as was discussed in Chapter Two, such a perspective is part of that reversal of reality that "lies" at the heart of a liberal capitalistic outlook.

Given these options, of course the maid chooses to sacrifice certain aspects of her identity - home, food, name and so on. In

other words, the maid represses her desire to be recognised as a person in order to survive. As Lilian Ngoyi says: "A master and servant can never be friends". It is not a personal relationship. It is a relationship between objects, for if one treats another person as an object one automatically confers the status of object onto oneself. This is exactly what Miss Pringle, Visser, Britz and Mrs Plum do; they fail to recognise another human being and make objects of themselves.

There is only one point where recognition in the fundamental sense is at stake. That is when Karabo admits that "I wanted her to say she was sorry ..." But Mrs Plum, like Teddy in "No Witchcraft for Sale" never says she is sorry; she does not recognise Karabo and Karabo opts for manipulating the oppressive structural expressions of the relationship. When these are altered she is ready to return in spite of wondering if Mrs Plum had not "come to ask me to return because she lost two animals she loved". Karabo certainly has grown up and learnt; Mrs Plum obviously hasn't. What determines the health of a society is the extent to which recognition of humanness takes place; that is, the ability to see people as a whole and to negotiate the boundaries between inside and outside, penetration and containment. Despite recalling Karabo, Mrs Plum's denial of the personal relationship continues and the split between the object and the person is maintained. The final exchange in "Mrs Plum" leaves no doubt as to who, as far as Mphahlele is concerned, has the better script for South Africa:

> Mrs Plum says to me she says, You know, I like your people, Karabo, the Africans.
>
> And Dick and me, I wondered. (1981:261)

CHAPTER SIX

SEEING WHICH INCLUDES NOT SEEING: RECOGNITION IN THE WORK OF GORDIMER

It has been suggested that "the title of a Gordimer story is like the centre of a jewel brooch" (Margery 1963:8) and indeed Gordimer herself has spoken of the importance of the title. She has also said that she likes to consider her stories as part of a tapestry, each one part of a whole (1975b:9):

> For everything one writes is part of the whole story, so far as any individual writer attempts to build the pattern of his own perceptions out of chaos. To make sense of life: that story, in which everything, novel, stories, the false starts, the half-completed, the abandoned, has its meaningful place, will be complete with the last sentence written before one dies or imagination atrophies.

As one strives to get some picture of the whole, one comes up against the historical specificity of Gordimer's work which many critics, notably Stephen Clingman (1981) have commented upon. I would like to suggest that all of Gordimer's work is an attempt to answer the question: Is there nowhere else where we can meet? the title of the story she chose to head her two retrospective collections (1975b, 1976b). To extend the play on titles, Gordimer asks: Is there, in a world of strangers, any possible occasion for loving? Gordimer concludes that there is not, and turns away from bourgeois concerns to the more basic issues of who owns what, the bases of ownership, and eventually, as the syntax of the title _July's People_ suggests, who owns whom? The

fact that after a literary career that has lasted several decades Gordimer continues to examine the master-servant relationship should not be underrated: there is more at stake between masters and servants than conditions of employment and shifts in political theory and terminology. It also suggests that Gordimer finds the master-servant relationship a useful microcosm of the relationship that exists between the two major groupings in South Africa. To carry through the implications of Chapters One and Two, major changes on the frontier require major internal reorganisation, and that is no easy task.

In the introduction to Some Monday for Sure (1976b), Gordimer states: "The very early stories, 'Ah, Woe is Me', 'Six Feet of the Country', are about master-servant relationships. They reveal the shameful impotence of paternalism". In July's People Gordimer reveals the difficulty of restructuring a relationship based on domination and subordination. When the 1983 constitution was being presented to South Africa, the question: How to share power without losing control? was often asked. It is an impossible task, for the relationship has to be entirely reconstituted, and the offer to share control necessarily entails a renunciation of power.

Themes related to the master-servant relationship persist through all of Gordimer's work, not only that which takes the master-servant relationship as its specific subject. Besides continuing the basic themes of denial, splitting, guilt, projection and their associated themes such as inside/outside, containment/penetration, dependence and paralysis, I will speak of Gordimer's particular treatment of landscape, the theme of exchange in terms of public and private and the talismatic nature

of objects. I begin with an analysis of "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?".

The story describes the mugging of a young white girl by a black man on a veld path. The title, of course, is ironic. A meeting of the kind suggested by the tone of the title implies recognition and mutual arrangement. The story however, describes a clash; there is no recognition and no reciprocity. The girl and black man encounter each other by chance and are flung apart; it is, to quote the OED on irony, "a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things". This is what Gordimer (1983b:49) means when she speaks of "the revelatory function of literature" in a country where "much is called by the wrong name or much is concealed; where so much is double talk".

The question posed by the title is "Is there Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?". Now the two characters meet on the veld which is, of course, outside. Gordimer sets great store on the landscape. She has spoken, like Lessing, of the contrast between what she read which was of Europe and what she experienced in Africa (1976a). She has spoken of the fact that her first impressions were of the reef mining landscape, the fact that this landscape was man-made and the implications of this for the structuring of consciousness (1976a). She has also spoken of something almost mystical which rises up from the earth and that distinguishes Africa from Europe (1983b:48-49). Many critics have commented on her use of landscape, investigating its metaphoric function, and Gordimer herself has gone as far as saying that the most important character in The Conservationist is the landscape (1984a:13). One of the most obvious alternatives to the landscape-as-veld is the landscape-as-urban. Gordimer seems to

propose, in Occasion for Loving, The Conservationist, July's People and throughout her work, a correlation between urban-as-white and veld-as-black. She is not alone in this - Doris Lessing does the same - and indeed, the question why writers associate certain groups of people with certain kinds of landscape is a substantial question, an answer to which cannot be attempted here.

In "Is There Nowhere Else..." the young girl is seen as making a foray as it were into the veld and being returned to the urban setting. The physical appearance of the man she encounters is intimately related to the veld; it is a very cold day, and the "damp, burnt grass puffed black, faint dust" while the man's "half-turned heel showed the peculiarly dead, powdery black of cold"; during the fight she sees "one foot, cracked from exposure until it looked like broken wood" and when she remembers him, she remembers "those cracks in his feet, fissures, erosion". In this story the landscape is African. What is important to note is that at this stage, the late 1940's, the girl makes a foray into Africa. She is not already assumed to be part of Africa. This is in direct contrast to Maureen Smales, who eventually flees from "Africa". The movement in Gordimer's work from this young woman to Maureen Smales is marked by the end of her use of a bourgeois perspective (in The Late Bourgeoise World), the possiblity of alternative forays into Africa (Guest of Honour), the assertion of Africa as a character (The Conservationist), the demands of mutual involvment (Burger's Daughter) and finally the demands of resituating oneself in Africa (July's People).

To say the landscape is outside is to adopt an urban perspective, and by implication, white. The point of view in the story is

white and, as one of those stories that could be called "forays into the black world", it is like "The Smell of Death and Flowers" (1956) and "The Amateurs" (1953). (These stories are interesting in the light of the Jim-comes-to-town theme, identified by Stephen Gray (1979), a perspective which Gordimer discards quite early; see "Not For Publication" (1965b).) To speak of inside and outside automatically raises a division and the concern in the fifties seemed to be: How could whites (since they were the ones with political clout) break down this barrier? Some thirty years later, in the title story to the collection Something Out There (1981), Gordimer completely subverts the correlation I have suggested and the question is entirely different. In "Something Out There" the rural landscape is white and black and the foray is being made into the white urban world.

In Chapter Two I discussed the notion of the exchange of goods and mentioned Gordimer's subversion of the liberal economic assertion that the market place based on an abstraction of values allows for the greatest possible freedom and therefore the greatest possible opportunity for unshackled personal intercourse. Whatever the nature of the exchange or transfer of ownership in "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?" the fact that objects change hands, as in "Happy Event", "Ah, Woe is me" and "Six Feet of the Country", brings us to another important theme in Gordimer's work - the talismatic nature of objects. (Two other stories immediately spring to mind; "The Talisman" (1953) and "Treasures of the Sea" (1953).)

In "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?", what changes hands is a handbag and a parcel. The fact that a handbag is the most obvious choice for a mugger need not deter us from considering

its symblic implications. The story as a whole is, after all, a kind of symbolic allegory. A handbag contains the public expression of the intimate self - one's keys, identity documents, money and cosmetics. It is a heavily-laden symbol: any victim of a burglary will acknowledge that the material loss is the least disturbing aspect of the experience. Thieves in the lounge where they can steal the TV are less disturbing than thieves in the bedroom where they can steal something of far less exchange value. Perhaps we can consider what the young girl was fighting for. In the absence of any established procedure for parting the person from their objects such as exchange over a shop counter, or a beggar with a hat, or a birthday, the girl is not "free" to give him the money and let him go. Gordimer is very clear about the element of guilt operative in the situation. When the young girl asks herself "What did I fight for? Why didn't I give him the money and let him go?" the reasons suggested are "His red eyes, and the smell and the those cracks in his feet, fissures, erosions". Gordimer is suggesting that the chief reason is guilt. The association between his red eyes, smell and her guilt was made at the very beginning of the encounter:

> The eyes were red, as if he had not slept for a long time, and the strong smell of old sweat burned at her nostrils. Once past she wanted to cough, but a pang of guilt at the red-weary eyes stopped her. (93)

Another persistent theme in Gordimer's work raised by this story and one which is of particular interest in a fragmented society such as South Africa, is the theme of public verus private. The encounter occurs in a public space yet it is manifestly a personal one. However, it is also a political one insofar as the quality of the encounter is largely determined by external

structural factors such as wealth, social status, stereotypes and so on. In a society divided along colour lines, it is inevitable that "consciousness has the same tint as [the] face" and the questions of public and private, inside and oustide shall rise with some force.

I briefly referred to the story "Ah, Woe is Me!" in the discussion of guilt in Chapter Two. This story was included in the first collection with "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?" and is one of the first that deals explicitly with the master-servant relationship. The phrase, 'Ah, woe is me' is spoken by Sarah, a domestic servant of the female narrator. She is a curious narrator who describes Sarah in the opening paragraph in a superficial way and then comments on this superficiality:

> Sarah worked for us before her legs got too bad. She was very fat, and her skin was light yellow brown, as if, like a balloon that lightens in color as it is blown up, the fat swelling beneath the thin layer of pigment caused it to stretch and spread more and more sparsely. She wore delicate little gilt-rimmed spectacles and she was a good cook, though extravagant with butter.

Those were the things we noticed about her. (133)

This narrator can analyse the position of Sarah and her children in South Africa, and conclude that: "The things she wanted for her children sound commonplace; but they weren't. Not where she had to look for them." (134) Yet this same narrator can get "rather angry" when Sarah is away all day greeting her children for the first time in a year, although, being understanding, she says nothing. (136)

When Sarah can no longer work because her legs are too bad, she sends Janet, her middle child, to visit madam. Madam (we never

know her name, pointedly enough) asks about the family, but:

> I always had the feeling that they were embarrassed, not by me but for me; as if their faces knew that I could not help asking these same questions, because the real state of their lives was unknown and unimagined by me, and therefore beyond my questioning.(138)

We can see here the same conspiracy of silence that surrounded Mary Turner's and Mzondi's death. When the Madam hears that Sarah's husband has to take a less taxing and more poorly paid job, and observes that the children's clothing seems to be getting shabbier, her efforts to find out how she could help are not effectual. One day Janet comes to visit. She is very shy, barely speaks, and the madam goes inside to get old clothes, and five shillings, which are accepted, as is the tea and jam. Then Janet stands at the door and weeps with fear at her mother's impending death. At this point the narrator displays the debilitating guilt that I spoke of in Chapter Two. The narrator emerges as one who does not understand or wish to make a cause-and-effect connection between ignorance, guilt and inefficacy, and certainly she does not in any active way pursue knowledge or involve herself. Her question: "What could I do?" is thus suspect in the same way as Jane MacCluster's question: "What did he [Little Tembi] want?".

This situation - seeing and not seeing - is cleverly played upon in "Monday is Better than Sunday", also in Gordimer's first collection. The story describes a family and the constant service they receive from their servant throughout a Sunday. Gordimer makes her point by subverting the reader's expectation that the servant should be feeling anger, resentment and frustration: instead, at the end of the day the servant goes up

to the roof of the block of flats, looks over the city and feels lonely, an emotion that takes her out of the context of master-servant and makes of her a simple human being. The reader, enticed into a false sense of identification with the servant, is forced to question his own ability to recognize the human.

The title story of her third collection, Six Feet of the Country, (1954) introduces a new element into the dialectic of master and servant. The guilt, the veld/urban contrast, the acid observations on the theme of exchange are present, but the ironic play is greatly developed and the problematic corpse is introduced. The story prefigures The Conservationist in many obvious ways.

The narrator, a businessman and hobbyist farmer, has a plot outside Johannesburg which his wife, Lerice, runs. One of the labourers is reported as having died and the authorities are notified. The corpse is taken away but the dead man's family want it returned for proper burial. The father arrives from up north for the burial. On the way to the grave he insists that his son was not as heavy as the body in this coffin he is carrying. The scene is witnessed by the narrator who out is practising his golf. The coffin is opened and they discover it is the wrong corpse. The plot allows Gordimer to drive deeper and deeper into the crassness of a situation where the lack of recognition and involvement and the powerlessness of people thoroughly diminishes their humanity.

For the narrator is not an ogre. He is a tolerant, accommodating liberal version of Mehring. He goes out of his way to help Petrus, brother of the dead man. When the family have to be told that the corpse has already been disposed of, he does have the

self-reflection to think "It was difficult to make a pauper's grave sound like a privilege", and to later say of his own rhetorical question "Am I supposed to bring the dead back to life?" that it was an attempt to "exaggerate my way out of this ridiculous responsibility that had been thrust upon me".

In any event, since the body has been buried, the family is charged twenty pounds for exhumation and undertaker's fees. The narrator's reaction is:

> Ah, I thought, that settles it. On five pounds a month, Petrus won't have twenty pounds - just as well since it couldn't do the dead any good. Certainly I should not offer it to him myself. Twenty pounds - or anything else within reason, for that matter - I would have spent without grudging it on doctors or medicines that might have helped the boy when he was alive. Once he was dead, I had no intention of encouraging Petrus to throw away, on a gesture, more than he spent to clothe his whole family in a year. (14)

This statement is full of the blind spots and reversals that typify liberal ideology. The narrator, who is responsible for Petrus' low wage sees that wage as an abstract condition divorced from himself. The fact that the twenty pounds is, in a sense, for the living rather than the dead is beyond the narrator's powers of understanding. There is an absolute and fundamental lack of recognition on his part of Petrus' family and their need for <u>their</u> ritual - a mere gesture, according to him. The narrator damns himself again in the reader's eyes by disclosing that he is aware of the fact that twenty pounds is more than Petrus has to clothe his whole family for a whole year.

But the labourers do manage to collect the money and so, after two weeks they get the coffin back. At the second funeral they discover again that they have been given the wrong body. Further

attempts to get the right body fail. Finally they ask for their money back, but in vain. "So," the narrator concludes, "the whole thing was a complete waste, even more of a waste for the poor devils than I had thought it would be". The story could end there but a powerful last paragraph allows Gordimer to play on the notions of exchange and bankruptcy. Considering the willingness of Petrus and family and friends to spend twenty pounds, the narrator reflects:

> Just like the poor everywhere, I thought, who stint themselves the decencies of life in order to insure themselves the decencies of death. So incomprehensible to people like Lerice and me, who regard life as something to be spent extravagantly and, if we think about death at all, regard it as the final bankruptcy. (15)

The last paragraph reads:

> The old man from Rhodesia was about Lerice's father's size, so she gave him one of her father's old suits and he went back home better off, for the winter, than he had come. (20)

When these paragraphs are read together we can see that Gordimer is clearly positing that it is the narrator's life that is bankrupt.

The problematic corpse arises again, if I may use such an expression, in "Happy Event", another story in this collection. This is the story of Ella Plaistow who has an abortion so as not to jeopardise an overseas trip, and her maid Lena, who at the same time gives birth to a child which she apparently strangles, for it is discovered by a milkman, wrapped in one of Ella's cast-off nightdresses.

Allan, Ellas's husband, gives a straight-foward example of the denial of bodily knowledge:

"It's your body that objects," said Allan. "Remember that. That's all. There's some sort of physical protest that's got nothing to do with you at all really. You must expect it. It'll pass of in a week or so." (33)

On one level there is the return of the repressed, but there is also another level of meaning which draws a parallel between the personal body and the political body. The political implications of the phrase "some sort of physical protest that's got nothing to do with you, really" are obvious.

The fact that Lena's baby is wrapped in the night dress that Ella used at the nursing home and later "got rid off" reinforces the return of the repressed and illustrates just how involved maid and madam are and by extension how intertwined or dialectical the relationship between black and white is. One implication is that Lena is having Ella's baby, but we are dealing with fiction and hence with the shadows and subtleties of metaphors and irony. Thus, the question of the magistrate is, in a sense, unanswerable:

"Mrs Plaistow, am I to understand that you, a woman who has been married for eight years and has herself borne two children, were not aware that this woman in your employ was on the point of giving birth to a child?" (45)

Ella's overwhelming emotion is embarrassment - but this is public; privately she is upset, as she realises when she phones Allan. (44)

Again in this story, just as in "Six Feet of the Country", Gordimer ends with a paragraph that suggests some kind of exchange:

Lena got six months hard labour. Her sentence coincided

> roughly with the time Ella and Allan spent in Europe, but though she was out of prison by the time they returned, she did not go back to work for them again.

This paragraph represents a dense commentary on the notions of absence, exile, inside/outside, penetration and containment.

The dependence of the master upon the servant is more explicit in "Horn of Plenty", which also appears in Six Feet of the Country. Pat, the young American socialite, needs the opinion of Rebecca her servant. Rebecca has learnt her lesson - she must not, cannot, put herself at the mercy of employers, even benign ones who politely greet her with the name of her predecessor. As for Pat McCleary, "even if what this woman got out of her was the margin of service she had kept in reserve from others, it was simply that: something she had not gone so far as to yield, before, but not something beyond which was her limit" (125). In presenting Rebecca's history, Gordimer presents one of those similarities-in-difference that concluded "Happy Event". Rebecca's childhood was marked with such poverty that money had no meaning; she then worked in a house of such opulence that money had no meaning. What Gordimer is emphasing is that Rebecca's world and her employer's world are linked only by a purely abstract notion of money and service.

Pat, like Tony Marston in The Grass is Singing, must learn the rules. One evening when she is beautifully dressed to go out, she stands in the doorway of the kitchen, and Rebecca, who is simply glad to be finished early gives the sink a quick wipe and goes out, locking the door behind her. Pat is stunned. She hears her husband calling:

> But she stood there, before the door the servant had closed behind her, the fur on her arm sinking lower and

> lower, all the excitement in her blood ebbing flatly, like the fizz in a drink left standing. (132)

Rebecca cannot offer the recognition that Pat needs:

> "You know I can't stand it," she said wildly. "I must be loved. I can't stand it if I don't have love and warmth around me, if people don't care about me." (132)

Pat is certainly a more conscious person than Sarah's madam, Petrus' boss and Ella Plaistow. She may not be astute about social mores, and Gordimer is not sympathetic about this kind of ignorance, but Pat is at least aware of feelings and exposes them. However much her outlook may be the result of being a spoilt New York socialite, she states a simple psychological truth. What is of interest is the contrast with Hank, her husband, a South African born and bred: what astonishes Hank is that Pat sees Rebecca as a person.

I discussed another story in this collection - "Enemies" - that deals with the lack of recognition, in the section on denial in Chapter Two. In this story, the opening sentence and the last sentence encapsulate the colonial expereince:

> When Mrs Clara Hansen travels, she keeps herself to herself. (162)
>
> IT WAS NOT ME. CLARA HANSEN. (172)

Poetically, or metaphorically speaking, Clara Hansen's efforts at denial reap ultimate success. Having denied the woman who died, she is worried that Alfred might think it is her and she is forced into presenting or defining herself in the negative. Unable to say "this is me" she says, of the other whom she has denied, "IT WAS NOT ME". True to colonial mentality the self is presented as an absence.

The stories which I have examined so far and which bring us up to the late 1950's, focus on the dialectic between master and servant; the mutual dependency, control and denial that binds master and servant together. What is being suggested is that we pay for the denial of this fact with fractured sensibilities, or fractured selves. There has been an implication in Gordimer's writing, growing weaker over the years, that all that is necessary is for this fact to be recognised and the problem will be resolved: something which any reasonable person can see - a sort of Forsterian "only connect".

During this time Gordimer published her first two novels, The Lying Days (1954) and A World of Strangers (1958). The ideological change that takes place is a subtle one and is described by Stephen Clingman (1981:172). Of The Lying Days he says it "gives a precise image of the rise to South African consciousness of an incipient white liberalism", whereas A World of Strangers is "more properly a novel of liberal humanism". The realisation that this ideology may be untenable seems to be present in a A World of Strangers, for whilst Toby Hood can on one occasion say of Steve Sithole "He was me - I was him" he also notes that "I passed from one world to another - but neither was real to me. For in each, what sign was there that the other existed?" (197).

Gordimer had already expressed, in The Lying Days, the impatience she felt at trying to get below the surface triviality "to the real flow of life that was been experienced, underneath, all the time, by everybody" (1953:76). What she seems to begin working towards in A World of Strangers is, rather than the presentation of the dialectic that we have so far seen in the stories, an

investigation of the admission that "at a certain deep level [South Africa's blacks and whites] understand each other only too well" (Gordimer, 1982). To expand on one of her metaphors, she has begun digging, for "We whites have still to thrust the spade under the roots of our lives" (1983a:24).

Several stories from this time signal a change in Gordimer's perception of the dialectic between master and servant and what is at stake. "The Bridegroom" (1960b) and "The Pet" (1965) are useful contrasts. The first concerns a white road gang foreman about to get married, the second a black manservant's identification with a dog. Another story, "Something for the Time Being", also published in Friday's Footprints (1960b), presents the bankruptcy of liberal humanism. In this story a man fired for insisting on wearing a Congress badge is given a job by a liberal. He continues to insist on wearing the badge despite the objection of the new foreman, and is fired. The liberal employer does not defend him. He says the man can do anthing he likes, but "he mustn't wear his Congress button at work". As his wife points out: "Pretend, pretend. Pretend he doesn't belong to a political organisation. Pretend he doesn't want to be a man. Pretend he hasn't been to prison for what he believes." She says to her husband: "You'll let him have anything except the one thing worth giving" (1958:234), which is, of course, recognition.

"The Bridegroom" is set in the bush on the eve before the foreman is going into town to get married. His bossboy Piet has done many of the things a wife would do; prepare his bath, wash his clothes and especially bake him koeksusters. One of the big changes that would have to take place would be that the "the boys must keep out of the way" (85). The foreman savours the intimacies he has

with them - even joins in their music round the fire. But he is taken by surprise at his pleasure in the intimacy and "A strange thing happened to him. He felt hot, over first his neck, then his ears and his face. It didn't matter of course; by next week they would have forgotten [the offer of a radio]" (90).

It seems that Gordimer here goes beyond the more external and conscious ways in which masters and servants hold one another in positions of domination and subordination. What she is suggesting is that masters and servants use each other for the most deep and profound needs, and that recovery from the master-servant mentality could require an almost total self-realisation and reorganisation. This is a tall order, and I suspect that Gordimer knew it and that is why in her next novel, Occasion for Loving (1963a) she interrogates the division between public and private and questions the worth of an individual psyche seeking change without concurrent public action to change the structure that hold power relationships in place.

"The Pet" is the story of Gradwell, a Nyasa, and therefore a migrant, who works for the Morgans in Johannesburg. On one of his few leaves home he marries, and his wife falls pregnant. Two years later the child dies without Gradwell ever having seen it. At the same time Erica Morgan buys a bulldog that turns out to be a useless watchdog and doesn't even mate with a "bullygirl". Mrs Morgan is fed up. Gradwell, who has detested the dog all along, finally feels something of himself, and sitting with the dog who "unaware, as usual, of what he had done wrong, but always conscious of wrong-doing, failure" breaks off a piece of his bread and throws it to the dog.

The issue of servants and animals has surfaced many times in this dissertation, and in two of the stories I have just examined. Ellen Plaistow, in talking about Lena and Thomas, says to her husband "You remember our Great Dane bitch and that little terrier in Gerard Street?" (36). Pat McCleary likens the hotel servants to oxen (116). What is happening in The Pet however, is an identification by the servant with an animal, and the grounds for the identification are consequently quite different. Gradwell can identify with the fact that the bulldog is not recognized or accepted for what it is, and has above all only use value. Furthermore, on the level of larger structural issues such as labour and exile, Gradwell cannot function as a full man, he cannot have his wife with him and produce children. There is no recognition between Gradwell and Erica Morgan, despite her sentiments that "She felt she could say anything to Gradwell; he was rather a favourite of hers among her servants. They were, as she put it to herself, two human beings, never mind the colour or the master-servant thing" (82).

Like "The Bridegroom", "The Pet" seems to mark a change in Gordimer's treatment of the master-servant relationship. The fabulous fifties are over, and the hope that if we could "only connect" all would come right, is fading. "Not for Publication" and "Some Monday for Sure" seem to indicate that the search for change must shift out of the context of a purely personal individual liberal humanism to social action. It was in the early sixties that Gordimer wrote Occasion for Loving (1963) which explores the failure of liberal humanism.

The decade of the sixties was a busy one for Gordimer. She wrote Occasion for Loving considered by many critics to be an awkward,

unsuccessful book, and, in some cases interesting precisely because of that, and The Late Bourgeois World (1966), considered by overseas critics when it first appeared to be one of Gordimer's finest novels to date. The latter was banned and only unbanned in 1976. The decade contained the stories she wrote for Livingstone's Companions (1972) which culminated in A Guest of Honour (1971). These stories were set in a non-South African Africa and indicate that Gordimer was making space for a wider perspective. It was the decade of African independence, a decade marked in South Africa by a massive clampdown on all forms of dissent including writers and publications. In 1966, the year which marked the beginning of Vorster's detente policy, all exiled black writers' works were banned. The Rivonia Trial in 1963 also resulted in a huge "absenting". So there was a kind to twist to the era, an emergence on the one hand and a closure and absence on the other.

Occassion for Loving tackles the problem of private and public interests head on, and the strain of doing so is reflected in the structure. It falls into two distinct parts. The first is a private work, infused with Freudianism, and references to the Oedipal complex. The second part deals with the public relationship of Anne and Gideon. Anne and Gideon interrupt Jessie's search for self. The tension remains in the second part in that Anne inspires Gideon to paint again, yet she parts him from the ANC. There are many moments in the text where Gordimer lays the foundation for the clear blunt conclusion that this novel offers. When Anne and Gideon are travelling in the car on their "honeymoon" trip they stop and have a picnic among the grass. Anne asks Gideon if he is hungry.

> He was not hungry - not in any way at all. He wanted nothing and had in himself everything. He did not need to touch her, even without touching her he possessed her more completely than any women he had ever had. (233)

Later, Jessie makes the point more clear. She tells Gideon what she left out when she "settled the race business once and for all":

> I remember the black men who rubbed the floor round my feet when I was twelve and fourteen. I remember the young black man with a bare chest, mowing the lawn. The bare legs and the strong arms that carreid things for us, moved the furniture. The black man that I must never be left alone with in the house. No one explained why, but it didn't matter. I used to feel, at night, when I turned my back to the dark passage and bent to wash my face in the bathroom, that someone was coming up behind me. Who was it, do you think? And how many more little white girls are there for whom the very first man was a black man? The very first man, the man of the sex phantasies..." (253)

It is out of these intensely personal, individual psychic realities that Gordimer can come to a sober sociological judgment; for when we speak of mixed marriages, we are speaking not only of psychic space, but of the inheritance and sharing of concrete property. Thus, Gordimer can conclude:

> They came again and again to the stony silence of facts they had set their lives against. They believed in the the integrity of personal relations against the distortion of laws and society. What stronger and more proudly personal bond was there than love? Yet even between lovers they had seen blackness count, the personal return inevitably to the social, the private to the political. There was no recess of being, no emotion so private that white privilege did not single you out there; it was a silver spoon clamped between your jaws and you might choke on it for all the chance there was of dislodging it. So long as the law remained unchanged, nothing could bring integrity to personal relationships. (279)

<u>Occasion for Loving</u> is a rich novel and it would be possible to

go much deeper into the gradations of the issues that it confronts. The thrust of this chapter however is an examination of the changing treatment of the master-servant relationship. I shall therefore move on to two more "moments" in Gordimer's writing - The Conservationist and July's People.

In Occasion for Loving Gordimer stated the more explicit themes in these two later novels. There is the silence: "The past rose to the surface of the present, free of the ambiguities and softening evasions that had made it possible in the living" (1963a:84), and incidents that "lie gathering force in some dusty corner" (91), which is coupled with power: "I'm scared of it and I'm always fondling it like a dirty habit" (144), and "I sometimes get afraid that everything we think of as love - even sex - is nearly always power instead" (154).

The theme of silence or evasion is sustained throughout The Late Bourgeois World and is epitomised by Mrs van der Sandt who puts "a frilly cover over everything; the lavatory seat, her mind (1966a:33). Mrs van der Sandt is Elizabeth's ex-mother-in-law, and the novel examines Elizabeth's reaction to the suicide of Max, her ex-husband. In The Late Bourgeois World however, there is an important shift. In presenting the relationship between Elizabeth and Luke, who is an activist seeking financial support, Gordimer ensures that Luke is seen and he is described in some detail. We may recall her statement, from which the title of the present chapter is taken: "We actually see blacks differently, which includes not seeing" (1983:21). Max, however, is dead. His appearance in the novel is as an absent corpse. Graham, Elizabeth's present lover, is rarely allowed to emerge as more than a cipher.

There is also a clearer perception of the quality of the place of whites in South African history. Wade (1978:11) detects this quality early in Gordimer's fiction. Of The Lying Days he says: "The whites move from island to authoratative island, seeming to tread above the waters of experience". In The Late Bourgeoise World a more explicit exploration is made of diachrony and synchrony, public and private. Elizabeth's reaction to the newspaper story concerning Max indicates that time also has a private and public dimension:

> The only important things about Max now, the author argues, are Elizabeth and Bobo - the present and the future... The irrelevant things, embedded in a past that has always been in a sense dead, are his father's career, his trial, his parents. They belong to the white world which has lost the ability to perceive the passage of time, or to understand its significance -... they are the 'facts' of the newspaper version of Max's life. (Wade, 1978:121)

The sterility and ultimate untenability of a highly privatised timeless realm of existence, and history's ability to reassert itself, reaches its height in the character Mehring, in The Conservationist. Mehring colonizes his farm. I have quoted (in Chapter Three) Dan Jacobson's observation that a colonial culture is one which has no memory. Bearing in mind Franz Fanon's (1967:100) thesis that: "in Europe and in every country characterized as civilized or civilizing, the family is a miniature of the nation", the reviewer Ricks (1975:13) offers an interesting response to The Conservationist. He suggests that "husbandry is the book's tactful crux" and Mehring , with his "lack of" parents, and by implication ancestry, forms a striking contrast with the blacks. Surprisingly he does not make much of Mehring's son's homosexuality.

The conflation of women and blacks, or sexism and racism being equated in terms of oppression, has been noted by Dorothy Driver (1983:18): "Mehring's attitude towards women is returned to again and again as a means of characterising him as racially exploitative and as incapable of seeing other (black) human beings in other than functional terms". She supports her statement with Mehring's comment: "What's the reason we go after [women] - she was pretty. She had a smashing figure. -" and "there's a special pleasure in having a woman you've paid for" (Gordimer, 1974:71). Gordimer also, Driver goes on to note, analyses colonial domination in sexual terms utilising female images in relation to the land - "quite a standard literary practice" Driver says (18), which, however, does not appear in Mphahlele's work.

There is another point in The Conservationist where the conflation of labour, woman and land is cued emphatically by denial. Having just listed, epigrammatically, a line of ancestry (247), Gordimer re-introduces the narrative with "No, no". Mehring's fractured sensibility notes that: "The struts of the Indian's water-tank are broken, on one side, the rain's done, undermined the thing, its about to collapse. No no" (248). Out of this comes the memory "I parted your legs while you were in the bath" and a consideration of "the responsibility of the owner of the property". Some time later (260), his interaction with the hitch-hiker he has sex with causes his gorge to rise in revulsion. Again, "No no" is followed by a woman being "landscaped":

> The grain of the skin is gigantic, muddy and coarse. A moon surface. Grey-brown with layers of muck that don't cover the blemishes.

The mine detective (we assume) who discovers them introduces the spectre that haunts the coloniser: "Its not safe here... They find you people here, they rob you... I'm telling you, they leave you naked. You won't have nothing... They sell it in the location" (263). As he hysterically absents himself, Mehring rants: "She'll be alright. They survive everything... their brothers or father take their virginity good and early. They can have it, the whole four hundred acres" (264).

This is, as Driver notes, not only a male perception. Gordimer sees the collusion, even if unwilling, on the the part of woman in the enterprise. In "Six Feet of the Country", "The Train form Rhodesia" and "Something for the time being", women, "through awareness of the husband's racially dubious behaviour... come to a realisation about the nature of their marriages" (Driver. 1983:19).

The denial to which Mehring subjects others and himself, leads to a radical splitting. This is illustrated when his hand engages with the private parts of the girl on the plane. Such incidents hold enormous thematic implications, which no longer need to spelled out, in terms of denial, splitting, public and private and deracination.

As I have said, Mehring is colonizer, and the crux of his status reminds us of Mrs Hansen. To his mistress, Mehring says, "Oh for God's sake. Leave me alone. Touch me," and then:

> He has been sitting so still he has the fanciful feeling that so long as he does not move the farm is as it is when he is not there. He's at one with it as an ancestor at one with his own earth. He is there and not there. (161)

The temptation, in coming to grips with Gordimer's work, to join her in her dense complexity of metaphor is great: the last word in the novel belongs to a corpse. What was buried at the beginning, appears at the end and land is reclaimed from one who failed to offer his Self. It may appear odd that one should find in *The Conservationist* such rich material in terms of the psychology of the master-servant relationship and yet find so little substantial interaction between Mehring and his labourers. Rather than this being a distortion of the text's substance, it is a reflection of it - the servants stand powerful, ever-present, split and refracted through women and land and finally dominating, yet remain shadowy figures in the mind of the colonizer.

Gordimer's next novel *Burger's Daughter* (1979) is certainly a major work, but cannot be substantially addressed in terms of the master-servant relationship. In terms of one of the subsidiary themes in the master-servant relationship - penetration and containment - the abiding image that this novel provides for the present analysis is Rosa, returned from exile and standing in a prison cell, "free" at last, standing where her father had stood.

It is difficult when one assesses the conclusions of *Burger's Daughter*, *The Conservationist*, *The Late Bourgeoise World* and *Occasion for Loving*, to decide whether or not a future or an impasse is posited. If there is a future it is looked at from a stance that is enclosed or fractured, yet neither is a dead end the only future. The same sense concludes *July's People*. Maureen Smales rushes towards a future, but it is unknown; in any case, her rush towards a future is more a rejection of the present.

July's People (1981a) is set in a future; the lurking beast of

white South African consciousness, the revolution, has happened, is happening. The opening sentences provide the images of revolution; a servant serving, and a knock on the door. Gordimer's irony is in full force. The reader is led out of confusion, reminiscent of waking up, to realise that July is serving those whom he now controls and that they have been so displaced that there is in fact no door on which to knock.

Certainly, in any novel of hers, Gordimer will re-present the elements - history, language, bodies, land (property), smell, talismatic objects, and so on - that attend her primary theme of a meeting between master and servant, black and white. The effort of recognition, of establishing the personal relation in a society where individuals are socially and legally constituted as aliens to one another, will necessitate a fragmentation and a hiatus - an interregunum - before a new self can emerge. The novel briefly and bluntly states as much, in the context of a revolution, and the elements of the primary theme are consequently re-presented with a rapidity and repetition appropiate to a psyche/society in crisis.

Almost immediately Maureen is introduced as a "child of the shift boss", the Helen Shaw of <u>The Lying Days</u>. As she wakes:

> At first what fell into place was what was vanished, the past. In the dimness and traced brightness of a tribal hut the equilibrium she regained was that of the room in the shift boss' house on mine property she had had to herself once her elder sister went to boarding school" (1981a:2).

There is a double denial - the loss of her immediate past is filled by a lost past. What <u>is</u> reasserted is the question of authority. That that authority is split, is registered through

the reference to names:

> Her school shoes, cleaned by Our Jim (the shift boss' name was Jim, too, and so her mother talked of her husband as 'My Jim' and the house servant as 'Our Jim'), were outside the door. (3)

The fact that the woman (mother, wife) has to make a distinction, but does so bound by the choice of personal pronoun emphasizes the psychologically complex enmeshment of the bourgois marriage in larger authoritarian social structures. In terms of language, whilst still in the introductory phase of the novel, Maureen awakes surrounded "by one of the languages she had never understood" (4).

These immediate factors or elements are condensed, split, refracted and displaced in a manner typical of a hall of mirrors to which Driver (1983:33) likens Gordimer's fiction, throughout the rest of the text. When Maureen and Bam, her husband, are trying to establish the meaning and consequences for themselves of the presence of their yellow bakkie in the village, Maureen is more able than Bam to understand July's English: "Often Bam couldn't follow his [July's] broken English, but he and she understood each other well" (13). Gordimer is forever confronting the interplay of silence and language. The intercourse of those who do have language between them, Bam and Maureen, is marked by crucial silences. "There was the constant subliminal feeling between him and her that they must discuss, talk" (Gordimer's emphasis, 35). But this feeling engages with questions that have to do with them disengaging themselves from their present situation: "How to get out of here? Where to?". On two important occasions, once when July returns the bakkie after a trip and when Maureen finds out about the gun, she keeps silent (36 and

155). Language marks the turning point of Maureen's consciousness. July finally breaks out of the frustration of his English "based on orders and responses [like Fanagalo], not the exchange of ideas and feelings" (96). This observation strikes Maureen as she faces the same dilemma that Mary Turner faced - that of having nothing to do. The turning point however is when, in an argument over objects, July suddenly begins to speak to Maureen in his own language, and "She understood, although she knew no word" (152).

Having briefly introduced one element after another in the opening pages of the novel, Gordimer enters a more measured narrative, and subtly registers other elements of her theme: "In various and different circumstances certain objects and individuals are going to turn out to be vital" (6). The abstraction of exchange is dealt with less obviously: "in the transformation of myth or religious parable", it is the bank accountant who is "the legendary warning hornbill of African folk-tales" (9). This issue surfaces more clearly on two more occasions in the novel. When July comes to fetch their washing, Maureen clutches at a strut of her identity and insists on paying. In this context she is foiled by the talisman - it is July's people who are "able to make the connection between the abstract and the concrete" (28). With Bam it is more obvious. When the issue of the keys arise (obviously a loaded metaphor, as it is in "Mrs Plum") Maureen and Bam talk of supplies, "as long as the money lasts": Maureen observes of Bam: "Habit assumed the male role of initiative and reassurance - something he always had on him, a credit card or cheque-book" (59). Later it is July who holds onto the only real existence that their relationship has, when he questions whether he will be paid his month's wages,

thereby insisting on the abstraction on which the relationship is predicated. Maureen's humane creed, with its insistance on the absolute nature of intimate relationships, cannot come to her aid.

> The absolute nature she and her kind were scrupulously just in granting to everybody was no more than the price of the master bedroom and the clandestine hotel tariff.
>
> Abstractions hardened into the concrete: even death is a purchase. (65)

It may be fortuitous, but it is worth noting that when Maureen meets July's wife, she thinks of two objects that are potent talismans in two other stories we have examined - a handbag ("Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?") and a night-gown ("Happy Event"). We, as readers, may, like Maureen, wonder where we are in time. This section closes with Maureen representing, in microcosm, the synchronic nature of white experience identified by Wade in The Lying Days and The Late Bourgoise World: "Maureen was aware, among them in the hut, of not knowing where she was, in time, in order of a day as she had always known it" (17).

In a crucial scene set in the first half of the novel, we are given a glimpse of what Maureen desires. In a scene with religious overtones, Maureen emerges from the hut into the rain, and strips naked. She sees the headlights of a vehicle, the bakkie presumably, returning. The scene is reminiscent of Mary Turner's emergence into the rain on the night of her death. What Maureen desires - to expose herself before a saviour, is what we all desire, but as long as we maintain a conspiracy of silence, we will be unable to save ourselves, and stand in a shaft of light, even if in a prison cell.

In providing in the Introduction the rationale for my choice of texts I stated that Gordimer was the writer who brought us up to the present. _July's People_, the last text I examine, is set in a future, and ends with the protagonist running towards one. The question of a future is ever-present, and we have examined a future presented in fiction; it a familiar question and a familiar fiction: Maureen Smales runs, for surely there is somewhere else where we can meet...

CONCLUSION

Psychoanalysis, Freud has claimed, deserves our attention for the connections it discloses between our most apparently disconnected activities. In this dissertation I have accepted this claim, and sought to disclose the presence of denial, splitting and projection. The air-filled doll of the pornographer, the hollow bronze statue of the imperialist, and the empty success of the capitalist in a culture where people do not need what they want and do not want what they need, all confirm Freud's claim.

We may also turn to psychoanalysis for confirmation of the potency of silence in our everyday activities. As noted before, Freud went so far as to define a symptom as that place in a conversation where a word should have been spoken. I have developed the metaphor to include other kinds of silence such as exile, imprisonment, the unseen and death, and turned to literature to explore the implications of these metaphors. We find South African literature marked by silences, silences between Bam and Maureen Smales, Mary and Dick Turner, silences lacing Lessing's African landscape and Karabo's and Mrs Plum's domesticity. It is a literature heavily weighted with what cannot be spoken, what dare not be spoken and the refusal to hear what is being said.

We find a literature "peopled" by characters desperately attempting to forge a stable ego in a guilt-ridden society where the self- complacent pay the penalty of persecution. It is a literature striving towards some sort of vision that will

overcome unspeakable bodily knowledge. This literature is an element in our struggle to understand our exile from a society, a struggle made more difficult by our failure to offer ourselves. The basis of any claim to a place rests, as Gordimer has observed, on the extent to which we can offer ourselves. The establishment of a self to offer is forged in the offering.

Toby Hood, in A World of Strangers, observes that, as he passed from one world to another, neither was real to him, "for in each, what sign was there that the other existed?" In a society where communication with the Other is reduced to spying through a keyhole, and where seeing includes not seeing the existence of verifiable realities, we are bound to question our very existence. All three of the writers I have examined insist on the centrality of the colour bar in South African society. We learn from psychoanalysis and South African literature that we are "in bondage" to the place and the people where and with whom we live, and that until we accept this bond we will not be free. The central feature of our existence in this country, as Olive Schreiner and so many since her have observed, is the mixture of races. This social reality binds us to a common destiny. The denial of this binds us to a common tragedy. Lessing,Mphahlele and Gordimer all seek for a place where we can meet and all three invite us to ponder the question: How deep, in this country, is skin deep?

The texts I have examined are marked by repeated moments and patterns as if to confirm that in a colonial culture which has no "memory" we are bound to suffer from reminiscences. Mary Turner, virtually naked, goes out in the rain to meet Moses; Maureen Smales strips outside the hut in the rain and sees the lights of

the returning bakkie driven by July. Rosa Burger asks Baasie "What do you want?"; Jane McCluster asks of Little Tembi, "What did he want?". It is a literature littered with unburied corpses (The Grass is Singing, "The Suitcase", "Six Feet of the Country", The Conservationist) - victims of the battle over bodies and language. What do we want? We want what we must offer - recognition.

Imentioned the notion of reflexivity in the Chapter on Mphahlele in terms of a system being misunderstood and then developed on the basis of these misunderstandings. In this dissertation I have examined writers to see how, in their work, they illustrate the silences of our condition. I have also sought to show how their work itself is marked by these silences. The reflexivity continues. There is a correspondence between my own consciousness, the consciousness of the writers I have examined and the "consciousness" of the fictional characters they have created. In this dissertation I have struggled to make connections between a variety of perspectives and to "see through" the barrier that obscures the Other. It is no doubt marked by my own failures to gain a sense of wholeness about who I am and where I am.

However, just as fiction does not itself speak explicitly of the author's personal struggle, or explain its own production, so this work must be silent on certain conditions of its own production. With its silences already "sounding" clearer, the last word is given to Julie, in Lessing's "A Winter in July". Although not in essence an African story, Julie's dilemma is

particularly intense for the South African colonial psyche. Julie, slowly and painfully, concludes:

> I think it is a terrible thing that we are unable to explain what we feel or say who we are.

NOTES

Chapter One

1 I am indebted to Turner and Giles (1981) for much of the perspective in the subsequent few paragraphs.

2 Schreiner had an unnecessarily idealist view of this bonding (like Buckminster Fuller's spaceship earth metaphor) as well as an odd sense of South African geography. The insight I have quoted is embedded in a contradictory passage:

> It is not only that all men born in South Africa, from the Zambesi to the Cape, are bound by the associations of their early years to the same vast, untamed nature, it is not only that South Africa itself, situated at the extremity of the continent, shut off by vast seas and impassible forest from the rest of the world, forces upon it's inhabitants a certain union, like that of a crew, who in the same ship, set out on an interminable voyage together. There is a subtle but very real bond, which unites all South Africans, and differentiates us from all other people in the world. <u>This bond is our mixture of races itself...</u> The only form of organisation which can be healthily or naturally assumed by us is one which takes cognizance of this universal condition.

This insight has the same limited value as a similar statement by Doris Lessing, where the dialectic is recognized but does not appear to be understood in a useful way:

> And while the cruelties of the white man towards the black man are among the heaviest counts in the indictment against humanity, colour prejudice is not our original fault, but only one aspect of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing outselves in every creature that breathes under the sun. (1964:8)

3 We may consider how a more strictly social science approach may make use of fiction. The major assumption underlying the use of an indiviudal life in social analysis, and which underpins the sociological use of fiction is that the individual reflects the larger society because he or she is a product of it; that in some sense the society lives in the individual. Some sociologists then fulfill the requirements of a scientific method by taking a representative sample of subjective individual imaginings and then, considering particular perspectives therein, generalise about the society in which such perspectives were produced. In this manner they reduce fiction to quantifiable elements such

as type and frequency of images, the type and frequency of choices of subject by writers, publication figures and sales figures. Such an approach need not be confined to novels or even to written fiction. Jill Kasen's recent study of comic strips in The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin from 1925 to 1975 examined the comic strips' focus on social class and occupation distribution. (For this and the subsequent three examples I am indebted to Bernard Phillips (1985)). She concludes that these strips reveal a movement towards a "democracy of underdogs", and increasing classlessness. Her study partially confirms an earlier study by Eli Lowenthal who examined popular biographies between 1900 and the 1940's. Lowenthal found an increasing interest in entertainers and a decreasing interest in politicians, businessmen and professionals. This was characterized as a shift from idols of production to idols of consumption. Consumption, according to Lowenthal, offered greater oppurtunities for equal participation. Donald McQuarie's study of Utopia in science fiction led him to conclude that the cultural categories of the ruling class have impoverished science fiction, which implies the impoverishment of social imagination. Wendy Griswold selected a random sample of 130 novels published in the USA between 1876 and 1910 in order to focus on reflection theory in the sociology of literature. She confronts the uniqueness of the American novels and concludes that contrary to prevailing myth, there was a high degree of correspondence between American and British cultural ethos in this period.

Another aspect of sociology and literature that can be noted in passing is the broad correlation between literary form and the mode of production in a society. Christopher Cauldwell (1937), in a rather chaotic fashion, and Ian Watt (1957) have investigated this link.

Lastly, the historian R G Collingwood (1961:281-2) has commented on the change in historical thinking being paralleled by a change from the Sherlock Holmes type of detection to the Poirot type. This is a notable example in view of the story-telling nature of history, fiction and pscychoanalysis, a point which will be taken up in the next section.

4 It was to Fliess that Freud sent his first application of psychoanalysis to literature, a five hundred-word commentary of C F Meyer's short story "Die Richterin" (Clark, 1982:342). The field has reached that stage where introductions or overviews (Wright, 1984) and anthologies of seminal papers (Kurzweil and Williams, 1983) have appeared. The volume of material may be gauged from Norman N Holland's Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare (1964) which contains a bibliography of more than a hundred items covering the single point of Freud's Oedipal theory of Hamlet.

5 Kurzweil and Phillips (1983:6) speak of stages - they acknowledge an impure chronology - and point out that professional critics such as Thomas Mann, W H Auden, Lionel Trilling, William Empsom, Alfred Kazan, E H Gombrich, Meyer Shapiro, Geoffrey Hartmann and William Barret followed the earlier analyst critics such as Marie Bonaparte, Phyllis Greenacre, Erich Fromm, Henry Rosenzweig, Henry Murray, Selma Freiburg, Ernest Kris, Ernest Jones and Theodore Reik. Melanie Klein seems to have had a rather crude literary sensitivity. See

her use of Julian Green's novel If I Were You in "On Identification" (1955). Of course, there is a difference between an analyst using literature for illustrative purposes and an analyst claiming to be a literary critic.

6 Meredith Ann Skura (1981:1) also refers to it. According to her, for a list of Freud's (finally contradictory) references to poets, see Norman N Holland (1964:1-44) and Jack J Spector (1974:33-145).

7 The issue of characters and narratives corresponding to society is discussed in Chapter Four and in each of the chapters devoted to a writer (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), but see especially the chapter on Mphahlele.

8 Obviously no attempt will be made here to confront the full complexity of metaphor. The daunting nature of such an undertaking may be gauged from Warren A Shibles' Metaphor: An annotated bibliography and history (1971), and Critical Enquiry 5:1 (1978) which is devoted to a discussion of metaphor. For a list of various claims made for the role of metaphor see Robert Rogers (1978:5-6). In an epigram prefacing his book, Rogers quotes Harold Searles:

> Perhaps the reason why so many metaphors have a peculiarly poignant beauty is because each of them kindles in us momentarily a dim memory of the time when we lost the outer world - when we first realised that the outer world is outside, and we are unbridgeably apart from it, and alone. Further, the mutual sharing of such metaphorical experience would seem, thus, to be about as intimate a psychological contact as adult human beings can have with one another.

Chapter Two

1 Klein did not present a discussion of the notion of position as such. In this section I am indebted to Hanna Segal's exegesis of her work.

2 Vorster was quoted in The Cape Times. 28 August 1976, as saying: "If there is a crisis, then all I can say is that in my lifetime have seen bigger crises".

3 In an interview with the The Wall Street Journal, Botha stated: "The only problem South African has is its foreign debt". The remark was reported in Business Day, 22 October 1985 and The Argus, 22 October 1985, and commented on in a leader article in The Cape Times, 23 October 1985.

4 This was strikingly shown by the contrasting headlines of Die Burger, The Cape Times and The Argus when a large bread price increase was announced by the government on Thursday 9 September 1982; The Argus headline was "BREAD SHOCK", The Cape Times headline was "Brown bread price up" and Die Burger headline was "Graanboere bly oor koringprys" ("Wheat farmers pleased at grain price").

5 Frans Esterhuyse, writing in Weekend Argus, 24 August 1985, opened his article "Who is this man?" (page 9) with: "The unseen presence of the imprisoned black leader Nelson Mandela looms larger than ever on the South African political landscape even though he has been in jail for more than 20 years. And even though newspapers here are not even allowed to print his picture." See also The Weekly Mail, 13-19 December, 1985 for a report "Turn left at Nelson Mandela" that lists the honours that have been bestowed on Mandela in Britain and Europe. Besides awards, the naming of places and honourary doctorates, Mandela has been granted the freedom of Aberdeen, Glasgow and the Borough of Greenwich. The writer of the article, Margaret Smith, makes the point that: "It is ironic that the freedom of so many areas should have been granted to a man who, in reality, has so little freedom".

Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Rivonia trial on 13 June 1965, when he was already in prison serving a sentence of five years, handed down in August 1962, for incitement and leaving the country illegally.

6 Gordimer has written extensively on censorship, and it is a subject that gets at least a passing mention in almost every article of hers or interview with her, precisely because it is so much part of the fabric of South African society. In "Apprentices of Freedom" (1981) she writes that the destructive and alienating nature of state intervention is felt "at the widest level of the formation of our society itself", but it is "at its most obvious in the censorship laws, running amuck through literature and every now and then lunging out at the other arts". See also "Writer's Freedom" (1975) for a discussion of censorship as part of a matrix. For a substantial discussion of censorship by Gordimer, see 1963: 59-63 and 1974a and 1974b. See also Savage (1981), particularly the survey on the knowledge of social science students (48), for a discussion of the inhibition of social analysis and imagination.

7 I am arguing that although it may well be that social being determines consciousness, a consciousness once formed has the ability to occlude material circumstances. For a discussion of this, which is Gordimer's point about "seeing, which includes not seeing", see Thomson (1979) who describes the disgust of Indians at foreigners defecating in fields whilst not seeing Indians doing the same.

8 Harding's point is also made by Chodorow (1974). I refer substantially to Harding because the notions of denial, splitting and projection can be clearly identified in her analysis, and because she quotes Jane Flax's notion of an unresovled infantile project.

9 Mannonni's work is problematic and has been severely criticised by Franz Fanon (1970) and flatly contradicted by Aime Cesaire: "I am speaking of millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear" (quoted by Fanon, page 7). Despite the problems Mannonni's work is interesting for the attention he pays to the deep psychology of the phenomenon. However, it is this very fact that involves him in an interesting contradiction. On the one hand he asserts that the colonial type can only be found in the colonies, yet he cites Shakespeare and Defoe as prototypes of the

colonizing mentality.

10 For a brief overview of European imperialism in terms of "the scramble for Africa", see Chamberlain (1970)

11 The split perception of land and the phantasy of an empty land is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five, where Lessing's metaphor of "a landscape, internal and external" is examined.

12 Although much of what Lichtmann says is quite accurate he incorrectly finds in Freud grounds for accusing psychoanalysis of being a mechanism of adjustment to an evil social order. This view has been rebuffed by Bruno Bettelheim (1985:40) and its genesis more correctly located in the particularly North American view of psychoanalysis - a view which Freud saw developing and, with some justification, deplored.

13 For another important account of domestic service see Van Onselen (1982)

Chapter Three

1 D C R A Goonetilleke (1977) writes on Conrad, Kipling, Forster, Lawrence and Cary. Martin Green, (1979) writes on Defoe, Scott, Cooper, Tolstoy, Twain, Kipling and Conrad. Jeffrey Meyers (1973) writes on Kipling, Forster, Conrad, Cary and Greene. Alan Sandison (1967) writes on Haggard, Kipling, Conrad and Buchan. M M Mahood, (1977) writes on Conrad, Achebe, Forster, Narayan, Greene and V S Naipaul.

2 Although J M Coetzee writes in a different era and literary mode to the writers I examine, a comment of Stephen Watson (1980:252) on his novels Dusklands and In the Heart of the Country, is an excellent statement of this dilemma:

> The novels [are] of the absence of the subject, of characters disembodied in a colonial milieu by a freedom so lawless that it is tantamount to imprisonment. All his characters, or ciphers, are engaged in a desperate attempt to forge a stable ego, a coherent self of certain reality, in a violent world in which there are no authentic relationships, to substantiate a self.

3 Manganyi's work on "the body" in South Africa seems to offer far more interesting approach to the "psychology of apartheid" debate than the empirical social psychology approach of Van der Spuy (no date, 1978).

4 Booth, talking about irony seems to be speaking of the same phenomenon as Searles, talking about metaphor. Searles (quoted in footnote 10, Chapter One) claims that the mutual sharing of certain metaphors may be "about as intimate a psychological contact as adult human beings can have with one another".

Chapter Four

1 Gordimer has made a similar statement. In the introduction to Selected Stories (1978) she wrote:

> There are some stories I have gone on writing, again and again, all my life, not so much because the themes are obsessional but because I found other ways to take hold of them.

It is in the ways of taking hold of them that she reveals "I am acting upon my society, and in the manner of my apprehension, all the time history is acting on me" (9-10).

Chapter Five

1 Hodge (1981:34) makes too great a claim for Karabo; we do not at the end of the story have a character with "a total awareness of self".

2 In other words, it didn't, as far as I know, first get published in a magazine somewhere. It appears as "Dinner at Eight" in The Unbroken Song.

3 I am in part reacting to the kind of criticism that Ursula Barnett (1976:75) has made: Miss Pringle is "hypocritical, self-deceiving and sexually frustrated ... utterly repulsive. Mphahlele may have intended to arouse our sympathy for her but his dislike of type prevented him creating a character. The irony of her murder by the man she befriends therefore fails to appear tragic, and the theme of misunderstanding between black and white falls flat".

4 See Barnett and her criticism of this story: "In the South African context the events and characters of 'The Living and the Dead' are impossible". I have taken the trouble to cite a critic with whom I disagree because as far as I know she is the author of the only volume wholly devoted to an assessment of Mphahlele's entire output up to 1976.

5 See H I J Van der Spuy (no date and 1978). Van Der Spuy uses Theodore Adorno's concept of the Authoritarian Personality. The South African psychologist I D MacCrone (1955) developed a similar South African-based concept some decades before Adorno's work was published and called it The Calvinist-Puritan personality. MacCrone's contribution to intergroup relations has been briefly assessed by DH Foster (1983).

6 This suggests that Mphahlele falls into the popular trap of seeing such race relations as something from which South Africans are spending a long time coming out of, rather than a more complex process which has often involved regressing towards those sick relationships.

7 However absurd the idea of loving Africans is, it is a crucial strut in South African liberal ideology. It has also affected literature in a very obvious way. Kenneth Parker, (1978:8) commenting on a selection of South African novels, has said:

Perhaps the most striking feature of these novels is the recurrent themes - often almost indistinguishable from cliches - of which some of the most obvious are that: all Afrikaners are baddies; all blacks are goodies - unless they are politicians, in which case they are corrupt; all priests are goodies, although white priests and Anglican priests in particular are better goodies than black priests; all black creative artists are potential genius material; industrialisation has destroyed the self-contained albeit quaint and picturesque life of the blacks, who, in their 'natural state' have a 'heart of white'.

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