

**The Relation between Form and Ideology in
Doris Lessing's Children of Violence**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine Doris Lessing's relationship to Africa and to politics as reflected in the Children of Violence series, and to examine the impact of this on the form of the texts. The study plots the ideology of the series (which is strongly autobiographical) by examining Lessing's own biography over the seventeen years of writing the series, and by means of close textual analysis of narrative focalisation and representation of subjectivity.

It is a central contention of the study that literature is influenced by political and historical events and emerges from a social and cultural milieu which helps shape form and content. The importance of engaging with rupture as it manifests itself in the text in the form of silences and contradictions, is stressed.

The first two novels, Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage were written while Lessing was still a member of the Communist Party; A Ripple From The Storm, Landlocked and A Four-Gated City after she had left. Despite this, the ideology of the series is remarkably consistent in that we are presented with a humanist perspective which poses the conception of an essential self throughout, despite Lessing's political affiliation. Whereas the ideas of individual essence are evident only in silences and contradictions in the earlier texts, Lessing's romanticism is increasingly openly expressed in the texts which were written after she leaves the Party. Her increasing sympathy with her protagonist is represented in the change in narrative focalisation from omniscience to free-indirect speech.

The central change in the series is in Lessing's depiction of her protagonist's relationship to Africa. Before Lessing leaves the Party, her protagonist desires a construction of herself as African, after Lessing leaves, her protagonist is described as alienated from Africa and having no role to play there. The Children of Violence series enacts the reworking of the protagonist's (and Lessing's) contradictory position as African and exile.

Contents

1. Chapter 1	
Introduction.	1
Notes To Chapter 1	11
2. Chapter 2	
'A Vision of Good': Authority and Romanticism in <u>Martha Quest</u> and <u>A Proper Marriage.</u>	16
Notes to Chapter 2	49
3. Chapter 3	
The Politics of Martha's Quest in <u>A Ripple from the Storm.</u>	56
Notes to Chapter 3	89
4. Chapter 4	
<u>Landlocked: Parables, Dreams and Mirrors and the Desire for</u> <u>Exile.</u>	96
Notes to Chapter 4	118
5. Chapter 5	
'The Politics of Experience': An Analysis of <u>The Four-Gated City.</u>	126
Notes to Chapter 5	158
6. Bibliography	

Chapter 1

Introduction

Doris Lessing's career as a creative writer has spanned over three decades: from her first major publication The Grass is Singing (1950)¹ to her most recent major work, The Fifth Child (1988).² During this time she has published thirty volumes of novels and short stories and has produced reviews, television scripts, plays and general articles.

The response to her work in both academic and popular circles has generally been overwhelming.³ The Sunday Times, London (23 September 1984) reported that Lessing's Children of Violence series had to date sold 2.5 million copies.⁴ By 1986, The Golden Notebook had sold 900 000 copies.⁵ Moreover, her success has been international. Her work has been translated into twenty one foreign languages.

Today Lessing's work has become part of the university literature canon, particularly in America. Dee Seligman's bibliography bears testimony to the enormous critical interest in Lessing's work, and to the diversity of her critics.⁶ Seligman reports that the Modern Languages Association has held a seminar on her work annually since 1971, that a Doris Lessing Newsletter has been established and that new dissertations are being written every year.⁷ Lessing frequently lectures at academic institutions and is regularly interviewed by the media, both newspapers and television. The Grass is Singing and Memoirs of a Survivor⁸ have both been made into films, and a number of her early plays have been televised.⁹

The five texts which I will be analysing constitute the series entitled Children of Violence, consisting of Martha Quest (1952), A Proper Marriage (1954), A Ripple from the Storm (1958), Landlocked (1965) and The Four-Gated City (1969).¹⁰ In her 1957 essay, "The Small Personal Voice", Lessing projects the series as 'a study of the individual in relation to the collective'¹¹ and in 1969, upon completion of The Four-Gated City, she describes it retrospectively as a Bildungsroman.¹²

The series presents the development of a central protagonist, Martha. The first four novels are set in Zambesia, a fictional colonial country which is certainly Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). They trace the development of the protagonist over some fifteen years from her adolescence on the farm, until she leaves the colony for England in 1950. The Four-Gated City takes us through another fifteen years in London before diverging into a projected future world in the Appendix of the novel.

The story of the series is briefly as follows: Martha, born of first generation English settlers, leaves home (in the thirties) because of her frustration with the life she leads among her rigid and conservative family and the farming community of the district. She becomes caught up in the hedonism of the youth of the town. Her days are spent in the offices of a law firm where she is employed as a typist; her nights at social events at the Sports Club. The political consciousness which had been fostered by her reading and by the influence of two leftist intellectuals, the Cohen brothers, promotes an occasional guilt which prompts her to attend the meetings of the Left Book Club and to read energetically. However, she mostly suppresses her intellectualism. She marries Douglas, a civil servant, despite her reservations (Martha Quest).

Martha is intensely frustrated by her marriage and her seeming incapacity for motherhood. She is simultaneously absorbed and repulsed by the lifestyle of the civil servant community into which she is catapulted when she marries Douglas. Her lifestyle is characterised by ennui. During the period of the popularisation of the Russian cause, (after Hitler's invasion), Martha joins the communist group in the colony and leaves Douglas and her daughter to devote herself to politics (A Proper Marriage).

Later, after an affair with William, an RAF pilot, she enters into yet another unwise marriage, this time with the leader of the group Anton Hesse, a German exile. Besides the work with the group, Martha and her comrades serve on the executives of all the reformist groups in the town throughout the period of the war. All their time is spent in meetings (A Ripple from the Storm).

After the war, the group disintegrates and Martha awaits her passage to England and the dissolving of her marriage. She experiences her first meaningful love affair with Thomas, a radical Jewish Pole (Landlocked).

In England, Martha lives in the house of a writer, Mark Coleridge, and acts as secretary, surrogate-mother and housekeeper to his extended family. She experiments with the concept of transcendentalism. She stays there for twenty years. After a nuclear holocaust, Martha ends up on an island with a race of gifted mutant children (The Four-Gated City).

The Children of Violence series is also roughly autobiographical.¹³ Lessing's family arrived in Southern Rhodesia in 1925 and were allocated a farm on Mashona land at Banket, one hundred miles northwest of Salisbury. Lessing left school at the age of fourteen and, like Martha, she eventually left the farm to work as a clerk in Salisbury (1937). She married a civil servant, Frank Wisdom, at the age of nineteen. During the period of the war, she left her husband and two children and became involved in the various left wing groupings of the town during the period of 1942 - 1948. Her marriage was dissolved in 1943. She married Gottfried Lessing, a communist German exile, in 1945. In 1949 she left Rhodesia with her son Peter Lessing after divorcing her second husband.¹⁴ She arrived in London in 1950 with the manuscript of The Grass is Singing. Unlike Martha Quest who steadfastly refuses to join any political party in London, Lessing joined the Communist Party (1952) and remained a member until 1956.¹⁵ By 1964 her interest in the anti-psychiatry movement and Sufism, had become apparent.

In the course of this thesis I will attempt to explore the contradictions which arise in the Children of Violence series as a result of Lessing's contradictory stance vis-à-vis Africa in terms of her position as an African - as an anti-colonial who feels a deep affinity for Africa - but as simultaneously an exile, in that her socialisation is distinctly British and her race and class position preclude meaningful relations with the indigenous population. In Jenny Taylor's terms, Lessing:

...paradoxically held a position as an African writer by explicitly subverting but implicitly confirming an essentially Eurocentric perception of Africa.¹⁶

I will examine how this contradiction in Lessing's ideology influences the manner in which she represents her protagonist.

When Lessing started the series with Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage she was still a member of the Communist Party. Moreover, as Bertelsen points out, these two novels were written shortly after her Rhodesian experience.¹⁷ The narrator in both these novels is omniscient. Every action, thought, and utterance of the protagonist is circumscribed by the commentary of the narrator. Martha is represented with empathy as a victim of the conservative colonial society. She is championed by the narrator for her philosophical beliefs - her rejection of racism and sexism - but condemned for her ennui and irrational behaviour.

In my view, the central contradiction of these two texts is evident in the narrator's representation of the landscape and of black people. The landscape is described as vast and empty and undeveloped, a fact which ignores the expropriation of the land from black people and the presence of reserves.¹⁸ Moreover, the landscape and the black people are romanticised. Martha's potential for creative involvement in Africa is realised, not as a result of her reading, but through moments of illumination and through visions of an ideal community on the veld. Her imagination is described as authentic and the narrative endorses a realisation of the African landscape and its indigenous people as a pre-conscious state, embodying fertility and wholeness for her. This romantic perception of unity enables Martha, the individual, a gauge by which she rejects every social and political group in the colony as a site of repression.¹⁹

Bertelsen has pointed out that the Children of Violence series absorbs the 'shocks and changes' of Lessing's own development.²⁰ The most obvious example of this is A Ripple from the Storm, published two years after Lessing had left the Communist Party. The novel centres on Martha's participation in left politics in the colony and presents a devastating critique of communism.²¹ It is undoubtedly the most didactic of the series. We are presented with an apparently stable, unified and completely authoritative narrative viewpoint despite the fact that A Ripple from the Storm was published so soon after Lessing had left the Communist Party, an event which must have been characterised by considerable intellectual and emotional upheaval. Here Lessing typecasts all socialism as Stalinism. The characters are all cast in satire and

irony. Each is represented as a victim of a particular socialisation which causes the enactment of stereotypical role relations which will eventually lead to the destruction of the group.

Lessing implies that the socialist/communist conception of the self as materially determined of necessity leads to repression and to schism, because it does not account for the emotional being. Relationships within the group are described as emotionally crippling. Martha loses her solitariness and her connection to the landscape, and hence also her connection to her 'other' self. This returns only when she becomes conscious of the contradictions within the group.

In A Ripple from the Storm, Lessing's romanticism is again reasserted. Martha is most alienated from Africa at the time when she is intensely involved in politics. The implication is that political involvement causes emotional repression, which alienates her from the wholeness and unity of the landscape.

The publication of Landlocked (1965), sees the absorption of another 'shock'. This text appeared after a seven year break from the Children of Violence series and three years after the publication of The Golden Notebook (1962).²² By this time, Lessing had also announced her commitment to Sufism. Whereas in previous texts the prioritising of experience over intellect is evident only in the silences and contradictions of the text, in Landlocked experience is openly asserted as superior. What is sustained and re-affirmed is the individual quest for unity of vision, for the 'inner' truth which was relinquished in A Ripple from the Storm. However, Martha can no longer achieve this unity through communion with the landscape. Instead, her emotional well-being is realised through a sexual relationship. She is represented as an exile from Africa.²³ However, this exile is not portrayed negatively. It is implied that the political struggle should be fought by blacks. Moreover, Martha's leaving will relieve her of the crippling alienation she suffers in Africa. It will be argued in this thesis that the discourse of Sufism replaces the romantic discourse of the previous texts, with its epiphanies and moments, the main language previously available to Lessing to express her conception of the personal.²⁴

In Landlocked, Martha is portrayed with empathy. The narration varies between omniscience and the use of free-indirect speech which indicates a

coalescence between the point of view of the narrator and the protagonist. Martha now has a sense of irony about politics. She is presented as having grown and developed, as having achieved a heightened sense of self-consciousness and purpose and a new sense of emotional well-being.

In The Four-Gated City, Martha becomes fully the central consciousness of the text and is awarded all the authority vested in the narrator in the previous texts. Most of the novel is rendered in free-indirect speech with virtually no external commentary from the narrator. Previously, Martha's quest for individual self-knowledge was actualised in her moments of epiphany - of individual imaginative vision - while confronting the African landscape. Now Martha no longer has to seek knowledge from the landscape. Essential knowledge is contained within. She is literally a seer in her own right in that she develops transcendental powers and, by the end of the novel, she exists comfortably in both the 'inner' world of mystical experience and the 'outer' world of ordinary life. I will argue that in A Four-Gated City, Martha endorses Lessing's view of politics as a non-rational activity which people use to resolve personal schism. She has in essence resolved the previous contradictions which existed between the political and the personal. This resolution has been realised by the obliteration of her contradictory position as African and exile.

It becomes obvious then that Lessing's continual re-positioning of herself vis à vis Africa, has necessitated an adjustment of her relationship to her protagonist and consequently also a change in the positioning of her relationship to the reader.²⁵ In the first three texts, she is unremittingly authoritative. The narrator constantly appeals to a common-sense knowledge in the reader, who is thereupon required to concur with the narrator's judgment of Martha. In the last two texts, Martha is treated with sympathy and in effect becomes the focaliser of textual authority. No opportunity is offered to the reader to pass judgment because by implication Martha has now moved beyond common-sense experience. After the war, the people around her become neurotic, have nervous breakdowns, become middle-class and conservative, but Martha surpasses the parochialism of colonial life and even of British life. She creates a new kind of collective on Faris island, and the potential for unity between the personal and the political is proposed on a mass scale.

It will be argued in this thesis that what remains consistent in this series is Lessing's commitment to a belief in humanism, in the capacity for human development and the ability of the artist to create a vision thereof.²⁶ Moreover it becomes increasingly clear through the course of the series that Lessing understands human development as only being possible through the guidance and leadership of individuals with unique consciousness, rather than through group political action. Lessing's type of humanism places strong emphasis on the consciousness and actions of the individual human being. In her overall representation, society determines the behaviour of most individuals and predetermines their fate. Only the individual who can experience moments outside of time and space - who has a vision of wholeness which does not exist within the structures of society, and can visualise a resolution between the political and the personal - has the potential to break the cycle of endless repetition of repressive and fragmentary relationships in society.²⁷ Lessing's protagonist, Martha becomes such an individual.

My central contention is that literary texts do not exist as transcendent objects, eternal and immutable.²⁸ Literature is influenced by political and historical events, and emerges from a social and cultural milieu which helps shape form and content. Writers elaborate and reshape those social events in partial, individual and non-linear ways in their work which are in turn mediated by conventions of literary form. In Macherey's terms:

The writer is not there to articulate the total structure of an epoch; he gives us, rather, an image, a unique and privileged glimpse. This privilege derives from his social position, as individual and as writer. The role of the writer, you might say, is to dramatise the historical structure by narrating it.²⁹

In this view historical event and fact are viewed: 'as a condition of the text's existence rather than as social background'.³⁰ The Children of Violence series represents an important documentation of life in colonial Southern Rhodesia. Chennells has demonstrated admirably how Lessing's account of life in the colony explodes certain settler myths which colonial writing of her time endorses. Lessing contextualises and explains the behaviour of the various colonial

groupings.³¹ Moreover, she provides a rigorous critique of racial and class prejudice in the colony.³² And in The Four-Gated City, she describes the atmosphere of post-war Britain.

Indeed, Lessing's work over the past thirty-eight years reflects acute sensitivity not only to socio-political conditions and developments as expressed in the texts themselves, but also to their reception by her readers. In this respect her work has addressed (both in terms of content and form) the currency of Marxism in the forties, the crisis of Stalinism in the fifties, the burgeoning feminist movements of the sixties and early seventies, the protest against the nuclear arms race, Sufism and the anti-psychiatry movement.³³ Lessing has herself participated actively in politics and is a committed Sufi. She has also had the rare and contradictory experience of being African, anti-colonial colonial and exile. The result of this has been that many of her critics have tended to cast her as an authority on experience in these various spheres rather than to regard her viewpoint as that of an individual. In other words, Lessing's ideological proclivities are taken to be objective and socially illuminating. At times, for example, Martha is represented as a feminist hero with whom the critic identifies.³⁴ These critics have tended to represent the series as an organic whole and to reduce it to a single meaning.

This 'describing' of the text rather than explaining and thereby elaborating it, narrows its meaning.³⁵ As Macherey has pointed out:

Far from constituting a rounded, coherent whole, (the text) displays a conflict and contradiction of meanings and the significance of the work lies in the differences rather than the unity between these meanings.³⁶

In other words the task of the critic is not to fill in gaps or smooth over contradictions in order to reduce the text to a single coherent meaning, but to 'establish the unspoken'.³⁷ My task will be to engage with rupture as it manifests itself in the text, both as silence and contradiction, in order to attempt an understanding of the narrator's changing position in the Children of Violence series.³⁸

Lessing has explored a wide spectrum of genres and has employed science fiction, social realism and various modernist, psychoanalytic techniques. Just as

actual choice of content is influenced by social and cultural environment (whether or not it is conscious) so the choice of form a writer makes is ideological. In this reading ideology cannot simply be equated with content. In Terence Eagleton's terms:

Forms are historically determined by the kind of 'content' they have to embody, they are changed, transformed, broken down and revolutionized as that content itself changes.³⁹

Moreover, the novelist selects historical detail in order to authenticate a particular symbolic order.⁴⁰ Lessing has called her series a Bildungsroman. This choice implies a choice which is already 'ideologically circumscribed'.⁴¹ As Eagleton points out: 'the language and devices a writer finds to hand are already saturated with certain ideological modes of perception, certain codified ways of interpreting reality'.⁴²

The Bildungsroman is a form which purports to be the 'history' of the protagonist.⁴³ It is generally based on authorial experience.⁴⁴ It is therefore also a form which is predicated upon the unquestioned omniscience of the author. The hero is distinguished by a capacity for reflection and by the possibility of finding insight into wholeness through moments of illumination:

In these novels of Bildung it is the human imagination, in its capacity to respond to images which differ significantly from the shape of empirical experience, that is presented as a source of truth and a guide to essential reality.⁴⁵

The Bildungsroman thus embodies a notion of human essence, which has to find resolution with the material world.

Frank Moretti points out that the modern western world embraces values which are completely antagonistic: freedom and happiness, identity and change, security and metamorphosis. In this view the Bildungsroman: 'the symbolic form that more than any other has portrayed and promoted modern socialisation - is also the most contradictory of symbolic forms...'.⁴⁶ The Bildungsroman in itself embodies contradiction since its very aim, to resolve the 'bourgeois dilemma between autonomy and social integration', is contradictory.⁴⁷

In choosing the Bildungsroman Lessing has chosen a form of closure. The Bildungsroman requires a resolution of the political and the personal, a resolution which can only be attained through the fictionalisation of history. It can also only be attained by the use of a dominant narrator who can control the narrative point of view and thus also the viewpoint of the reader. Moreover it requires a belief that real change in society cannot be effected through the action of political groups, but only through the intervention of individuals who have true consciousness because they have access to truth as a result of the power of the imagination.

We can deduce from this that context and form are mutually determining. Literature reflects a writer's relations to political and historical events but at the same time the text cannot simply be reduced to context. Literature must be both socially and textually examined in order to be fully comprehended. While examining the nature of the narrative strategies which Lessing employs, I will also seek to contextualise them in order to ascertain their link to ideology. I will show how Lessing positions her protagonist in relation to Africa (over seventeen years of writing the series) both formally and ideologically, and how this in turn relates to the author's own changing ideological position at specific times.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. The following edition will be used: Doris Lessing, The Grass is Singing (London, Heinemann, 1981), abbrev., GIS.
2. The Fifth Child (London, Jonathan Cape, 1988), abbrev., FC.
3. See Claire Sprague (ed), In Pursuit of Doris Lessing: Nine Nations Reading (London, The Macmillan Press, 1990). This text examines Doris Lessing's reception in nine countries and reflects the extent to which Lessing is regarded as an international figure.
4. Quoted in Eve Bertelsen, "Chronology" in Doris Lessing, edited by Eve Bertelsen (Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), p. 12.
5. Quoted in Claire Sprague and Virginia Tiger, "Introduction" in Critical Essays on Doris Lessing, edited by Claire Sprague and Virginia Tiger (Boston, C.K. Hall and Co., 1986), p. 1.
6. Dee Seligman, Doris Lessing: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism (Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1981).
7. Seligman (1981), p. viii.
8. Doris Lessing, Memoirs of a Survivor(1974) (London, Picador, 1976), abbrev., MS.
9. See Bertelsen (1985), pp. 3 - 14.
10. I will be using the following editions throughout this thesis: Martha Quest (St Albans, Granada, 1982), abbrev. MQ; A Proper Marriage (St Albans, Granada, 1983), abbrev. PM; A Ripple from the Storm (St Albans, Granada, 1982), abbrev. RFS; Landlocked (St Albans, Granada, 1984), abbrev. LL; The Four-Gated City (St Albans, Granada, 1982), abbrev. FGC.
11. Doris Lessing, "The Small Personal Voice" (1957), in A Small Personal Voice, edited by Paul Schlueter (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. 14.

12. See The Four-Gated City, p. 671: "This book is what the Germans call a Bildungsroman. This kind of book has been out of fashion for some time: which does not mean that there is anything wrong with this kind of novel."

13. I have used the following sources for my biographical information: Bertelsen (1985), pp. 3 - 14; Dee Seligman, "The Four-Faced Novelist" in Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 1980), pp. 3 - 16; Sprague and Tiger (1986), pp. 27 - 30.

14. See Seligman (1980), p. 13. Contrary to other sources, Seligman points out that the Lessings left for England one week apart from each other and that no one knew they were going to get divorced. She claims that Gottfried Lessing did not intend to remain in Britain and did not require British citizenship, unlike Anton Hesse.

15. See Bertelsen (1985), p. 6. Bertelsen reports that Lessing identified with the critical group in the communist party after the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

16. Jenny Taylor, "Memory and Desire on Going Home: The Deconstruction of a Colonial Radical" in Bertelsen (1985), p. 58.

17. Bertelsen (1985), p. 18.

18. See Anthony Chennells, "Doris Lessing and the Rhodesian Settler Novel" in Bertelsen (1985), p. 35. Chennells points out that this is the only significant way in which Lessing confirms settler myths.

19. See Betsy Draine, Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 13. Draine's analysis of The Grass is Singing is applicable to Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage as well:

...the theme of psychic determinism in personal history is paralleled by the theme of social determinism in collective history.

20. Eve Bertelsen, "Introduction" in Bertelsen (1985), p. 18.

21. See Murray Steele, "Children of Violence and Rhodesia: A Study of Doris Lessing as Historical Observer" (Salisbury, Local Series Pamphlet No. 29, Central African Historical Association, 1974), pp. 17 - 28. Steele discusses

how Lessing's interpretation of Southern Rhodesian politics reflects her changed political position.

22. The following edition will be used: The Golden Notebook (St Albans, Panther, 1976), abbrev., GN.

23. This is a crucial shift in Lessing's perception of Africa which is largely ignored by critics. They tend to focus on The Four-Gated City as the major shift. See for example Frederick Karl, "Doris Lessing in the Sixties: The New Anatomy of Melancholy" in Contemporary Literature, 14 (1972), p. 24. He argues that The Four-Gated City contradicts all the previous novels in the series.

24. See Ann Scott, "The more recent writings: sufism, mysticism and politics" in Notebooks/memoirs/archives/: Reading and rereading Doris Lessing, edited by Jenny Taylor (Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 165. Scott argues that Sufism can be read as constituting a meta-language for Lessing.

25. See Mona Knapp, Doris Lessing (New York, Fredrick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), p. 1. Knapp recognises that Lessing rejects collectives as a vehicle for change but proposes that her position with regard to politics and Africa has remained consistent. She speaks of Lessing's 'deep distrust of ideologies, collectives and isms'.

26. See Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), p. 66: The proposition that the writer or artist is a creator belongs to a humanist ideology. In this ideology man is released from his function in an order external to himself, restored to his so-called powers. Circumscribed only by the resources of his own nature, he becomes the master of his own laws.

27. Louis Althusser, "On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1969) criticised what he termed as an 'essentialist' concept of ideology which sees ideology in terms of 'illusion' versus 'reality', a system of false ideas masking material reality. He argued that ideology is the material system of social practices. In this notion the concept of false consciousness widely used by Georg Lukács, does not exist. Ideology works in conjunction with political practice and economic practice. Quoted in Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, "On Literature as an Ideological Form" in Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader (Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 79. Also discussed in Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London, Methuen, 1980), p. 5.

28. Balibar and Macherey (1981), p. 80.
29. Macherey (1978), p. 113.
30. This understanding is essentially derived from a reading of Macherey. See Macherey (1978), pp. 53; 113 for examples.
31. Chennells (1985), pp. 31 - 43.
32. See Patricia Chaffee, "Spatial Patterns and Closed Groups in Lessing's 'Africa Stories'" in Bertelsen (1985), pp. 126 - 132. He demonstrates how Lessing's colonial society consists of conflicts and misunderstandings arising from a network of closed groups. Conflicts occur not between individuals but between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.
33. Sprague and Tiger, p. 11.
34. For examples of this see Elizabeth Wilson, "On rereading Lessing and de Beauvoir" in Taylor (1982), pp. 63 - 64. See also Lynne Sukenick, "Feeling and Reason in Doris Lessing's Fiction" in Doris Lessing, edited by Annis Pratt and L.S. Dembo (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p. 99.
35. Macherey (1987), p. 12.
36. Macherey (1987), p. 36.
37. Belsey (1980), p. 136.
38. Many of the critics accept the series as unproblematically representing a historical sequence. They come to this conclusion by looking at the consistency of pattern in the series. See for example, Nancy Porter, "Silenced History: 'Children of Violence' and 'The Golden Notebook'" in World Literature Written in English, 12 (November, 1973) and Lars Harveit, "Commitment and the Novelist's Craft: The Racial Issue in the African Volumes of Doris Lessing's 'Children of Violence'" in Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature, edited by Daniel Massa (Valetta, Old University Press, 1979). Others motivate for a unity of theme. The works of critics like Dorothy Brewster, Doris Lessing (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1965); Paul Schlueter, The Novels of Doris Lessing (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1969); Ellen Cronan Rose, The Tree Outside the Window: An Analysis of

'Children of Violence' (Hanover, New England Press, 1976); Michael Thorpe, Doris Lessing (Essex, Council For Longman Group, 1973) and Michael Thorpe, Doris Lessing's Africa (London, Evans Brothers, 1978), all book length studies, all maintain the thematic unity of the series and attempt to harness her to an English literary tradition.

39. Terence Eagleton, Marxism and Literary Criticism (London, Methuen, 1976), p. 22.

40. Balibar and Macherey (1981), pp. 84 - 87.

41. Eagleton (1976), p. 26.

42. Eagleton (1976), p. 26.

43. See S. Kerbel, "Bildung and The Metaphor of Growth in Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence", Phd., diss. (University of Cape Town, 1984), p. 35. Kerbel points out that the Bildungsroman generally has the look of honest verisimilitude, that it creates an illusion of authenticity.

44. See Margaret Scanlon, "Memory and Continuity in the Series Novel" in Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 75 - 86. Scanlon points out that Lessing neglects one of the most characteristic features of the series novel: the interest in memory and theme as novelistic device. Crucially, she points out that each transition in Martha's life is marked by a blacking out of the previous stage. However she does not point out the connection of this insight to the fact of Lessing's shifting ideological position in the series.

45. Kerbel (1984), p. 52.

46. Frank Moretti, The Way of the World (London, Verso, 1987), p. 10.

47. Moretti (1987), p. 67.

Chapter 2

'A Vision of Good': Authority and Romanticism in Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage.

This chapter will discuss the characterisation of Martha, and Lessing's depiction of her relationship to the African landscape, to the indigenous people and to the various groups in the colony. The narrative in both Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage employs what I shall call a 'historical-materialist discourse' (based on social and historical determinations) as well as a 'romantic discourse' (based on individual determinations) to describe the development of the protagonist, Martha. Further, the contradiction which results from the use of these two opposing ideologies is central to the Children of Violence series. It is my contention that an understanding of how the narrative strategy at various points disguises and/or mediates this contradiction, is crucial to an understanding of Lessing's contradictory relationship to Africa.

I shall use the term 'historical-materialist discourse' to describe Lessing's depiction of her characters as subjects determined by historical and socio-political circumstances. Martha's attitudes and the mores which constitute her are defined in relation to those of her family and the broader colonial society by an omniscient narrator. In this way, Lessing undertakes a fairly rigorous documentation and critique of the various settler groups that exist in the Southern Rhodesian colonial society. She discusses their class positions, cultural norms, political positions and consequent interrelationships. Martha is consistently satirised for her contradictory behavior towards these groups. Her desperate desire to belong causes her to suppress her intellectual rejection of their conservatism. Despite her numerous shortcomings, Martha is defined as unique (from the beginning) in that she shares the narrator's ideological rejection of '...bourgeois values and the bourgeois community, in favour of a socialist community'.¹ Most significantly, Martha rejects racial prejudice and the oppression of black people, the basic principle which unites the various colonial groupings.

Martha is further distinguished from the other colonials by the fact that she has an essential self which is derived from her communion with the landscape. The narrative uses a discourse of romanticism to describe Martha's relationship to the landscape and also to describe her relationship to the indigenous people.

It is my contention that although these two texts were written at the time that Lessing was still a card-carrying communist, the dominant ideology they reflect is not a socialist one. They depict a material world - life in Southern Rhodesia² - but as Gillian Whitlock has pointed out, Lessing is primarily interested in '...human essence: 'what is 'real' is the state of the person outside of class and history'.³ Lessing is first and foremost a humanist, believing in an individual human capacity for 'self-development and self-perfection'.⁴ In her seminal essay "The Small Personal Voice", Lessing voices her admiration for the humanism of the nineteenth century novelists and emphasizes her own 'faith in man'.⁵ She reiterates the necessity for the twentieth century writer to be a humanist, and a bearer of consciousness, 'an instrument of change' and an 'architect of the soul'.⁶

Lessing in her communist phase asserts the need for the artist to strengthen 'a vision of good which may defeat an evil'.⁷ and in A Proper Marriage, Martha herself strives to imagine 'a vision of good' (PM, p. 212). This conception implies that, through the power of the imagination, the artist visualises a transcendence of a mundane existence in order to create an alternative; in other words, it implies that the artist has true consciousness. This is essentially a notion which prioritises the individual human being above all else. In addition it accords almost exactly with Lukács' definition of the theme of the Bildungsroman as:

...the reconciliation of the problematic individual, guided by his lived experience of the ideal, with concrete social reality.⁸

The emphasis here is on unity, a reconciliation between the political and the personal. This formulation of necessity implies a strong directing and controlling

impulse on the part of the author. In Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage this is evident in the form of what Colin MacCabe terms a 'hierarchy of discourses'.⁹

The authority of the narrator is reiterated throughout the text. MacCabe describes this phenomenon in the classic realist text:

No discourse is allowed to speak for itself but rather it must be placed in a context which will reduce it to a simple explicable content.¹⁰

...the whole dialogue is surrounded by a metalanguage which being unspoken is also unwritten, and which places these discourses in inverted commas and can thus discuss these discourses' relation to truth, a truth which is illuminatingly revealed in the metalanguage.¹¹

The perception of the reader is circumscribed by the metalanguage, by its use of such devices as contrast, dramatic and verbal irony: which indicate the manner in which the object language should be read. The metalanguage in effect fixes the characters to be scrutinised from a point of view by which all their motivations and actions become obvious.¹²

In this, MacCabe argues that classic realism asserts a basic belief in the author as authority, as source of knowledge and authenticity - as accurate chronicler of the relation between self and the collective. The Bildungsroman form takes this one step further in asserting that the author is also seer - one who can visualise outside and beyond empirical experience, who can express a creative alternative to present chaos.

I will argue that it is this authority of the metalanguage, with its devices of contrast and irony and of narrative intervention, which enables a smoothing-over of the contradiction which exists between the concurrent use of a historical-materialist and romantic discourse in these two texts.

One cannot attempt an analysis of the work of Doris Lessing without also taking into account the vast body of criticism which surrounds it. The manner in which texts are received reflects their author's relationship to dominant ideology (whether conscious or unconscious). As Hans Robert Jauss asserts:

A literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something entirely new in an informational vacuum but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt or covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions.¹³

In chapter 1 of this thesis, it was mentioned that Lessing's critics tend to emphasise the organic unity of the Children of Violence series, stressing its consistency of theme and motif. More recently, valuable work has been done in documenting historical fact and event as a condition of the text's existence, rather than background. Rather than smoothing over contradiction, these critics have engaged with historical rupture as it manifests itself in the text both as silence and overt contradiction. Thus, they have brought new insight to our understanding of the extent and nature of historical and political determination of the text, and of the relation between biography and history.

Draine, Sprague and Michael Magie have all in various ways and to different extents, identified the fact that there are contradictory ideologies operative in Lessing's work. Draine describes how:

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.¹⁴

In a philosophical article which traces the nature of Lessing's romanticism, Magie discusses how Lessing produces two contradictory conceptions of self. The first is essentially the product of circumstances, material and social, the second is her conception that the self is a 'substantive entity' which exists inside the individual.¹⁵ Sprague asserts the existence of two dialectics at work in the sequence, a Marxist dialectic and one which is reminiscent of Jungian and Eastern philosophy.¹⁶

What I find lacking in these critics, is an attempt to understand why these contradictions exist in Lessing's work; as well as a failure to locate her as an African as well as an English writer. Mary Anne Singleton's close analysis of the symbolism of Lessing's depiction of the African veld in contrast to the depiction of the city, is very useful. She uses Jungian psychology as well as the imagery of alchemy and Sufism. Broadly she believes that Lessing's veld 'represents the unity of nature, whole and complete but in which the individual counts for nothing'. The veld is the unconscious. The city on the other hand, represents an ego-consciousness, logical but fragmented. The combination of the two states of consciousness, represents the unified consciousness.¹⁷ However, I tend to agree

with Seligman's criticism that Singleton's analysis is too schematic, often 'foisted upon the novels'.¹⁸ Singleton's archetypal approach, ignores the highly contextualised political and social structures which Lessing describes. A similar pitfall can be found in Roberta Rubenstein's over-emphasis of the symbolic.¹⁹

Southern African critics of Lessing's work have paid far more careful attention to the contradictions involved in Lessing's position as African and exile.²⁰ In an article which discusses Lessing's romantic portrayal of Africa in The Grass is Singing, Bertelsen, a South African, points out that a whole tradition of European philosophic and artistic enterprise casts problems of '...authority and submission, order versus savagery, and the rational versus the irrational, on an evolutionary or developmental axis'.²¹ On a more formal level, Bertelsen has discussed the existence of a number of competing discourses in Lessing (history, bildung, symbolic) as three distinct layers of writing.²²

Steele, a Zimbabwean, has examined the major themes of Lessing's African writing in its historical context, considering pre-war settler farming, racial segregation and also the various political factions in white politics in the thirties and forties.²³

Chennells, another Zimbabwean, has described the peculiar way in which Lessing's position as both colonial and anti-colonial is reflected in her relation to the myths of the Rhodesian settler novel. She consciously refutes many of the popular settler myths about the country and its inhabitants but also, seemingly unconsciously, reproduces colonial ideology.²⁴

A considerable number of the stories of both Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage are devoted to a contextualisation of Martha's position within colonial society. From the outset, Lessing asserts Martha her protagonist as superior to others in her environment. The colonials are presented fairly stereotypically. They lack selfconsciousness, are completely unself-critical and at the same time they are fragmented, united only by the 'communal neurosis' of the colonialist and the need to present the self as superior to the colonised.²⁵ Steele aptly describes Lessing's depiction of the colonials:

She depicts a conservative, highly rigid society that is intolerant of criticism, especially from outside. It is outwardly self-confident. And it is highly conformist and expects newcomers to conform.²⁶

Lessing conceptualises the colonials as stereotypes: the Jewish Cohens, the Afrikaner van Rensburg family, the upper-middle-class English ladies of the town, the frenzied youth of the Sports Club set, the Left Book Club, the communist group and so on. Each of these sub-groups is bound into a tightly knit cabal with its own language (PM, p. 200), and its own sub-culture, each attempting to assert power for its own members. The narrative depicts the whites as socially fragmented (MQ, pp. 57 - 58). The groups are separated from each other by various notions of nationality and class. However they feel compelled to maintain a semblance of unity and even of egalitarianism with each other (MQ, pp. 147 - 148) because of a necessity to assert colonial superiority.²⁷ They have to control the construction of their image both inside the country (in order to maintain colonial power) and outside (towards the critics of colonialism):

English and Scotch, Welsh and Irish, rich and poor, it was all backslapping and Christian names, a happy family atmosphere which had a touch of hysterical necessity in it, since the mail days, gymkhanas and dances were false tokens of community - for what is a community if not people who share their experience? The fact was, this district was divided into several separate communities, who shared nothing but Christian names, cards at Christmas and a member of Parliament. (MQ, p. 53) (my emphasis)

The narrator's voice is asserted quite strongly here, conceptualising and then dismissing the notion of community in the colony. Equally, the colonial attempt to recreate a highly mythologised past, to reconstruct a long and glorious white tradition in Africa, is satirised:

...the incident retreated into the fabulous past of kaffir wars, pioneers, and violence. How exciting life must have been then, sighed the people in the district, remembering their distant origins - and yet the district had not been settled much more than thirty years. How wonderful if that wild man on the black horse appeared again in his scandalous glory! How wonderful if Commander Day walked into the store (as he had once in the golden age) flanked by his two half-tamed leopards, with his three native concubines behind him - alas, alas, he did not, they did not, the time for the creation of legends was past. (MQ, p. 54)

Martha is uneasy in her relations with the white population. She gravitates from group to group in search of easy reassurance and security. However she finds the company of those around her intolerably superficial. At the outset of Martha Quest, the narrator describes Mrs Quest and Mrs Van Rensburg (her Afrikaner neighbour) knitting on the veranda. She immediately digresses to describe the beauty and variety of their surroundings. This is contrasted with the monotony of the women, rendered onomatopoeically for emphasis: 'talking, talking incessantly' (MQ, p. 7). The women do not communicate meaningfully as a group: '...what they exchanged ...[were] the phrases of their respective traditions' (MQ, p. 11). Were they to reflect honestly on their respective experiences, they would disagree violently. They are described as primitive in their exchange 'their tongues mercifully let off the leash' (MQ, p. 7).

Equally, the Quest family situation is described as a nexus of repressed emotion - guilt and anger. People act out 'timeless' roles which go far beyond them (MQ, p. 80). They are not individually culpable; their roles are predetermined by historical and socio-political conditions, by a socialisation in which they are trapped. This fatalism is reiterated constantly, giving it the effect of truth. We are told, for example, that Mrs Quest '...was now exactly as she would have been had she remained in England: a rather tired, disappointed but decided matron, with ambitious plans for her children' (MQ, p. 10), and:

...[Martha] was looking at Mrs Quest in a deep abstract speculation as if neither she nor her mother had any validity as persons, but were mere pawns in the hands of an old fatality. She could see a sequence of events, unalterable behind her, and stretching unalterably into the future.... Nothing could alter the pattern. (PM, p. 109)

It is as a group that the Quests are mutually destructive. The narration contextualises and thereby exonerates the behavior of each individual. Mr and Mrs Quest are both victims of social circumstances. We are told for example that they had both suffered nervous breakdowns as a result of the First World War (MQ, p. 262). They had decided not to have children for a while, and so Mrs Quest's unforeseen pregnancy (with Martha) is resented. Martha is constantly told that she has had a 'double nervous breakdown' for godparents

(MQ, p. 262). She is a child born in violence and thereby doomed to reproduce violence.

Mr and Mrs Quest are described as incompatible. Mr Quest's 'silence' (MQ, p. 27), his slow deliberate manner, is contrasted with his wife's incessant talking (MQ, p. 7). They have very different attitudes to the land. Mr Quest is devoted to his farm while Mrs Quest bitterly resents their poverty. Mr Quest is described as 'poor Mr Quest' (MQ, p. 26) and as a 'peace loving man' (MQ, p. 27). In the same way the past suffering and loss of Mrs Quest is explained. She had not wanted a child, nor had she wanted to leave England for the 'hard and disappointing life' she leads in the colony (MQ, p. 70; PM, pp. 109 - 111). Thus she is absolved to a certain extent in her domination of Martha: '...although her words were dishonest, her emotion was not' (MQ, p. 16).

Martha too acts out the role of the angry wilful contradictory adolescent (MQ, pp. 34 - 35), just as she later sets herself to play the role of devoted wife and mother. The patriarchal behaviour of her husband, Douglas, is contextualised in this way too. We are shown that when they marry, Douglas and Martha become locked into another set of unavoidable emotions. They act out their roles like actors in a play:

He had not known how intolerably boring and empty his life was until there was a chance of escaping from it; and the more fiercely he determined not to be left out of things, the more tightly he held Martha and consoled her. He was holding a warm, confiding bundle of female flesh, he wished only to love her and be proud of her - for above all his pride was fed by her anxious demand for her lover, but it was all no use. For, just as he was playing a role which was surely inconsistent with what he thought - the young hero off to the wars for adventure - so she began to speak in the ancient female voice which he found utterly irritating. (PM, p. 80)

Indeed, Martha's psyche is largely elucidated by means of assigning her roles: Martha the adolescent, Martha the rebel, Martha the newly married woman. She is conceptualised as a type by the narrator. She is 'one of those people....' or 'there is one type of woman....' (PM, p. 229; 329) or 'a fatal demon always took possession of her' (MQ, p. 11). Rubenstein points out that:

In Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage, Lessing takes her protagonist through the rites of passage of adolescence and young adulthood: social, intellectual, and sexual initiations; marriage, first child, and dissolution of her marriage. The landmarks of Martha's early experiences and gradual development of consciousness are deliberately representative, even archetypal....²⁸

The narration asserts a set of pre-determined role relations consisting of a series of roles into which Martha is locked by virtue of her biology, the cultural norms of the colonial society and social and political circumstances. Martha has the ability but lacks the impetus to break free. She has the ability to analyse her emotions and to conceptualise her experience, but lacks the willpower to act. Instead she represses uncomfortable emotion (PM, pp. 73 - 75). She rejects psychoanalysis because of its objective distancing view which describes her as a type. At the same time she embraces it as a means of justifying her 'confusion of feeling' (MQ, p. 117). Thus she searches in her psychology books for '...some pattern of words which would neatly and safely cage what she felt...' (PM, p. 73).

We are constantly made aware that Martha's intellectualisation does not lead to any action and evolves as a means of avoiding confrontation. This, as Ingrid Holmquist points out, suggests that Martha:

...uses her awareness to retain a status quo, that she rationalises her emotions in order not to deal with them.²⁹

Martha '...was not only miserable, she could focus a dispassionate eye on that misery' (MQ, p. 14). Martha, able to view herself only through literature which has created this 'defensive core' (MQ, p. 14), rationalises her psyche thus:

She was adolescent and therefore bound to be unhappy, British and therefore uneasy and defensive; in the fourth decade of the twentieth century and therefore inescapably beset with problems of race and class; female and obliged to repudiate the shackled women of the past. (MQ, pp. 14 - 15)

Similarly, Martha does not read to analyse the socio-historic, she reads merely to foster her romantic ideals (MQ, p. 35), to identify with the experiences of other writers and to confirm already firmly held opinions or for the feel of the words:

Her feeling was, I know this already; which did not mean that she agreed with any conclusion which proved how hopelessly unfair a system which condemned her, Martha Quest, to live on the farm, instead of in London with people she could talk to [sic]. She made this joke against herself rather irritably, for she knew it to be half true. What she felt was, Yes [sic], of course poverty is stupid so why say it again? (MQ, p. 66)

In all, Martha registers a strong disinclination to try anything new (MQ, p. 128) and a reluctance towards academic rigour. Throughout both texts the idea is proposed that people lose their 'real selves' - their individuality - in the context of their families and respective communities, and merely act out stereotypical family and social group roles which thwart real sensitivity and meaningful exchange. In other words, the act of communication is depicted as a convention, a ritual, on both an intellectual and a physical (sexual) level. We are shown that there is no possibility whatsoever of achieving a change in the status quo since individuals cannot reverse their socialisation.

Martha does however have qualities which distinguish her from the other colonials. She can reflect honestly on her struggle against the prejudice engendered by her socialisation: '...the effort of imagination needed to destroy the words black, white, nation, race...' (MQ, p. 56). Martha is inherently uneasy. She is aware of her self-division and her consequent contradictory behavior:

Then the thought flashed across her mind: I criticize my mother for being a snob, but despise the Van Rensbergs with a clear conscience, because my snobbishness is intellectual. She could not afford to keep this thought clear in her mind; the difficult, painful process of educating herself was all she had to sustain her. (MQ, p. 18)

This honesty is contrasted with the arrogance, complacency and superficiality of the other colonials. For example, Stella who assumes the role of matriarch in Martha's life appears to be fully in control, 'complete', but is revealed as neurotic (PM, pp. 7 - 8).

Martha's capacity for self-criticism is rendered the effect of truth. It is described repeatedly and in concrete terms, indeed it is personified, attributing to it thus a human essence. We are told of Martha's 'dispassionate eye' (MQ, pp. 14; 182), her 'tuning fork or guide within' (MQ, p. 220), and then more familiarly

'that sarcastic voice' (MQ, p. 184), 'that cool and dispassionate eye' (PM, p. 74).
(my emphasis)

Martha is also accorded a political understanding superior to most of the other colonials (PM, pp. 61 - 63). Indeed, the narrator overtly shares Martha's intellectual critique of colonial society by sharing her indignation at the shamelessness of the colonials:

Matty suddenly laughed, thinking of the oblique semi-poverty of her own home, and of this expensive house....

'It's not a joke, Matty', said Mrs Anderson.... 'After all Mr Anderson's retired, and we're not rich. I have some money but not much, and living is so expensive these days, isn't it?' So too the millionaire, indicating his several houses, his cars, his yacht: 'But it all costs a lot to keep up, he says indignantly'. (MQ, p. 141) (my emphasis)

Here the narrator shares Martha's comprehension of the class differences of the colony. The narrator also sympathises with Martha as a victim of the narrow entrapment of colonial life. In A Proper Marriage for example, her marriage becomes a 'trap' or 'web' (PM, pp. 59; 100). Pregnancy is described as a 'cage' (PM, p. 118) and Martha is trapped in a nightmare of repetition (PM, p. 109).

At the same time as Lessing demonstrates this obvious sympathy with her protagonist, her representation of Martha is predominantly ironical and satirical. Her portrayal consistently reflects an authorial claim to truth, a knowledge of the existence of an ideal relation of self to the collective which eludes her protagonist. Martha is represented as naïve, arrogant and contradictory. The authority of the narrator is established at the outset and maintained throughout Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage. Dorrit Cohn describes this phenomenon as external psycho-narration³⁰ in which:

It almost seems as though the authorial narrator jealously guards his prerogative as the sole thinking agent within his novel, sensing that his equipoise would be endangered by approaching another mind too closely and staying with it too long; for this other mind, contrary to his own disincarnated mental existence, belongs to an incarnated and therefore distinctly limited being.³¹

In both of these early texts our dominant impression is of Martha's immaturity. Every action and thought of the protagonist is rigorously explained and placed in perspective by the narrator. In both texts the disparity between the narrator and Martha is revealed both in the narrator's ability to assess ethical worth, and in her ability to explore psychic depth.³² This disparity is realised in the text through the disparity in linguistic competence between the narrator and Martha which is revealed through their idiomatic expression. The narrator is able to articulate and conceptualise Martha's experience:

Perhaps, if she could have expressed what she felt, she would have said that the calm factual air of the writing was too distant from the emotions that filled her; perhaps she was so resentful of her surroundings and her parents that the emotion overflowed into everything near her. (MQ, p. 9)

Here the authority of the narrator is disguised with the tentative repetition of 'perhaps'. And when Martha bids farewell to her parents before her first dance, the narrative conceptualises the experience in the realm of archetype and asserts: 'Nothing of this could Martha have put into words...' (MQ, p. 80).

Throughout both texts, the narrator juxtaposes the contradiction between Martha's naïve theories and her practice. The manner in which Martha becomes embroiled in situations which contradict her fundamental beliefs is criticised. She depicts Martha's violent swings of mood (MQ, pp. 134 - 135; 156 - 157), the contradictions between her intellectual and emotional beliefs. Moreover, besides revealing Martha as contradictory and inconsistent in her behaviour, the narrator also appeals to a shared common knowledge, a shared ironical point of view with the reader, and implicitly, a sense of superiority to Martha. When Martha dreams of becoming a nurse during the war, the narrator comments derisively:

But alas, alas, we know all about that ministering angel; we know what she comes to in the end.... (PM, p.80) (my emphasis)

And when Martha dreams of becoming a writer or painter, the narrator mocks her idealism, assuming a similar familiarity of experience and point of view with the reader:

Ah, the many thousands of hopeful young writers there are, for no better reason than that a pencil and writing pad take up less room than an easel, paints and drawing boards, besides being so much less expensive. (MQ, p. 232)

The narration further comments on the condition of adolescence: 'Ah how exasperating are the rational adolescents' (MQ, p. 44), and on Martha's sexual knowledge: 'Now, it is hardly possible to be bored by a book on sex when one is fifteen' (MQ, p. 9). The effect of the declaratory 'now' and the generalisation 'one', is simultaneously to collude with the reader and to assert authority.

Throughout both texts Lessing reiterates the phrases: 'the fact was' and 'in fact'. She provides a moral corrective, 'pinpointing the place allotted the reading subject'. In MacCabe's terms:

...the method of representation determines in its structural activity... both the places where the object 'appears' and the 'point' from which the object is seen.³³

The reader is gently drawn into collusion with the narrator. We are shown Martha's contradictions, her naïveté, and we are asked to judge her using a common-sense viewpoint which the narrative constructs.

The narrator satirises Martha's lack of perspective, thereby confirming the narrator's own capacity for objective vision:

...and it did not occur to her to ask, not until long afterwards, how it was that she, not more than a few weeks in time from the farm, hardly separated from it in space (since this little town was so lightly scratched on the surface of the soil that one could see the veld by lifting one's eyes and looking down to the street, while the veld grasses sprung vigorously along the pavements) - why it was that she read these poets as if they were confirmation of some kind of exile? (MQ, p. 221)

The closing question here has the effect of irony in its reiteration of Martha's naïveté. The narrative perspective is asserted as one which is able to conceptualise space and time from a broader world view and is thus implicitly more objective, more realistic. Its viewpoint is emphasised as distinct from that of Martha by the use of brackets.

Both of these first two texts in the Children of Violence series contain a highly limited amount of dialogue. The action is summarised and conceptualised for us by the narrator. When an episode is represented in scene form,³⁴ the dialogue is always circumscribed by the voice of the narrator who determines our point of view. Lessing's readers are not allowed to evaluate independently of the narration. For example, when Martha discovers that Douglas is somewhat different to the other men in the Sports Club, the encounter is focalised through Martha's eyes,³⁵ but every statement is re-interpreted by the narrator:

'You didn't tell me you took The New Statesman!' She might have been saying, 'Why, we are members of the same brotherhood!'

'Yes, I do take it, it's a fine-fine paper,' he said.

She looked at him with wide and delighted eyes; she even unconsciously went across to him and took his hand. 'Well', she saw herself behaving thus, and flushed, and dropped his hand, moving away. 'All the same', she said resentfully, 'it's nice to meet someone who - In the Club, everyone is practically mentally deficient!'

He laughed with pleasure at this sincere flattery, and they began to talk, testing each other's opinions. Or rather, Martha flung down her opinions like gages [sic], and waited for him to pick them up.... MQ, p. 238) (my emphasis)

Martha is able to note her own rashness: 'She saw herself behaving thus', but is unable to exert control over her emotion. The narrator ironically represents her irrational extremes: 'She might have been saying, 'Why, we are members of the same brotherhood!'; 'Or rather, Martha flung down her opinions'. The rest of the narrative (MQ, pp. 238 - 239) is presented entirely in reported speech with emphasis on Martha's immature behavior: 'Herself', in her room...completely childlike...'(MQ, p. 239), 'Not to tell him everything would have been a betrayal of their relationship...'(MQ, p. 239). The narrator emphasises that Martha constructs Douglas in her romantic image of the ideal man, suppressing all criticism (MQ, p. 240). Even when she discovers that Douglas is as wild as the other members of the Sports Club, she wavers between cancelling the marriage plans (idem.) and regarding the marriage ceremony as 'a door which would enclose Douglas and herself safely with romantic love' or as '...a door closing firmly against her life in town'(MQ, p. 250).

The narrator uses this direct means to define Martha's character.³⁶ The use of dialogue means that Martha's lack of caution and contradictory behavior, her failure to reflect and take control, is depicted in her own words. This enables the narrator to cast the scene as representative of Martha's behavior as a whole. At certain times the narrator bluntly refers to Martha as childlike, naïve. The narrator makes direct didactic statements:

The possessors of this particular form of arrogance may know its underside is timidity; but they seldom go on to reflect that the timidity is based on the danger of thinking oneself impartial to others, which necessitates a return of feeling. (MQ, p. 45)

She is able to make statements such as these, confident of the reader's complicity since her assertions '...work through knowledge that the text has conveyed and in no way damages the narrative's claim to representing reality'.³⁷ The narrative has cemented its claim that Martha has false consciousness about what her 'real self' is (MQ, p. 239). Implicit in this, of course, is Lessing's belief in the existence of an essential self which exists independently of social or material conditions.

In Lessing's depiction Martha has the potential for creativity, for unity and reconciliation with her environment. Martha has two 'parts': one which is seduced by the attractions of colonial life, the other which resists:

Martha had been sucked into the pattern; with part of herself she connived at it.... Yet that other Martha who stood idly by all this while, waiting to be used, never believed for one moment that she would stay; it was inconceivable. (PM, p. 278) (my emphasis)

This 'other' Martha, the self which resists, is described in the discourse of romanticism. It is the basis of Martha's individuality, her potential to escape the endless cycle of 'the bourgeois monster...repetition' (PM, p. 90), which dooms her to be entrapped in the family circle, and endlessly to repeat stereotypical role relations. This 'other' or residual self,³⁸ enables her to experience moments of illumination, to envisage an ideal city, and gives her the capacity to derive inspiration from the African landscape.

Lessing's protagonist is conceptualised as different from the other colonials because she has a heightened sensitivity and affinity to the African landscape. The landscape is defined as the embodiment of a pre-conscious state of unbridled sexuality, wildness, vastness and power. Martha embraces these qualities in contrast to the other colonials, who are alienated by them. All of Martha's moments of heightened experience are described (as I will demonstrate) in the discourse of romanticism. Contrary to the rest of the texts, Martha's experiences on the veld are rendered in free-indirect speech. The narrator affirms Martha's romantic cultivation of a belief in the authenticity of the imagination as well as the belief in the landscape as a potential source of inspiration.³⁹

The knowledge which Martha gains from her experiences on the veld is the knowledge which is affirmed by the narrative as true and correct. Her moments of heightened experience enable her a 'tuning fork' or 'guide within': the means to judge and reject the various groupings around her, be they left wing or conservative. The cumulative effect of her 'experiences' also enables Martha a vision of future possibility: it serves as a guide to essential reality.

Martha's moment of illumination in the veld is described in the form of what Cohan and Shires call a 'pseudo-iterative' event.⁴⁰ Martha has experienced many similar moments in the past but this particular event is given narrational stress, according it specificity while at the same time depicting it as representative of past events. The consistency of these events in Martha's life, and their consequent truth value, is thereby underscored.⁴¹ We are told that although Martha thinks of the experience as 'one', it is in fact 'the fusion of many' (MQ, p, 220). Frank Moretti aptly describes this crucial feature of the Bildungsroman:

moments' of a text with all the others: they are thus 'preserved' in their singularity, while simultaneously made 'meaningful' - they 'point beyond themselves'.⁴²

Lessing is able to assert her depiction of her protagonist's search for a 'real self' in moments outside of space and time as superior, by self-consciously comparing it with those of other literary figures. Martha's moment is revealed as more

realistic and consequently more credible. She is conscious of both pain and pleasure (MQ, p. 62): 'There had been no ecstasy, only difficult knowledge' (MQ, p. 62). The process of adapting that knowledge to material life is revealed as even more difficult, since Martha always breaks the resolutions she makes as a result of these new insights. The narrator condemns the protagonist's failure to take up the challenge which the epiphany presents: 'Alas for visions and decisions' (MQ, p. 63). Here, her distance from Martha's superficiality is rendered phonetically in her use of trivial rhyme. The narrator's explicit condemnation of Martha's ennui, is simultaneously proof of her implicit approval of the capacity to uncover residual truth through inspired imagination.

Martha's timeless moments occur when she is most desperately frustrated by the emotional pressures of colonial life: her mother's domination and the social pressures of the town. Martha is permitted to chart the process of her consciousness free of narrative comment. On these occasions the protagonist is not cast in irony. Indeed these moments are revealed as the occasions when Martha is able to move beyond negation on an emotional level. In material life Martha seeks to achieve the creative potential she believes she possesses, but fails in her half-hearted attempts at writing. The descriptions in these moments of symbolic experience, however, reflect the strength and sensitivity of her creative imagination (MQ, pp. 17; 60 - 3; 119; 134). She achieves a heightened self-consciousness and can 'watch the movement of her mind' (MQ, p. 60). Martha is able to observe minute detail in nature at these moments whereas she is ordinarily described as 'unobservant' (MQ, pp. 104; 109). Most importantly she is able to achieve unity with her surroundings:

There was a slow integration, during which she, and the little animals, and the moving grasses, and the sunwarmed trees, and the slopes of shivering silvery mealies, and the great dome of blue light overhead, and the stones of earth under her feet, became one, shuddering together in a dissolution of dancing atoms. (MQ, p. 62)

Martha becomes one with her surroundings, '...her flesh was the earth' (idem.), but only temporarily. She is unable to bear the pressure of the rivers 'forcing themselves painfully along her veins' (idem.).

It is also on the veld that Martha is able to construct an image of a unified society without racial prejudice. She consistently and deliberately conjures up an image of an ideal city, a future Utopia which embodies the idea of unity, not only with the landscape, but with its people as well:

There arose, glimmering whitely over the harsh scrub and stunted trees, a noble city, set foursquare and colonnaded along its falling flower-bordered terraces. There were splashing fountains, and the sound of flutes; and its citizens moved, grave and beautiful, black and white and brown together; and these groups of elders paused, and smiled with pleasure at the sight of the children - the blue-eyed, fair-skinned children of the North playing hand in hand with the bronze-skinned, dark-eyed children of the South. (MQ, p. 17)

The symbol of union which Martha constructs is the most acute depiction of Lessing's resolution of her contradictory relation to Africa. It is a union of both space and time. Africa and Europe are united in the image of the children of the North and South playing together. The city is landscaped with its colonnades and flower-bordered terraces and at the same time evokes an image of spontaneity with its flutes and fountains. It connotes both civilisation in the fact of its structures, and pastorality because of its simplicity. Lessing's desire for harmony and unity, 'her vision of good' is the over-determining factor here. Whereas almost every other action or thought is judged, the narrative does not correct Martha's vision. Martha's imagination is authenticated. The fact that she can imagine a future Utopia distinguishes her as special. The world of 'otherness', Africa and its people, is incorporated, and thereby rendered part of the self. According to Belsey:

The obliteration of the object in a subjectivity which expands to incorporate it, is the negation of desire, because desire depends on the existence of an object that can be desired precisely in so far as it is outside the subject, radically other. The negation of desire, imaginary plenitude, presents a world whose existence and meaning depends on the presence of the subject, a world of absolute subjectivity.⁴³

As a result of moments of epiphany Martha realises the smallness of humanity in relation to the vast land: '...she knew futility; that is, what was futile was her own

idea of herself and her place in the chaos of matter' (MQ, p. 62). These observations are the primary shaping force of Martha's critical consciousness, her perception of the false superiority of the coloniser based on a false belief in human power. Lessing corroborates this perception in her Preface to Collected African Stories Vol 1:

I believe that the chief gift from Africa to writers, white and black, is the continent itself, its presence which for some people is like an old fever, latent, always in their blood; or like an old wound throbbing in the bones as the air changes. That is not a place to visit unless one chooses to be an exile ever afterwards from an explicable majestic silence lying just over the border of memory or of thought. Africa gives you the knowledge that man is a small creature, among other creatures in a large landscape.⁴⁴

Moreover, as I have already indicated, the narrator describes the moment of epiphany as Martha's 'tuning fork or guide within her' (MQ, p. 220).

This notion of spiritual essence is further authenticated by Lessing in "The Small Personal Voice" where she reiterates the need for artists to 'force ourselves into an effort of imagination necessary to become what we are capable of being'.⁴⁵ Magie points out that we see in evidence here Lessing's belief in the existence of residual truth which reveals itself only through inspired imagination. In this romantic conception, the mind constructs the world in the act of perceiving it.⁴⁶ It is as a result of the moment of epiphany that Martha simultaneously realises her position as outsider, as a member of the colonising race. She resolves not to hunt animals (MQ, p. 63). Martha breaks this resolution the next day. Her perception of wholeness, of integration, does not allow her participation because it is essentially a false perception, an illusion of belonging. In this she is revealed as simultaneously African and exile. Intellectually she realises that she should not hunt animals as a sport, but she does not have the will to escape her socialisation as a member of the colonising race.⁴⁷

It is in her depiction of Martha's relation to the African landscape that Lessing's paradoxical position as African, and simultaneously as European exile, is most evident. Martha's (and Lessing's) social commitment towards identifying with, and becoming one with, Africa sets her apart from most of her fellow

colonials. However, while explicitly subverting a European/colonial point of view in the narrative, Lessing implicitly and seemingly unconsciously confirms a romanticised Eurocentric conception of Africa as other. Despite Lessing's condemnation of a romantic conception of Africa as 'the inverse side of racism', she implicates herself in the very romanticism of which she accuses Laurens Van der Post:

An African once said to me that beyond the white man's more obvious crimes in Africa there was the unforgivable one that 'Even the best of you use Africa as a peg to hang your egos on'. To this crime Mr Van der Post is open. So are all the rest of us.⁴⁸

Martha's affinity with the landscape, distinguishes her as sensitive in contrast to the other colonials. Mrs Quest, Donovan and Douglas are all alienated from the land. Mrs Quest yearns for the city. Donovan describes himself as an 'indoor type' and resents 'the wide open spaces' (MQ, p. 109). And to Douglas the Quest's farm, 'looks as wild as hell, gives me the creeps' (MQ, p. 259). All these people are described as superficial, insensitive and deficient in sexuality.

In Martha Quest the uncreated land is invested with personality - human moods and impulses are reflected in it: October is the 'ambiguous month, the month of tension, the unendurable month' (MQ, p. 217), 'The veld...lifted itself unafraid to meet that sky' (MQ, p. 252), 'This naked embrace of earth and sky' (idem.). The veld stimulates the imaginative creativity - Martha's evocation of the image of the ideal city is always linked to the landscape (MQ, p. 17; 134). Her moment of epiphany is stimulated by her observation of nature (MQ, pp. 60 - 63). Descriptions of nature are thus linked to Martha's periods of solitude, which are also periods of reflection. Chennells points out that in Lessing's depictions the veld 'does foster an exciting and eccentric individuality':⁴⁹

She also seems, to an extent, to have identified with settlers who saw in the empty land an opportunity for self-realisation and for the free development of personality, impossible to achieve in England or even in Rhodesia's towns.⁵⁰

Further, Bertelsen points out how the landscape and the weather are used as ‘...a measure of the condition of society and a symbol for the heroine’s imaginative development’. So dryness for example, signifies ‘cynicism, frustration and paralysis’:

October is Martha’s birth month (MQ, p. 217) and its omen is here fully spelt out; a parched land lies waiting for rain - Martha’s claustrophobia as a child (MQ, p. 217), as a wife and mother (MQ, pp. 277; 282; 297) reaches snapping point during this season.⁵¹

Bertelsen also points to Lessing’s use of images of rain, wetness and mud which are often associated with rites of passage. The first of these is the Van Rensburg’s dance (MQ, p. 79) where Martha splashes mud on her white dress, the second is her first club dance (MQ, p. 164) when the same thing happens.⁵² Both instances signify an expression of freedom which has been prohibited by her mother and Donovan respectively. In A Proper Marriage, a pregnant Martha swims in a mud-filled pothole. The immersion is associated with freedom, this time more closely with sexuality as Martha swims among the jelly of frog spawn (PM, p. 153). After this incident, Martha makes a firm resolution not to be vain about her body (PM, p. 155). As Nicole Ward Jouve points out: ‘Mud is where Martha defends herself, her strong body, against the inroads of convention - clothes, marriage: propriety’.⁵³

In Martha Quest, the farm is a ‘timid intrusion’ on the landscape (MQ, p. 8). As Lars Harveit points out: ‘Nature is always ready to reclaim the land from the intruders, as when the Quests give up their farm and move into Salisbury’.⁵⁴ The landscape of the farm is calm, the ‘pink ploughed land’ is contrasted with the bush, personified as ‘dark green and sombre’ (MQ, p. 8). The panoramic view of the landscape to which we are introduced at the outset is presented from the assumed perspective of a hawk:

...the cluster of grass huts which was the native compound huddled on a lower rise half a mile away; perhaps a dozen patches of naked soil - and then nothing to disturb that ancient, down-peering eye, nothing that a thousand generations of his hawk ancestors had not seen. (MQ, p. 8)

The use of the point of view of the hawk (and his ancestors) allows an objective overview which has the effect of truth. It renders Africa together with the hawk, as vast, timeless, unchanging and organic. The narrator further corroborates this view, asserting knowledge and thus authority. The reader is included in shared understanding:

...the land travelled endlessly, without limit, and faded into a blueish haze, like the hinterland to the imagination we cannot do without - the great declivity was open to the north. (MQ, p. 9) (my emphasis)

This view essentially prefaces Martha's insight in the epiphany as to the smallness of humanity. Rubenstein points out that the hawk suggests '...both the harmonic natural order and the restrictive emotional geography that awaits Martha as she leaves it.'⁵⁵ Martha's 'illumination' is acceptable because the truth value of the insights it renders has already been asserted by the narrator.

All of Lessing's Africa is described as vast, endless, empty and unchanging, an essentially romantic conception.⁵⁶ Chennells points out that in this Lessing implicitly confirms the myth of the uncreated land, the myth that: 'Before the arrival of the whites, the plateau was an empty wilderness which they were at liberty to shape as they pleased'.⁵⁷

Rhodesian novelists who wished to depict the country as a new Eden, or its settlers as new Arcadians, had to indulge in a particularly nasty sleight of hand. In 1890 the country was fairly heavily populated, and the first pioneer had difficulty in finding land that was not already used for fields or grazing.⁵⁸

Lessing is then also ignoring the removal of Africans to the reserves. The reserves are never a feature of the landscape in these two texts; this, despite the fact that this process had been fully entrenched by the thirties.

From the outset the assertion of the wildness, the vastness of the African landscape, is contrasted with the dullness, the lifelessness of the European landscape. This view is legitimated by the literature Martha reads:

In the literature that was her tradition, the word farm evoked an image of something orderly, compact, cultivated; a neat farmhouse in a pattern of fields. (MQ, p. 8)

This view is further entrenched when Martha moves to the city where the open space, the veld, is increasingly usurped by new suburbs, new buildings; in particular the Sports Club building, a corruption of Martha's colonnaded ideal city (MQ, p. 149). For Martha the landscape of the town is dull, grey and dark: the 'clouds move incontinently over the town' (MQ, p. 218). The park represents 'small acres of greenness in a waste of impervious streets' (PM, p. 151). This contrasts sharply with the energy of the rural landscape, the 'vivid', 'violent green', 'blaring red', 'the deep, soft hall of blue', and clouds which:

...wheeled and deployed and marched day and night, flinging down hail, storming down rain, rolling and rocking to an orchestra of thunder, while the lightning danced about the thunderheads and quivered over the mountains. (MQ, p. 218)

The effect of the rain in the town is contrasted with that on the veld. In the town:

...the tarmac rocked off its waves of wet heat, the trees in the park quivered through waves of rising moisture. (MQ, p. 218)

The veld is left 'teeming' and 'steaming' and 'febrile' after rain (MQ, p. 218). It is described as fertile, having an endless capacity for rejuvenation:

...between low walls of yellowing grass whose roots were still cluttered and bedded in the mess of last year's subsiding growth - that is, save where veld fires had swept and left blackened soil...so that new stems rose glistening, as clean as reeds from water. (MQ, p. 252)

This metaphor is extended into one of free and uninhibited sexuality:

...she was carried along on movement itself, the sun immediately above, naked and powerful, the loins and breast of light, while the earth's heat rose to meet it, in a rank and swelling smell of growth and wetness. (MQ, p. 252)

Again the romantic myth is perpetuated. The African bush is presented as signifier for a 'pre-conscious state',⁵⁹ a natural and unbridled sexuality which is not possible in the city with its 'incontinent clouds', its 'sterile tarmac' (MQ, p. 218); or in the 'cultivated' rural landscapes of Europe (MQ, p. 8). Moreover this view is confirmed through a claim by the narrator to authority of experience:

This naked embrace of earth and sky, the sun hard and strong overhead, pulling up the moisture from foliage, from soil, so that the swimming glisten of heat is like a cross made visible... for leagues, so that the circling hawk...seems equipoised between sun and boulder - this frank embrace between the lifting breast of the land and the deep blue warmth of the sky is what exiles from Africa dream of; it is what they sicken for, no matter how hard they try to shut their minds against the memory of it. (MQ, p. 252)

Again, this particular image of Africa is asserted as timeless and unchanging. Again the hawk is the seemingly objective perspective, the symbol of tradition. Its omniscient point of view is affirmed by the narrator. The balance which Martha cannot achieve in her material life is creatively fulfilled in the symbolic sexual encounter in which she is embraced, 'carried along' (MQ, p. 252).

When Martha had lived on the farm, her experience was often that of 'sombre threat' and even 'claustrophobia' (MQ, p. 8) - the sky 'pulses with light', 'is white hot', 'angry' (MQ, p. 29), 'beauty springs from loaded heat, the dust, the tension' (MQ, p. 28). Now that Martha has left the farm she is able to participate, although only briefly, in what Singleton describes as 'a unity of violent oppositions':

...the violent green opposed to glaring red, blue sky and raging storms, drought and jungle-like wet, death and surging fertility.⁶⁰

At the same time Singleton points out that the scene Martha encounters is not a comfortable one:

The cows are 'grazing in nervous haste'.... The walker is buried ankle deep in red mud and splashed with water. The veld is 'fire-tortured' and mosquitoes crawl everywhere, grotesquely like dragons. (MQ, p. 218)⁶¹

In this, I believe Martha's experience of the veld parallels that of Lessing. Both are represented as simultaneously African and as exile:

The heroic impossibility of the task of reconciling subject and object simultaneously produces exultation and despair.⁶²

We are shown that Martha's relation to the land is temporary and always limited. She is excluded from its dynamism and from the rhythm of its cycle and she always feels small and insignificant by comparison. Ultimately she is excluded by a knowledge, which is rooted in her education, that she is an exile. She is constantly told by her mother that she is British and that their stay in Africa is temporary; and she unconsciously shares this attitude (*MQ*, p. 22). This is a similar relationship to that of her experience of the black community. Martha yearns to participate in their lives but is prevented by the fact that she is part of the colonising class and is hence regarded with suspicion, by the fact that she always meets the blacks in an unequal relationship (as servants), and by a complete lack of understanding of their language and culture. Instead she can think of them only in terms of pity or guilt. Even her participation in organised politics fails to include them in any significant way.

Further, I believe that a comparison can be drawn between the narration's representation of Martha's relation to the landscape and to the colonised. In both she is realised as both African and exile. This is as much a reflection of Lessing's own relationship to Southern Rhodesia. Both the landscape and the indigenous people are ultimately other. They merge as an unknown quality: Africa. Martha can empathise with both the landscape and the black people but is excluded from full and permanent relationships with either. Lessing describes both the landscape and the blacks in romantic discourse because they pose her central dilemma: how to reconcile the contradiction of feeling both African and exile.

The colonised are not present as actors in either of these two novels.⁶³ They are however constantly talked about by the colonials in terms of their potential threat to the whites and in terms of their deficiencies as manual labourers. They are homogeneously ascribed a general character by the

colonials: stupid and lazy (MQ, p. 45), 'nothing but animals' (PM, p. 26), 'nothing but children' (PM, p. 61). In contradiction to these characteristics of indolence and slothfulness, they are regarded as potential rapists (MQ, p. 47) and potential revolutionaries (PM, pp. 66; 306). The liberal opinion that a black middle-class should be created (PM, p. 220) is not allowed any voice by the conservative colonials.

Although Martha rejects racial prejudice on principle, she cannot traverse beyond sentimentality in her relations to black people (MQ, pp. 17; 75; 184; PM, p. 274). The consequence of her conception of the black population as victims, is that she has no mechanism for dealing with them as actors or even as fellow adults. Her emotion is always focussed on women and children. Her romanticisation refuses to acknowledge that black people are capable of emotions other than love. Thus she excludes the black plough driver in her vision of the ideal city because he cannot be infused with her pity:

The driver she did not like - he was a harsh and violent man who used that whip with too much zest; but the pity she refused herself flooded out and surrounded the black child like a protective blanket. (MQ, p. 17)

In another incident later on in Martha Quest, she cannot fully confront the fact of the violence meted out to black people. Martha watches two policemen leading prisoners to the magistrate's courts. The narrative's depiction of this scene focuses on the hands of the prisoners rather than their whole bodies:

The prisoners were handcuffed together, and it was these hands that caught Martha's attention: the working hands, clasped together by broad and gleaming steel, held carefully at waist level, steady against the natural movement of swinging arms - the tender dark flesh cautious against the bite of the metal. (MQ, pp. 183 - 184) (my emphasis)

Martha tries to empathise with them by following them down the street (in her imagination) but she cannot. She feels only a 'moral exhaustion' (MQ, p. 184).

Like the other colonials, both Martha and her narrator homogenise the black character. In A Proper Marriage, the narrator describes the blacks in the city as 'teeming', their smell 'rich and heavy' (PM, p. 31). This is remarkably

similar to the phrases with which the narrative describes the rankness and plenitude of the 'teeming and steaming and febrile' (MQ, p. 218) veld with its 'rank and swelling smell' (MQ, p. 252). The blacks are unseen and unheard. The 'teeming' remains part of the underworld from which Martha is excluded just as she is ultimately an exile from the veld. Martha associates the black community with fertility and pastoralty, with harmony with the landscape as in her visualisation of the ideal city (MQ, p. 17). When they do not fit in with this image, as in the case of the oxen-driver or the prisoners, they are excluded from her consciousness.

This principle of exclusion applies equally to her depiction of the ideal city which is shaped in an image formed by her reading of European literature.⁶⁴ Martha invests the black community with her own symbolism because she has no knowledge of their culture. Her city, with its colonnades, terraces, fountains and flutes, is reminiscent of ancient Greece or Rome although it is physically located in Southern Rhodesia (MQ, p. 134). The necessity to couch her ideal of a unity between Europe and Africa in a European past indicates an inability to traverse beyond a colonial understanding of the 'backwardness' of African societies. She has no notion of what a pre-colonial African society would have looked like or even if it had existed. She can only assume its close resemblance to a past European civilisation, a pre-industrial time, idealised by an English Romantic tradition. Further, her ideal city is also exclusive in another sense. The fact that there will be no hatred or violence is enabled by the exclusion of people like her mother and Mrs Van Rensburg (MQ, p. 134). Martha assumes that most black people are unified, free of the emotion of hatred or violence. She is able to romanticise in this way, having never entered a black location. Her only view of the location in the town is from the top of the kopje when (symbolically) all she encounters is a 'limitless darkness' which Donovan describes as 'Kaffirtown' (MQ, p. 120).

Lessing uses what Harveit has described as a 'vignette' method:

...which presents the blacks in their environment context and at the same time infuses the scene with emotional appeal.⁶⁵

So, for example, Martha ‘...sees a small and ragged piccaninny, a child of perhaps seven years...’ delivering milk in the cold at four o’ clock in the morning, and is overcome by sadness. She plunges into her books to find something ‘...that would include that deprived black child’ (MQ, p. 135). Later, in A Proper Marriage, Martha envies a black woman for her fertility and her easy acceptance of motherhood (PM, p. 26). The narration constructs these instances of Martha’s romanticisation as conscious on her part. She realises her idealisation of the black woman as ‘something simple, accepting - whole’ (PM, p. 26) as a romanticisation of poverty. She reminds herself that the ‘...child mortality [rate] for the colony was one of the highest in the world’ (PM, p. 26).

However, this romantic construction of the black woman as ‘simple, accepting and whole’ is affirmed by the narration as true at a later stage in the novel. When Martha is overwhelmed by contractions during childbirth, it is a black cleaning woman who enables her to accept the pain by crooning an old nurse’s song: ‘Let the baby come, let the baby come, let the baby come’ (PM, p. 165). As a result: ‘Martha let the cold knot of determination loosen, she let herself go, she let her mind go dark into the pain’ (PM, p. 165). This is juxtaposed with the crudity of the ‘pink’ nurse who ignores Martha for the most part and is variously described as ‘newly from England’ (PM, p. 160), ‘the pink English girl’ (PM, p. 161), ‘baby-faced’ (PM, p. 163), and most damningly as an ‘uncommitted virgin’ (PM, p. 163). She enters after the black woman has soothed Martha shouting: ‘That’s the stuff, push!’ (PM, p. 166). Martha ends up ‘sucking chloroform like an addict’, unable to bear the pain (PM, p. 166). The image of the black woman as a symbol of natural fertility and nurturing is sustained.

Martha’s response to her encounters with black people is always emotional. Her reactions are always couched in humanistic terms. When Solly denounces the ‘coloured’ people as ‘a waste of time’: ‘In their position halfway between the blacks and the white herrenvolk, they are bound to be unstable, they are bourgeois to the core, all of them’ (PM, p. 50), Martha’s reaction is: ‘They are human beings after all’ (idem.). She cannot analyse beyond this. Moreover, she latches on to anyone who denounces racial prejudice. When Douglas advocates better food and housing for the black people (PM, p. 62), she ignores

the context of his remarks (the advocacy of a black middle-class which will cushion international pressure about racial oppression) and instead looks ‘...with grateful affection towards him’ (*idem.*). Her responses to instances of oppression of the black community are never intellectualised. She is derisive of the charity meted out to the ‘coloured’ community but is inarticulate about her scorn.

Martha’s only constructive image, that of the ideal city, represents the black community in ancient harmonious pastorality. The African people are a pre-conscious state like the landscape. This is the image which is sustained in these two texts and it is the image which is ultimately approved by the narration.

Martha (and Lessing’s) emotional desire to assert personal belonging in Africa, coupled with a romantic belief in the power of the individual to effect change, overwhelms any attempt at a socialist politics or a historical-materialist analysis.

Swingewood points out that the knowledge gained by Martha through her illumination, that of separate things interacting and finally becoming one, but greater (*MQ*, p. 62) is perhaps the key to Martha’s sense of freedom:

It is possible only with and through a group; and yet collectivities absorb the individual, demanding conformism to the norms and thus the elimination of genuine individuality.⁶⁶

The possibility of change in the individual through social interaction is completely denied since every social unit, every group or collective is a site of mindless propaganda and is ascribed qualities of repression and dominance, qualities which render it a locale of oppression.⁶⁷ Lessing’s socialist discourse is powerfully undermined by this depiction.

Although Martha conceives of herself as special, she desperately wishes to subject her individuality to a group or collective in order to escape her socialisation. Despite her strenuous effort to play out the role relation required of her by a particular collective, she feels exiled, alone. She is always uneasy in groups (*MQ*, p, 86):

When Joss, for instance, or Mr van Rensburg, posed their catechisms, and received answers qualifying her for their respective brotherhoods, surely at that moment some door should have opened, so that she might walk in, a welcomed daughter into that realm of generous and freely exchanged

emotion for which she had been born - and not only herself, but every human being... (MQ, p. 90)

Yet even when the group ideology contradicts Martha's, she is willing to submit herself to its rituals. She feels deprived when Donovan removes her from the Sports Club set:

They were singing now, inside; and unaccountably her eyes filled with tears. It seemed as if she were being snatched away from her birthright before she had even stretched out her hands to take it. (MQ, pp. 118 - 119)

All of the groups or collectives in the text (except the black community) are described in detail by an omniscient narrator. The genesis, cultural and social determinants and method of functioning of the groups are all carefully outlined. Each and every group is described by Lessing as a site of false consciousness. Their ideology (whether conscious or not) is crude and artificial, and manifested in its complex rituals and conventions which in turn reinforce the status quo. Role relations between the participants are essentially power relations and repeat the relations of repression and dominance in the broader society. Just as people act out fixed roles in the family, they act out stereotypical roles in groups, roles which are predetermined by their socialisation.

Martha desperately searches for a satisfactory discourse - one that will adequately explain and express her thoughts and feelings. She tries out one collective after another: the Sports Club, the Left Book club, the communist group. She is prepared to submit herself totally to each. When she joins a group she feels 'a door closing' on her past life (MQ, pp. 92; 250). She believes that she is going to 'live differently' (PM, p. 353). Her absorption is always prevented by the 'other' part of herself: her 'small voice' (MQ, p. 112), the 'critical nerve' (MQ, p. 117) which is the knowledge she has gained from her moments of illumination on the veld.

The narrator is highly satirical in her description of the fake spirit of egalitarianism which pervades and becomes the motto of the Sports Club. The club exists as a protest against the European class system, its motto in itself

assumes the symbolic value of convention: 'In fact...this club had come into existence simply as a protest against everything Europe stood for' (MQ, p. 154). The narrator carefully undermines this convention by remarking ironically upon the backslapping of the waiters (*idem*) and the manner in which a waiter is forced to perform a war dance to the popular song 'Hold him down the Zulu warrior' (MQ, p. 228). She describes the stereotypical male-female relations, its materialism, the juvenile avoidance of intensity - how everything is based on ritual, on convention which results in depersonalisation. Thus Donovan admonishes Martha; 'You always get yourself mixed up with people' (MQ, p. 158). Intellectual and sexual engagement are a complete taboo in this sphere. When these mores are challenged by the forthcoming war, the ethos of the club crumbles.

In both texts the narrator is absolutely direct in her condemnation of colonialism and in her rejection of the colour bar. However, she is equally critical of the left political organisation that exists in the colony. The Left Book Club repeats the stereotypical role relations existing elsewhere in the colony although they pretend otherwise. Their meeting (MQ, p. 130) is constantly interrupted by a demand for the women to tend to the needs of their children in spite of 'native [*sic*]' servants (MQ, p. 130). They are depicted as deeply resentful of this although they attempt to disguise the emotion. The meeting is devoid of intellectual discussion, confined solely to administrative matters (MQ, p. 131). Their judgment of Martha is determined by the fact that she reads "The Observer" rather than "The New Statesman" (MQ, p. 137). In all, they are presented as middle-class, arrogant (MQ, p. 214) and snobbish. Their activity is as superficial as that of any other collective in the town.

In the description of the communist group, the narrative voice constantly intervenes to redefine and contextualise Martha's naïve idealisation of the group and to satirise the romanticism of the anti-colonial colonials: 'They longed only to hurl themselves...into complete self-abnegation; and if they were asked to spend the rest of their lives in prison, so much the better' (PM, p. 345). Martha's rage at the fact that she had previously been excluded from knowledge about the Russian Revolution is generalised: '...if the first political emotion of people like Martha is anger, the second is blind anarchy...' (PM, p. 316).

The narrator also portrays a level of unconscious doubt in Martha each time she enthuses about left organisation. So, for example, the communist paper "The Watchdog" affects Martha uncomfortably because its style is 'hectoring' and 'exclamatory' (PM, p. 52).

Moreover, Martha feels a pre-emptive boredom with the repetitious activity of the group, a premonition seemingly beyond her experience:

She could not account for it, but the picture of a small group of people, middle-class every one of them, having meetings, running offices, even going among the people, struck her as absurd, pathetic - above all, old fashioned. Here it was again, the enemy which made any kind of enthusiasm or idealism ridiculous. (PM, p. 307)

As with every other group, the communist group is presented as a nexus of negative emotion - repression, cynicism and arrogance. Each person is in the group, not out of political conviction, but for a personal reason (PM, p. 307). The group is wracked with tension from the start, and intellectual alliances are equated with sexual alliances (PM, p. 348). Lessing's representation of the inadequacies of each member of the group in A Proper Marriage clearly predicts its doom even before it is properly constituted, and prefigures her portrayal of their activities in the next novel in the series, A Ripple From The Storm.

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how Lessing embraces a notion of human essence while seemingly portraying a socialist view of society. I have also tried to demonstrate how authoritative narrative positioning in the text controls our perception and judgement of character, especially that of the protagonist. The narrator smooths over the contradiction between the major discourses at work in the text's narration. The narration satirises or provides a direct conceptualisation of Martha's thoughts and behaviour as a means of constructing a moral viewpoint from which to judge Martha. This judgement is absent only during Martha's moments of epiphany and in her rare encounters with black people. In these moments Martha's thoughts are rendered without narrative commentary.

In this process, the narrator ultimately privileges the individualised, romantic viewpoint. Martha's central insights are derived from her moments of

solitude and not from group situations. She can never achieve the reconciliation between the personal and the political, which she experienced on the veld, in social situations. The books she reads do not capture what she feels and the groups she joins, stifle her passion and her intellectual being. The knowledge she has acquired from her moments of illumination of the possibility of oneness and of the smallness of mankind, afford her a position of relative detachment from which to criticise the groups which make up colonial society. Martha's engagements with social groups always expose the fact that she does not belong because of her central contradiction: the fact that she is both colonial and anti-colonial, both British and African.

In Lessing's representation any group as such is seen to perpetuate the repressive relations of the family and society as a whole. This choice of representation indexes Lessing's growing antipathy towards organised politics, even while she is a card-carrying member of the communist party. In these early texts she depicts the African landscape and its people as a timeless and organic whole. Her protagonist's affinity to Africa and its people, however romanticised, is always limited. Martha yearns to belong to Africa and its people, but is always rejected. Her sense of belonging can only be achieved in moments outside of space and time. In this too, both Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage reveal Lessing's central contradiction, the position of being both African and exile.

This contradiction, which I have suggested is also Lessing's own dilemma, is given further significance by our knowledge that Lessing writes both of these texts in England, literally as an exile from Africa, and yet at the same time as a member of the Communist Party where she would have felt bound to demonstrate her affinity to Africa and at the same time rationalise the fact that she had left the country. In my view, the contradictions represented in the text by the shifting narrative position in relation to a romantic and a historical-materialist discourse, represent Lessing's own struggle to position herself vis-à-vis Africa.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Alan Swingewood, "Structure and Ideology in the Novels of Doris Lessing" in The Sociology of Literature: Applied Studies, edited by Diana Laurenson (Keele, University of Keele, 1978), p. 44.

2. See Anthony Chennells, "Doris Lessing and the Rhodesian Settler Novel" in Doris Lessing, edited by Eve Bertelsen (Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), pp. 31 - 43 and Murray Steele, "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia" in Bertelsen (1985), pp. 44 - 54. Chennells and Steele, both Zimbabweans, assert this point and cite researched historical information.

3. Gillian Whitlock, "Fashion and Form: Children of Violence as Bildungsroman" in Bertelsen (1985), p. 133.

4. See Raymond Williams, Keywords (London, Fontana Press, 1983), p. 150. Williams says that this definition was a feature of the post-enlightenment idea of history and became established in the nineteenth century.

5. Doris Lessing, "The Small Personal Voice", (1957) in A Small Personal Voice, edited by Paul Schlueter (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1974), p. 6.

6. Lessing (1957), p. 7.

7. Lessing (1957), p. 7.

8. Georg Lukács, The Theory of the Novel (London, The Merlin Press, 1971), p. 132. See also Georg Lukács, "Realism in the Balance" in Aesthetics and Politics, translation edited by Ronald Taylor (London, Verso, 1980), p. 49. Here Lukács asserts: The Theory of the Novel, was a reactionary work in every respect, full of idealistic mysticism and false in all assessments of the historical process.

9. Colin MacCabe, James Joyce and the Revolution of the World (London, Macmillan, 1978), p. 219.

10. MacCabe (1978), p. 219.

11. MacCabe (1978), p. 218.
12. MacCabe (1978), pp. 223 - 224.
13. Hans Robert Jaus, Towards an Aesthetic of Reception, trans. Timothy Bahti (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982), p. 14.
14. Betsy Draine, Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 4.
15. See Michael Magie, "Doris Lessing and Romanticism" in College English, Vol. 38, No. 6 (February 1977), p. 533.
16. Claire Sprague, "Dialectic and Counter-Dialectic in the Martha Quest novels" in The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 14 (August 1979), p. 39. Although I agree with the substance of her article, I find these two terms limiting. Sprague herself points out that Lessing probably found in Marxism 'a description of struggle and motion already congenial to her way of seeing the world', p. 40. Moreover, Lessing's attraction to Eastern philosophy only becomes evident in the sixties.
17. Mary Ann Singleton, The City and the Veld: The Fiction of Doris Lessing (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1977), p. 19.
18. Dee Seligman, Doris Lessing: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism (Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 39.
19. Roberta Rubenstein, The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 33 - 48.
20. See Lorna Sage, Doris Lessing (London and New York, Methuen, 1983) and Jenny Taylor, "Memory and Desire on Going Home: The Deconstruction of a Colonial Radical" in Bertelsen (1985), pp. 55 - 63. Both English, these two critics are an exception in that although they do not discuss Lessing's portrayal of Africa in great detail, both address the contradiction of Lessing's position as anti-colonial colonial, as African, exile and woman very convincingly.

21. Eve Bertelsen, "Doris Lessing and 'Savage Africa'" in Publisher/Writer/Reader, edited by Susan Gardner (Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand, 1986), p. 123.
22. Eve Bertelsen, "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia: History into Fiction" in English in Africa, Vol. 11, No. 1 (May 1984), pp. 15 - 40.
23. Steele (1985), pp. 44 - 54.
24. Chennells (1985), p. 35.
25. Chennells (1985), p. 37.
26. Steele (1985), p. 45.
27. See Chennells (1985), pp. 36 - 37, for a discussion of how Lessing debunks the myth of egalitarianism in the colony.
28. Rubenstein (1979), p. 35.
29. Ingrid Holmquist, From Society to Nature: Doris Lessing's 'Children of Violence' (Gothenburg, University of Gothenburg, 1980), p. 78.
30. See Dorrit Cohn, Transparent Minds (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 11. Cohn finds the term 'omniscient narration' too general. She uses the term psycho-narration instead because it 'identifies the subject-matter and the activity it denotes'.
31. Cohn (1983), p. 25.
32. Cohn (1983), p. 29.
33. MacCabe (1978), p. 224.
34. See Steven Cohan and Linda Shires, Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 88. In their definition a scene 'coordinates the duration of story and narrational times so they appear equivalent'.

35. See Cohan and Shires (1988), pp. 94 - 95. They distinguish between agency - which raises the question of who supplies the narration, and point of view - which raises the question of whose vision determines what is narrated:

Focalization consists of a triadic relation formed by the narrating agent (who narrates), the focalizer (who sees), and the focalized (what is being seen and, thus, narrated - in the case of mental life: emotion, cognition, or perception).

36. See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London, Methuen, 1983), p. 59. According to Rimmon-Kenan, there are two basic types of textual indicators - direct definition and indirect presentation. Direct definition names the trait of a character using an adjective, noun, or other part of speech. Indirect presentation displays and exemplifies it in various ways.

37. MacCabe (1978), p. 224.

38. Magie (1977), p. 531.

39. See Sorrel Kerbel, "Bildung and the Metaphor of Growth in Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence", Ph.D. diss. (University of Cape Town, 1987), p. 25:

The English inflection of the Bildungsroman absorbs from the Romantic poets and celebrates the centrality of the imagination of the artistic persona. It is through the power of the creative imagination that the artist-hero, though essentially passive, is seen to assume new potency. He is able to summon an alternative and palliative world into existence.

See also Magie (1977), p. 522. Magie points out that Lessing's combination of affirmative quest with sceptical and moral self-criticism characterises the English Romantics, particularly Wordsworth. He asserts that her role models are the self-divided rather than the militant Romantics.

40. According to Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 86, an iterative event is an event which occurs more than once but which is narrated only once:

A pseudo-iterative event gives events narrational stress by conflating singular and iterative frequencies. Events are said to recur many times but they are narrated with the specificity of a single occurrence.

41. See Nancy Topping Bazin, "The Moment of Revelation in Martha Quest and Comparable Moments by Two Modernists" in Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 1980), p. 94. I agree with Bazin's assertion that in Lessing's description of Martha's moment of epiphany, the emphasis falls on the protagonist's need to be guided and nourished as she proceeds with everyday life.

42. Frank Moretti, The Way of the World (Norfolk, Thetford Press, 1987), p. 62.

43. Catherine Belsey, "The Romantic Construction of the Unconscious" in Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Magaret Iversen, Diana Loxley (London and New York, Methuen, 1986), p. 86.

44. Doris Lessing, Collected African Stories, Volume One (1973) (London, Granada, 1981), p. 10, abbrev., AS.

45. Lessing (1957), p. 9.

46. See Magie (1977), p. 532. According to Magie:

This epistemology is widely familiar now not only in literature and literary studies but in many other places and forms: in the Kantian tradition of philosophy, in Gestalt psychology, in structuralist anthropology and linguistics, in the sociology of knowledge.

47. In this I take issue with Carole Ferrier who says that: 'Martha's symbolic encounters generally lead straight out to social awareness and social action'. See Carole Ferrier, "Lives in Conflict: Doris Lessing's 'Children of Violence' novels" in Hecate, v (February 1975), p. 32.

48. Doris Lessing, "Desert Child" in New Statesman, London, 1958, p. 700.

49. Chennells (1985), p. 38.

50. Chennells (1985), p. 35.

51. For a detailed discussion of this see Bertelsen (1984), pp. 31 - 32.

52. Bertelsen (1984), p. 33.
53. Nicole Ward Jouve, "Of mud and other matter - 'The Children of Violence'" in Notebooks/memoirs/archives: Reading and rereading Doris Lessing, edited by Jenny Taylor (Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 78.
54. Lars Harveit, "Commitment and the Novelist's Craft: The Racial Issue in the African Volumes of Doris Lessing's 'Children of Violence'" in Individual and Community in Commonwealth Literature, edited by Daniel Massa (Vail, Old University Press, 1979), p. 30.
55. Rubenstein (1979), p. 41.
56. See Bertelsen (1982), p. 11, for an account of Lessing's depiction of Africa in The Grass is Singing:
- What emerges is an idea of 'nature' and consequently Africa, as quintessentially 'savage', a symbol of uncontainable energy, a collection of dark, extreme forces that are constantly threatening to run out of control, to reassert themselves and claim some primitive ascendancy.
57. Chennells (1985), p. 32.
58. For a full discussion of this see Chennells (1985), pp. 35 - 36.
59. Singleton (1977), p. 10.
60. Singleton (1977), p. 56.
61. Singleton (1977), p. 56.
62. Belsey (1986), p. 48.
63. In Collected African Stories, ironically written much later, black/white relations are more fully developed and black characters often appear as actors in those novels.

64. See Eve Bertelsen, "Interview with Doris Lessing" (London, 9 January 1984) in Bertelsen (1985), p. 93. Lessing comments on the effect of having read Olive Schreiner for the first time:

What influenced me was the fact that she wrote about Africa in a way you could take seriously. Because I had been reading all the English classics of which my parents' bookshelves were full, and it hadn't really come home to me that there could be a serious literature from Africa.

65. Harveit (1979), p. 31.

66. Swingewood (1978), p. 46.

67. See Doris Lessing, Going Home (1957), (London, Granada, 1984) p. 62. She asserts her distance from political groupings:

...it is one of my firmest principles that a writer should not become involved in day-to-day politics.... But I do not stick to this principle. For one thing, my puritan sense of duty...is always driving me out to meetings which I know are a waste of time.... I am not a political agitator. I am an agitator manqué.

Chapter 3

The Politics of Martha's Quest in A Ripple from the Storm

...art makes us 'see' 'conclusions' without 'premises'¹

A Ripple from the Storm (1958) is a fascinating novel in terms of its content, its representation of left politics in Southern Rhodesia in the early forties.

Moreover, the manner in which the narrative devices used to depict Martha's quest are adjusted, provides crucial insights into Lessing's changing political affiliation.² However, Lessing critics tend to be least impressed by this text.

Most are disparaging about the novel's concentration on political events rather than on Martha's emotional development,³ while on the other hand, a critic such as Alan Swingewood finds that Lessing has no real grasp of serious politics in this novel.⁴

In this chapter Lessing's characterisation of Martha's participation in communism in A Ripple from the Storm, as well as her portrayal of the nature of the communist group, will be examined in order to develop an understanding of her politics at this time.

Sprague asserts that Lessing effectively uses the group as a collective protagonist in A Ripple from the Storm.⁵ The plot of the novel is integrally structured around the meetings of the group.⁶ The members of the group have in common a political rejection of racism and sexism. Thus they are all conscious of their contradictory positions as people who regard themselves as Africans but who have been socialised as exiles from Europe. Moreover, they are acutely aware that they are regarded by the black population as members of the colonising class.⁷ Consequently, they feel insecure and alienated from the colonial society, from the black people and from the African landscape.

However, communism enables each of them a conceptualisation of an ideal society and a belief that all their problems will be resolved by impending world socialism. In Lessing's depiction, Martha and her comrades join the group as a means of resolving personal fragmentation and division. Joining the group

enables an affiliation with a universal cause. This in turn enables a severing from an unpleasant past. It also holds the promise of a future resolution of feelings of alienation and guilt. In this sense the organisation also represents an alternative family. It enables a sense of security and belonging and a sense of purpose.⁸

However, Lessing shows that despite their theory, the individuals within the group are unable to transcend conventional modes of behavior. They are guilty of both racist and sexist practices.

It will be argued, contra the critics, that Lessing's depiction focuses on the psychological problems of individual members of the group and effectively represents emotional repression and personality differences as the root cause of the ineffectuality of the organisation. A crucial insight in Sprague's article on A Ripple from the Storm is her perception of Lessing's use of patterns and mirrors which suggest repetition.⁹ It seems to me that devices such as the presentation of naming patterns, and of characters who repeat identical behavioural patterns, are used to illustrate the inability of the communists to develop new kinds of relationships. It represents the stereotypical view that people who become communists have psychological problems. It cements the idea that they have no inner resources to break the cycle of predetermined social roles which is (represented in the earlier texts as) the result of socialisation.¹⁰ Thus, in Lessing's representation the group uncritically conflates a psychoanalytical concept of repression and a sociological concept of oppression.

Moreover, she shows that, on a practical level, the group is completely ineffective because of a conceptual inability to deal with the problems of colonial oppression. Those of them who live in Zambesia have at best a vague understanding of Marxist theory and no practical knowledge of how to effect change in the colonial society. The group's ideas are derived from classical Marxist theory as mediated by its European leaders, Anton and Andrew. They have no means of mobilising around that which unites them, their rejection of racism.¹¹

Lessing critics all comment on the narrative shifts which take place in The Four-Gated City. Interestingly, no-one seems to have picked up the crucial changes in A Ripple from the Storm. On a formal level, A Ripple from the

Storm is the most overtly didactic of the five novels. It relies primarily on quoted dialogue for the narration of meeting scenes. According to Cohan and Shires, quoted dialogue recites a character's speech directly (that is, as history) without alteration.¹² Significantly the impression that the character's words are being recounted in an unmediated fashion (that is, without the narrator) enables satirisation through subtle verbal and dramatic irony. This is in contrast to the previous books in the series, where Martha's lack of understanding is highlighted by direct narrator intervention. In A Ripple from the Storm verbal irony is achieved by juxtaposition of contradictory utterances, while dramatic irony is achieved by the depiction of the futility of the rhetoric and its inappropriateness for Southern Rhodesian conditions.

Lessing also uses a great deal of narrated monologue to recount the process of Martha's thought. Cohan and Shires point out that 'narrated monologue establishes a close relation between narrator and focaliser, against which stands the focalised: the character's self-apprehension'.¹³ This is in opposition to the previous novels in the series, where the discourse of the narrator was always clearly identifiable. Although the narrator is not entirely effaced in A Ripple from the Storm, there is a lack of the verbalising and conceptualising of Martha's thoughts and actions by the narrator which marked the previous novels. Martha functions instead as focaliser as well as the focalised in relation to the seemingly effaced narrating agency.¹⁴ In Dorrit Cohn's terms:

By leaving the relationship between words and thoughts latent, the narrated monologue casts a peculiarly penumbral light on the figural consciousness, suspending it on the threshold of verbalization in a manner which cannot be achieved by direct quotation.¹⁵

We can see this in the fact that the narration focuses on Martha's conflict of thought by noting the difference between what she really thinks and what she believes she ought to think. As Cohn points out:

But no matter how "impersonal" the tone of the text that surrounds them, narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony. Precisely because they cast the language of a subjective mind into the grammar of objective narration, they amplify

emotional notes, but also throw into ironic relief all false notes struck by a figural mind.¹⁶

The use of narrated monologue, highlighting the contradiction between what Martha believes she ought to think and what she really thinks, enables Lessing to depict the discipline of organised politics as intellectually stifling. The boundaries of the reader's knowledge are thus circumscribed by Lessing's use of discourse in the narrative.¹⁷ At the same time the text can be viewed as a site of struggle among various discourses.¹⁸ In viewing the contradictions between the 'subject of the events (in the story) and of narration (in the telling)',¹⁹ we can discern the contradictions and silences in the text, and thereby come to a fuller understanding of the manner in which our knowledge has been restricted. In the case of A Ripple from the Storm, the glaring silence is the omission of an explanation of the group's actual political analysis. We are constantly presented with meeting rhetoric which avoids this discussion even though we are told that it takes place. The narrative satirises the group with ease because we are only presented with its most parodiable and stereotypical features.

In A Ripple from the Storm there is virtually no mention of the members of the white community outside of the group or of Martha's family. The group becomes Martha's entire life. At the beginning of the novel the narrator describes the communist group as a site of warmth and love. It is united by a 'shared emotion' (RFS, p. 7), 'affectionate devotion' (RFS, p. 7), 'admiration' (RFS, p. 7), 'communal tenderness' (RFS, p. 8), 'gentle protectiveness' (RFS, p. 8) and 'small trusting smiles' (RFS, p. 63). Each of the members of the group feels superior to the rest of the colonial society because they have been touched by the 'holy water' (RFS, p. 38), they '...have made the journey from a willing compliance with the yeasty new mood to the utter self-abnegation which was the essence of being 'ripe'' (RFS, p. 46).

Martha devotes all of her waking hours outside of her job as a legal secretary to the activities of the group, and even then regards the time she spends at work as 'irrelevant to her real interests' (RFS, p. 33). We are told at the outset of the novel of Martha's 'painful insecurity' (RFS, p. 8). In effect the narrative depicts her level of commitment and her reliance on the mutual

affirmation of the group as emotionally crippling. She uses the group and the group ideology as an emotional salve:

She was conscious that the moment she left the group she felt let down as if a physical support had been removed. (RFS, p. 25)

and

These days she always awoke early, and with delight, no matter how late she had been in getting to bed. For the first time in her life waking was not a painful process of adjustment. ...before she had opened her eyes she was already poised forward in spirit, thinking of the moment when she would rejoin the group and her friends. (RFS, p. 32)

The narrator reiterates Martha's inability to exist outside of the group physically, intellectually and emotionally throughout A Ripple from the Storm.

In Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage, Martha's critical facility, her 'tuning fork', is developed during the time that she spends alone reading and engaging with her natural surroundings. This was realised in her moments of epiphany, the experiences which 'guided and nourished' her emotional and intellectual sensibility.²⁰ In chapter two it was pointed out that this romantic conception of self is undoubtedly the construction which the metalanguage, the language of the narrator, affirms. Now, in A Ripple from the Storm, Martha is described as entirely urbanised, removed from that special relation to the veld and from the sensuality of mud and wetness (MQ, pp. 88; 161 - 6; PM, p. 153) which distinguished her from the narrow parochialism of the other colonials and thereby potentially freed her from psychological predetermination and secured her a place in Africa.

In A Ripple from the Storm Martha's physical environment is characterised by dryness and dust.²¹ She spends all her time in small meeting rooms, estranged from the vast, sun-drenched veld.²² She has lost her capacity for solitariness and reflection, and the emotional and intellectual inspiration which had previously been enabled by a connection to the landscape. In this we witness an extension of Lessing's idealisation of the African landscape. The narrative depicts Martha's physical, emotional and intellectual decline, the result

of no longer communing with nature. On a physical level, the narrator depicts how Martha has lost her former vivacity:

It seemed that she had not had time for months to examine her image - and her nail varnish was chipped too, and her hair needed attention. Her face, rather pale, with heavily shadowed dark eyes gazed back at her. (RFS, p. 193)

The phrase, 'it seemed' indicates Martha's level of consciousness about her own behaviour. Indeed her physical appearance of neglect is closely allied to her emotional state:

She was in a fever of anxiety, the familiar strained irritation, as if she were juggling half a dozen objects in the air at the same time, and knowing she was bound to drop one of them. She examined the severe young face and thought: If I didn't know myself, what would I think? Well, I certainly wouldn't guess all the things that have happened to her in the last year, getting divorced, being a communist, getting married again, all the complications and never sleeping enough. No, it's all nonsense, people talking about faces. Faces don't give things away at all - that face says nothing. (RFS, p. 193)

Quoted monologue is used to present Martha's thoughts directly - to give the illusion that there is no element of narrative mediation.²³ There is substantial irony in the word 'nothing'. Martha's denial of her physical decline is contrasted with the 'objective' knowledge that is presented by her image in the mirror. This measure of irony is centrally achieved by juxtaposition. Lessing has revealed to us throughout the narrative that Martha 'does not know' herself - that she no longer takes the time to reflect on her physical and mental condition. Moreover, in this particular excerpt she first reveals that Martha's face is riddled with anxiety, and then shows us that Martha sees this but denies it:

Martha, even more discouraged, swung the mirror back, and passed her hand downwards over her body. I'm in one of my thin phases, she thought. Well I suppose that's something. But I really can't go and get married without stockings - well why not? No one would even notice. (RFS, p. 193)

The narrative fixes the position of the subject by first of all providing us with 'objective' knowledge which is verified by the mirror image - the fact that Martha has neglected her body. This physical neglect is then ascribed a connection with emotional Angst - the 'fever of anxiety, the familiar strained irritation'. Finally it allows Martha to use her own words: 'If I didn't know myself what would I think?' Our access to Martha's private thoughts only confirm the prior knowledge established by the 'objective' language of the mirror; that she is confused, and that she is repressing her own emotion.

The reader is immediately struck by the contradiction between the focaliser, (the character who is thinking) and the focalised (the character's thoughts). Yet all of this is focalised through the character herself: 'Consonant narration follows a character's own self-apprehension to the point of imitating his or her own vocabulary.'²⁴ Dissonance from the character's point of view is then established in the narrative almost entirely by means of juxtaposition of the character's contradictory thoughts and emotion.

The narration does not however find Martha individually culpable. We are shown that her refusal to confront her emotions is to a large extent derived directly from the ideology of the group as articulated by Anton, its leader:

'A communist, comrades, is a person who is utterly, totally, dedicated to the cause of freeing humanity. A communist must consider himself a dead man [sic] on leave. A communist must be prepared to give up everything: his family, his wife, his children, at a word from the party....' 'A communist must always order his private life in such a way that the Party cannot be blamed...' (RFS, p. 37). The word communist repeating itself through Anton's sentences, was a reiteration of responsibility and goodness; and Martha could feel the exaltation that seemed to be the natural air of this small room heighten. (RFS, p. 38)

Anton evokes the idea of an essential communist. Martha's subjectivity is reduced to the signified communist. She is exalted by the very Christian humanist notions ('responsibility and goodness') she despises in the colonial society. Moreover, when Martha approaches Anton with a personal problem, she is glibly informed that: 'The personal life of a comrade should be arranged so that it interferes as little as possible with work' (RFS, p. 56) and that 'Socialism...will cure everything' (RFS, p. 58).

Martha is constantly tormented by her inability to live up to this doctrine, and the narrator shows that her response is to suppress feelings of guilt and insecurity. At the end of A Proper Marriage, she announces that she is 'freeing' Caroline from the tyranny of the family (PM, p. 374), yet she is tormented by suppressed guilt over this act (RFS, pp. 96 - 97). The narrator uses dramatic and verbal irony to highlight the naïveté of the slogans which are used by the group members to deal with complex emotion. The response to crisis is always to idealise the future rather than to confront emotion, as in this conversation between Martha and Jasmine:

They were talking about the difficulties of 're-educating the older generation to socialist ethics', and what sort of work would be best suited to the capacities of Mr and Mrs Cohen, Mr and Mrs Quest - work which would release them into being much better and nobler people than they were now, while they simultaneously worried about the unpunctuality of their lovers. (RFS, p. 9)

The full irony of this situation is apparent to the reader who has just been informed that at this time both Martha and Jasmine's parents have disowned them (RFS, pp. 8 - 9). Jasmine has continued to live in her parents' house despite the fact they will not speak to her. She will not leave their home for fear of disgracing them in the Jewish community. She is prepared to live like an 'outcast, treated as if she did not exist' (RFS, p. 8). Jasmine's feelings about this are never discussed. Instead Martha idealises her chivalry (RFS, p. 9). Moreover, the opposed discourses create a tension in the subject. The juxtaposition of the huge question of re-education, with the fact that Martha and Jasmine are simultaneously concerned about 'the unpunctuality of their lovers,' has the effect of bathos and undermines any sympathy the reader might have felt for their cause.

Similarly Martha is tormented by the racial neurosis of her landlady. She tells herself that Mrs Carson is a product of a certain kind of society and '...would cease to exist when the society came to an end' (RFS, p. 27). However, she has a nagging doubt that this will not happen: 'The wings of elation had folded under her. She even caught herself thinking: Supposing she's stronger than we are?' (idem.). Here Martha's alienation from her own thoughts is

emphasised. This is immediately subverted and replaced with the idealism of the group's doctrine:

Therefore, before entering the big empty house at night, when she was by herself and not supported by William, she always hardened herself and strengthened the buttresses and arches of her own dream: over there, she thought, meaning in the Soviet Union - over there it's all finished, race prejudice and anti-Semitism. (RFS, p. 27)

Psycho-narration is used to conceptualise Martha's actions '...she always hardened herself...dream'. This is immediately substituted with narrated monologue which confirms the 'facts' represented by the narrative voice. The fact that Martha's response is to create an emotional buffer between herself and Mrs Carson is highlighted. She deals with her only on a practical level and avoids thinking of her at all costs (RFS, pp. 27; 96 - 97).

Martha's inability to cope with the present and to achieve a fuller sense of self, results in a severing with her past and an idealisation of the future in the form of a construction of an ideal which exists outside of space and time.²⁵

The sight of a small ragged black child 'potbellied with malnutrition' (RFS, p. 34) does not upset Martha or cause her to suffer the pity and guilt which the sight of a small black child provokes in Martha Quest. Instead Martha and Jasmine smile at each other, '...saying in that smile that because of them, because of their vision, he was protected and saved' (RFS, p. 34). Just as their view of the family is the same, so the narration casts their dream for the future as identical:

Each saw an ideal town, clean, noble and beautiful, soaring up over the actual town they saw, which consisted in this area of sordid little shops and third-rate cafés. The ragged child was already a citizen of this ideal town, co-citizens with themselves; they watched him out of sight around the corner smiling: it was as if they had touched him with their hands in friendship. (RFS, p. 34) (my emphasis)

The vision described here represents a parody of Martha's construction of an ideal city in Martha Quest. Here the ideal is contrasted with the reality of the squalor of the town, whereas Martha's vision in the earlier novel is harmoniously situated in the Dumfries Hills on the veld (MQ, p. 17). Unlike the previous

vision, the actual content of the ideal city is not described, the implication being that the communists have a belief in a Utopia but have no concrete notion of what it consists of. The nebulous nature of their beliefs is underscored with the words 'as if'. The irony is realised in the knowledge established at the outset of the book that the group has no contact with the 'black community' (RFS, p. 11). In Martha Quest, Martha's individual imaginative constructions were always authenticated by the narrative. In A Ripple from the Storm, the communal dream is parodied.

This incident is juxtaposed with the fact that William and Jackie, their lovers, are leaving the colony. Martha and Jasmine deliberately avoid an emotional farewell (RFS, p. 35). They naively refrain from confronting their personal problems, believing that all emotional problems and prejudices will vanish upon the advent of socialism (RFS, p. 27). Instead, their response to the emotional pain of losing their lovers is transferred to the ragged child, the product of colonial oppression. Both forms of pain are simultaneously anaesthetised by their political ideals. In Lessing's depiction, communism enables a rationalisation of emotions which in effect amounts to an avoidance.

The group's rationalisation or avoidance of emotion lies in the belief of its members in the imminence of world socialism. Jasmine and Martha believe that they need not mourn the departure of their lovers because they would meet after the war:

They did not specify the country where they would meet: the world was open to them. As Jackie often remarked: When you're a communist you can go to any country in the world and be with friends at once. When members of the group talked of the future, it was as if they were interchangeable with each other, one country the same as another: they were part of the great band of international brothers, and as they talked their eyes met, exchanging looks of infinite devotion and trust. (RFS, p. 34)

This is reinforced by Anton's speech which tells them that: '...this is the dawn of human history' (RFS, p. 62). When Martha feels despair at Anton's possessiveness, 'I'm caught for life' (RFS, p. 123), she can reassure herself:

They all of them saw the future as something short and violent. Somewhere just before them was a dark gulf or chasm, into which they must all disappear. (RFS, p. 123)

Thus she believes that she will at a later stage be transported away from the colony, from the ripple to the eye of the storm. We are told quite early in the novel that, 'As usual a demon of impatience was snapping at her heels, pushing her into the future' (RFS, p. 25) and later: 'the old feeling of impatience was snapping at her heels' (RFS, p. 186). By using the term 'as usual', and 'old', the narrator establishes authority and experience in the text. She establishes Martha's behaviour as being predictable because of a certain endemic feature of her character: the demon of impatience, which forms part of a particular pre-ordained cycle: 'pushing her into the future'. Although Martha is aware that she is avoiding emotion and reflection, she rationalises her behaviour by constantly cultivating her belief in a socialist society. Martha's relationship to the group is as contradictory as her relationship to patriarchy. She is able to criticise but it is always suppressed:

At the same time there was something lacking.... Instantly they were transported into the very heart of their vision: during the last few decades when people in the West have suddenly become communists, they have always been contemporaries of Lenin.... They picture themselves, moving fugitives from one hiding-place to another...heard Lenin say: 'Comrades, we will now proceed to build socialism'. (RFS, p. 38)

Moreover, the form of the Bildungsroman enables the development of the conception that the heroine is special - that she has temporarily wavered but will have the ability to redeem herself, to grow and develop beyond the ordinary malaise.²⁶

The idea that the ideal of world socialism will soon be realised enables easy reassurance because the group essentially believes that '...racial and national hatreds will vanish on the advent of socialism' (RFS, p. 128). This formulation then justifies the shelving of complex personal emotional issues associated with racism, sexism and class; it absolves the group from confronting the full horror of the psychological effects of colonialism both to the oppressed and the oppressor. Moreover the idea of world socialism precludes the group from having to analyse

the specificities of the colonial political situation. The idea of personal repression and political oppression are uncritically conflated. The narrative depicts thus how one of the central contradictions of the group, its own racist and sexist practices, are largely unexamined.

The only time Martha craves to be alone is when she is ill (RFS, p. 93). It is then that she confronts the full extent of her repression in the form of a feverish nightmare. The dreams which in previous texts are represented as the vital connection to her environment, and which enable her escape from the tedium of her existence, become a nightmare signifying her alienation from Africa and its history.²⁷ Martha longs to dream of 'that country', which she supposes is England (RFS, p. 95). Instead she dreams of an ancient, pre-colonial and class-structured Africa where the land had been worked by '...a copper coloured, long limbed, sharpened featured people, tied together like slaves under the whip of a black overseer' (RFS, p. 95).²⁸ She comes face to face with an immense half-fossilised lizard 'steadily regarding her with a sullen and patient query' (RFS, p. 96). The 'fossilized lizard' symbolises a history from which she is excluded. Its 'sullen and patient query' seems to question her presence in the country. Martha cannot interpret or engage with either country:

She thought: next time I drop off to sleep I might go anywhere, it's like a nightmare, not knowing what's waiting for you.... For the cold salt-sprayed shores and the deep sullen pit seemed to have nothing in common, not to be connected, and their lack of connection was a danger. And she realised she was afraid to drop off to sleep again. (RFS, p. 96) .

It is implied that unlike previously, when Martha could understand, could nourish her subconscious from an identification and communication with her surroundings, her association with communism has rendered her desolate because it precludes a reconciliation with the landscape of her birth. Martha fears falling asleep again because it means confronting the central contradiction in her existence: her insecurity about her position as colonial and exile. She is disbelieving of her position as exile: '...how can I be an exile from England when it has nothing to do with me?' At the same time she faces the half-fossilized lizard, the symbol of Africa - 'both alive and dead', with complete

incomprehension. She does not understand its complexity of emotions, whether it is a victim or whether it is in control. Her uncertain query as to whether she can legitimately participate in Africa's history: 'Perhaps I can dig it out?' is left unanswered.

In this respect it is interesting to note that when members of the group idealise the future, their vision is always located in places outside of the colony, more often than not in the Soviet Union (RFS, pp. 9; 62; 108; 168). There is always a sense (mainly because most of the group are RAF members) that they will all leave one day and live elsewhere in Europe (RFS, pp. 33 - 34). But in Martha's nightmare, she cannot even participate meaningfully in a European struggle: 'She slept and dreamt that she was among hordes of war-crushed people for whom she was responsible' (RFS, p. 98). Martha, as representative of the group (RFS, p. 98), cannot cope with the huge responsibility of saving Europe. The implication seems to be that the ideology of the group is in every way in discord with the environment it is purporting to change.

Just as Martha's dreams in the earlier novels are affirmed by the narrator as the product of authentic imagination, so the nightmares of A Ripple from the Storm serve as a metaphor to express the extent of Martha's alienation. She is realised as exile, alienated from Africa's history and landscape, despite her anti-colonial political engagement. The truth of this situation is borne out by events in the story. In Martha Quest her ability to achieve oneness with the veld represents a potential to resolve the contradiction of being African and exile. It also represented a potential for personal wholeness. Now she is presented with a hopeless chasm: 'the cold salt-sprayed shores and the deep sullen pit seemed to have nothing in common, not to be connected and their lack of connection was a danger'. Martha is riddled with anxiety and guilt (RFS, p. 96). The narrator shows that at the time when she is most politically active - when she is able to visualise political unity, Martha is most deeply divided on a psychological level.

We are shown that Martha lives in the present and the future when she is in the group. Communism enables a severing from an 'ugly past' (RFS, p. 62). She is able to feel that the 'record of misery, brutality and stupidity' is over (RFS, p. 62): 'She was feeling a comprehensive compassion: for the pitiable past, and for the innumerable unhappy people of the world whom she was pledging

herself to deliver' (RFS, p, 62). She becomes alienated from the past - from her family and from the rural district in which she has been raised.

Even the physical consciousness which had enabled her a sense of place in A Proper Marriage when she re-discovers her sexuality through a swim in a mud-filled pot-hole (PM, pp. 152 - 154), is lost.²⁹ During her illness in A Ripple from the Storm, at the moment when Martha is most completely estranged from her body, she believes that she is saving the world:³⁰

At the end of her arms she could feel them, giant's hands, as if she compressed the world inside them. Everything she was had gone into her hands. She moved them, to see if she could shrink them back to size. For a moment they were her own hands again, then out they swelled, and, lying with shut eyes, she felt the tips of her fingers touch the vast balls of her thumbs as if girders had been laid across a ravine. The world lay safe inside her hands. Tenderness filled her. She thought: Because of us, everyone will be saved. She thought: I am holding the world safe, and no one will be hurt and unhappy ever again. (RFS, p. 108)

Significantly, free-indirect speech is used to describe Martha's emotions. As soon as Martha expresses the sentiments of the group ideology, the use of the phrase 'she thought' distances the narrator from her protagonist. The implication is that Martha's emotions can be narrated without commentary because they express truth, but that her conceptualisations are wrong. Her sentiments have therefore to be distinguished from those of the narrator.

Martha's belief that she and her comrades can save the world is satirised in the next paragraph, when Martha is unable to share with Anton her conviction that the group ideals will 'save the world'. She literally suppresses thought and emotion by hiding her hands. Moreover, she is unable to admit her doubts even to herself. Instead she tells herself: '...he might get hurt if he touched them' (RFS, p. 108). This instinct, that Anton would not be able to share her emotion, is borne out in her relationship with him. When Martha becomes sexually excited by the prospect of the approaching storm, she is forced to suppress the emotion because she can find no satisfaction in her sexual relationship with Anton. Instead she learns to 'protect herself against him sexually' (RFS, p. 247).

In this way, by using juxtaposition, dramatic irony and shifts in narrative focalisation, the narration repeatedly highlights Martha's inability to follow her instincts and her consequent alienation from a 'real' self.

On the one occasion when Martha does experience a 'moment of illumination' (RFS, p. 186), it is at a time when she is totally at odds with her environment: '...the smell of dry dust filled her nostrils' (RFS, p. 186) and in no time: '... the moment of knowledge had gone' (RFS, p. 186). Martha has the feeling that she is being shut out of something 'beautiful and simple' (RFS, p. 186). It is always implied that Martha has had to substitute her 'real' thoughts and feelings for the ideology of the group, that she has another part of herself which has been suppressed.³¹ The narrative implies that the socialist/communist conception of self as materially and socially determined of necessity leads to repression and to schism because it does not account for the emotional being and for individual thought and expression.

Another way in which the narrative undermines Martha's commitment to communism, is by portraying her as completely dependent on men. She is reliant upon relationships with men to sustain her sense of emotional well-being as well as to form and shape her intellectual point of view. In Martha Quest, Martha asserts the Cohen boys as her intellectual mentors, readily adopting their ideology. In A Proper Marriage, Martha joins the Party through her association with William, an RAF pilot who then becomes her lover. In A Ripple from the Storm, after he is posted, Martha realises that she had 'spent too much time with William' (RFS, p. 46):

...that the ardour she had devoted to William would, had she been a real communist, as Anton used the word, have been spent on several people. But it was only with half her mind she was able to believe she had been at fault. If she had longed for nothing else steadily all these years it was for a close intimacy with a man. (RFS, p. 46)

It is once again implied that Martha has two parts: 'it was only with half her mind'. Martha's insight into her behavioural flaw, is immediately countered with the rationalising rebuttal and then with the direct voice of the narrator who

conceptualises Martha as a type, irrefutably asserting her dependence on men, as an endemic character flaw:

There is a type of woman who can never be, as they are likely to put it, 'themselves', with anyone but the man to whom they have permanently or not given their hearts. If the man goes away there is left an empty space filled with shadows. She mourns for the temporarily extinct person she can only be with a man she loves; she mourns him who brought her 'self' to life. She lives with the empty space at her side, peopled with the images of her own potentialities until the next man walks into the space, absorbs the shadows into himself, creating her, allowing her to be her 'self' - but a new self, since it is his conception which forms her. Such a woman is recognizable often enough not by her solitude but the variety and number of her acquaintances and friends with whom she may be intimate but who, as far as she is concerned, do not 'really' know her. (RFS, p. 46)

The narrative sets itself up as an authority. We have already been presented with the factual evidence of Martha's behaviour, then with her own half-hearted admission. Now the narrator proceeds to compare her with other examples of this type and indeed to provide us with a psychological tract on the behavioural patterns of this species.

This assertion serves as a precursor to the action of the novel, thereby positing the voice of the narrator as the indisputable authority, the voice of experience. Immediately after this sequence the protagonist acts out the prototype which has been set up in that she immediately seeks out a special relationship with Anton, thereafter believing that she had been sought by him:

Good Lord, she thought, he's taken me over. He's responsible for me.... An old feeling of being hemmed in and disposed of prickled through her. I hate it all, she thought wildly, not knowing what she hated or why she was imprisoned. I wish to God everyone would leave me alone. She had a nightmare feeling of sliding helpless into danger. (RFS, p. 106)

Martha's complete ineffectuality in dealing with her emotional life in a rational fashion, and the blatant contradiction between her political ideology and practice, are reiterated. Moreover, the narrator asserts authority by highlighting the fact that Martha has an instinctual sense that her relationship with Anton is a mistake, but is unable to formulate the problem.

Anton is ascribed the characteristics of an evangelical leader with his ability to mesmerise those around him with the power of his voice (RFS, pp. 62 - 63): ‘...his words had the power and passion of the great men from whom he had taken them’ (RFS, p. 63). He is essentially defined by his otherness. The group know nothing of his background and can only speculate about his personal life. Moreover his authoritarian personality poses a sharp contrast with the ebullience of the other members of the group. At the group’s recruitment meeting, his words dictate the content of Martha’s belief. Anton’s approval of the French Revolution allows Martha to think:

...she might still admire the great men she had been used to admire; they had been misguided, that was all. (RFS, p. 63) (my emphasis)

The use of the conditional tense ‘might still admire’ emphasises the fact that Martha no longer has independent judgement; she requires endorsement from a greater authority. She is transported by the charisma of the patriarchal voice:

He spoke slowly, drawing the sentences out one after another from his brain where they were stored waiting, and handed them to the listeners, his voice measured, unhurried, not cold so much as anonymous.... the others were in the same condition of joy and release. It seemed to her this unhurrying voice was cutting the past from her, that ugly past.... Also, the calm voice was linking her with those parts of her childhood she still owned, the moments of experience which seemed to her enduring and true, the moments of illumination and belief.... (RFS, p. 62) (my emphasis)

and

She was swung, because of the calm and responsible certainty of Anton Hesse’s voice, on to a state of quiet elation and purpose. She knew that everyone in the room felt as she did. She was linked with them all, and from the deepest needs of her being. (RFS, p. 63) (my emphasis)

It is the sound of Anton’s voice and not the content of his speech which affects Martha. It becomes a kind of security blanket, enabling her a sense of well-being: ‘...and she felt her shoulders straighten with an influx of strength, as if she

had been given a gage [sic] of trust' (RFS, p. 62). Anton's voice assumes a life of its own and becomes a disembodied entity, 'it'. The narrator here emphasises Anton's lack of spontaneity. The sentences he utters are purely mechanical, 'anonymous' and already 'stored, waiting' and it is suggested, calculated to evoke the kind of emotional reaction which Martha experiences. The irony of this is highlighted in that Anton constantly asserts the need for the group to be unemotional and 'to analyse' the situation rationally. His own speech with its premeditated measured tones has exactly the opposite effect. We are shown that Martha's intellectual persuasions are determined thus by a tone of speech. The narrator depicts Martha as having false consciousness, as deluded for believing that the superficial experience of a mechanical political speech is the same as her moments of illumination on the veld.

The full irony of this idealisation of Anton is realised only later in the text. Anton is unable to tolerate criticism (RFS, p. 93). Moreover Martha finds that his political and personal behaviour are totally divorced (RFS, p. 187). She discovers that he is utterly conventional in his ideas about male and female roles in marriage, and becomes totally dependent on her to take responsibility for practical matters:

She had understood that from now on all the practical details of life would have to be dealt with by herself. This was such a reversal of her idea of Anton that she needed time to think about it. (RFS, pp. 204 - 205)³²

Further, we are told that he has a middle-class sense of property (RFS, p. 248). Their love-making is totally inadequate: 'There was something essentially contradictory between the image of the revolutionary, essentially masculine, powerful and brave, and how Anton had behaved with her in bed' (RFS, p. 169). We find that Anton attacks Martha's politics after she rejects his sexual advances (RFS, p. 250). A great deal of time is spent on proving that Anton, the leader of the group, is personally totally repressed. In Lessing's representation, Anton cannot provide adequate leadership because he has severe psychological problems. The central criticism which the group makes of him, is that he lacks humanism (RFS, pp. 91; 138; 229).³³

The tenuous nature of the group's supposed unity is highlighted. The recruitment meeting is wracked with submerged sexual and class tension. Anton is antagonistic at the start of the meeting because he is affronted that Marjorie, with whom he had flirted in the past, has brought a boyfriend. When one of the members admits that he does not '...understand half of what you say comrade' (RFS, pp. 64 - 65), Anton abruptly informs him that he is a victim of 'capitalist propaganda' (RFS, p. 64). All of this interaction is focalised through Martha:

The office was full of people, Marjorie among them, who was sitting next to Colin. Usually Anton greeted her first, Martha remembered: this time he did not greet anyone but went stiffly to the table, seated himself, and arranged his papers without looking around at the others.... (RFS, p. 59)

And later when Marjorie speaks, the reader's viewpoint is again mediated through Martha's gaze:

Martha had observed that the girl [Marjorie] had been trying to catch Anton's eye to gain from him his usual fatherly approval of her, and was now hurt because his eyes met hers without any sort of acknowledgement. (RFS, p. 61)

Martha notices the contradictions in Anton's behaviour but it does not occur to her to criticise. Rubenstein points out that 'The fact that Anton is an "enemy alien" is also significant in a symbolic sense, for in exaggerated form he embodies both her [Martha's] inner enemy and her psychic alienation'.³⁴

A Ripple from the Storm is characterised by the protagonist's alternating feelings of belonging and alienation. The narrative constantly presents Martha as having sub-conscious feelings of criticism towards the group and group members, which she suppresses immediately and self-consciously:

...she was ashamed of any association with Jackie Bolton - and ashamed of being ashamed, since, as a member of the group she was responsible for him. (RFS, p. 16)

And on several occasions Martha is sharply critical of Anton but silences her criticism (RFS, pp. 36; 38; 57). However, as she becomes increasingly conscious

of falseness within the group, and critical of the authoritarianism and sexism practised in the name of democracy, her 'satirical' eye, the intuitive critical consciousness (which the narrator has characterised as special in the previous novels) returns quite consciously and she becomes aware that she is acting out roles: 'Martha ate loyally, watching herself become gay in proportion as her sense of unease deepened' (RFS, p. 197). Holmquist aptly describes how in Lessing's novels: 'Intellect and rationality are connected with an outer cultural form of consciousness whereas intuition and irrationality are linked with the inner self, the "watcher"'.³⁵

Martha is able to analyse her own behaviour critically as well as that of the other women (RFS, pp. 126; 134; 169). Her criticism of the behaviour of individuals within the group however, invariably leads her to the conclusion that their behaviour patterns are no different from those of conventional society:

Marjorie was pregnant after four months of marriage. Martha noted the girl's efficiency, recognized a certain emotional competency; noted, too, a characteristic set of the shoulders, something both complacent and wary, and thought: Well? It's no good expecting me to believe in it.... (RFS, p. 167)

Martha finds it easier to leave her thoughts on this subject inconclusive because she cannot bear to confront the truth.

Martha's subconscious expressions of doubt about the potential of the group to effect any change, her insights into the inconsistencies of members of the group, and her perception in dreams of her own alienation from the country, represent a discourse in the novel which steadily undermines the reader's opinion of the group and its quest, and which affirms the dominance of the narrator as sole authority. The narrator identifies with Martha's lack of attention to the details of political meetings by generalising the experience of political activists:

...the shortest acquaintance with politics should be enough to teach anyone that listening to the words people use is the longest way around to an understanding of what is going on. (RFS, p. 13)

Later, Martha's return to self-criticism is very directly associated with her realisation that the group is flawed:

There's something wrong somewhere, something I ought to be understanding: the group can only work if the two strongest people in it are in agreement? I must think about it. But how can I? I don't know enough, I simply don't know anything about anything. Yet I'm quite ready to vote on a programme that might affect a whole country.... (RFS, p. 192)

Martha is unable to conceptualise, to pinpoint exactly what the problem is, but the narrator has already executed this function in the opening epigram by using the quote by Louis Aragon which denounces communism (RFS, p. 7). A Ripple from the Storm is essentially a narrative of closure, far more so than the two previous novels. The point of intelligibility of the subject is fixed from its very beginning.

The narrator describes Martha as having a misplaced sense of her own seriousness about politics. Reference is made to her middle class flippancy (RFS, p. 135) and to her bohemianism (RFS, p. 198). She is oblivious to socialist doctrine except in the vaguest liberal terms: 'responsibility and goodness'. She is unyieldingly cast as a type - as a woman who longs for the protection and safety which a man can provide.

The narrator shows how Martha's capitulation to the male figure is conflated with her submission to the authority of the party since leadership, whether of the communist party of the Soviet Union or the group, rests firmly with men.

Martha is not alone in this. All of the women in A Ripple from the Storm are satirised by the narrator.³⁶ Because most of the men are European and have previously belonged to the party in Europe they are idealised by the women as 'other', as different and exotic, and therefore special. Their word is established as the truth.

The narrative also illustrates how the entire well-being and efficient functioning of the group is constituted upon prevailing sexual relations. On one occasion when, because of her relationship with Jackie Bolton, the normally highly-disciplined Jasmine defies a group policy decision on organisational

strategy, the "Help For our Allies" organisation is virtually destroyed as a base of operation for the group and they lose a considerable amount of credibility in the colony (RFS, pp. 14 - 19).

The group replicates conventional sexual relations and sexual prejudices. Even in meeting situations, the women suppress resentment and anger and respond with conventional maternalism:

‘Just a minute, comrades’, said Marie du Preez. She faced Anton. Her tone combined anxiety and a sort of easy maternal warmth for him, as if she could only subdue her disapproval of him by a tone of voice she might have used to a child. (RFS, p. 91)

Typically, Marie does not have the intellectual language to argue through her accusation that the group does not take into account the particular circumstances of the colony, the fact that racial oppression is as important a factor as class oppression. And even more typical of the behaviour of the men in the group, her husband mocks her attempt at criticism: ‘Women. She feels it is wrong, and so that’s enough’ (RFS, p. 91). Marie’s position is in no way vindicated, and the women’s censure of Piet’s remarks is not taken seriously. The men, are on the whole, completely intolerant of criticism (RFS, pp. 10; 77; 93). On another occasion when the group have a self-criticism session, the women are severely attacked for their provocative style of dress and for their frivolity (RFS, pp. 133 - 134). This happens not long after the women had all received marriage proposals from all the RAF members, men they hardly know, within a month (RFS, pp. 76 - 78). Indeed the women are never related to as equals (RFS, pp. 20; 37). They are the centre of attention in the group (RFS, p. 178) and are even sexually harassed (RFS, p. 143). They are admonished by the men for being bourgeois, and informed that their salvation lies in working-class husbands (RFS, p. 105) but that they would not even be good enough for that role (RFS, p. 77).

At the same time the narrative constantly points to the fact that the women are indeed frivolous: they spend their free time fantasising about their relationships and those of others (RFS, pp. 35; 91). We are shown that a considerable amount of time is spent on their appearance (RFS, pp. 99; 134), in

the bid to secure a strong man. We learn that the female comrades are only peripherally concerned with theoretical issues: '...it was a remarkable fact that none of the women knew what a Trotskyist was; they had accepted it as a term of abuse' (RFS, p. 42). This is placed in the context of the fact that the members of the group treat the Trotskyists as though they are greater enemies than the conservative colonials (RFS, pp. 41 - 43).

The contradiction between theory and practice by the group as a whole, and by individuals within it, is reiterated throughout the text. Underneath the veneer of warmth and unity (RFS, pp. 7; 8; 37) the individuals in the group are all as self-divided, insecure and repressed as Martha. Indeed, they are able to cohere as a group only when they agree to drop mutual criticism from the group altogether (RFS, p. 166). All seek to escape the socialisation of their colonial culture through membership of the group but fail to do so. The men are alike in their possessiveness and paternalistic attitudes towards the women. William for example, becomes identical with Douglas, Martha's former husband, in his attempt to stake possession over her: 'She had seen the two men as one, and identical with the pompous male fabric of society' (RFS, p. 25). Anton, the paternal, strong leader (RFS, p. 187), becomes possessive and totally dependent on Martha's practicality after their marriage (RFS, pp. 190; 204). Andrew, who breaks with tradition by agreeing to marry Maisie (Martha's friend) in order to protect her name, is at first idealised. Then he too becomes engulfed in possessiveness. He is repulsed by Maisie's pregnancy as soon as the father of the child, Binkie Maynard, arrives home from the war (RFS, p. 237).

The women in the group protest the male paternalism. Marjorie asserts the need to fight a revolution against men: '...when we get socialism' (RFS, p. 266). In the meantime they act out roles of compliance. Marjorie, Martha, Jasmine, Carrie and Marie all defer to dominant males and choose strong men as sexual partners. Marjorie says of Colin her fiance: 'He's so nice, and he's just what I always wanted - a solid man...' (RFS, p. 85). The women repeat the same patterns of behaviour: Marjorie, Jasmine and Martha idealise each other's competence and in turn strive to become efficient secretaries rather than political leaders (RFS, p. 7). In the same way the group rejects racism on an intellectual level but practices racism on an unconscious level in their paternalistic treatment

of their only black member (RFS, p. 61). As in the previous novels, Lessing demonstrates the inability of individuals within a group structure to reconcile the personal and the political.

In Lessing's narrative, the group is destroyed to a large extent because of the failure of the individuals within it to overcome their personality flaws. Anton is shown to be fundamentally bourgeois, insecure and egotistical (RFS, pp. 36; 187). His inflexibility and reluctance to admit mistakes eventually leads to the alienation of a significant number of group members. Jimmy's shrill criticism of the group really belies the fact that he is severely insecure and feels overwhelmingly alienated. Lessing dedicates a considerable amount of space to the recounting of the process of his breakdown (RFS, pp. 150 - 162). The behaviour of many of the RAF members amounts to political schizophrenia: they are unable to reconcile the fact that they are middle-class and so act out an elaborate charade to prove otherwise, in order to establish a greater credibility among their comrades who idealise the working-class (RFS, pp. 15; 75 - 76).

In effect Lessing constructs characters who are all in some way outsiders to the colonial society (RFS, p. 39). The group enables a feeling of belonging and of exotic importance in its status as an international movement.³⁷

We are given a great deal of insight into the personal schisms of members of the group, the flaws of their personal relationships and the effects of their misplaced sense of self-righteousness in A Ripple from the Storm. However, despite the fact that the narrative primarily focuses on political meetings, we are given practically no insight as to the political premises of the group or of Lessing. This narrative strategy on Lessing's part privileges analysis based on individualised, psychological explanations and motivations at the expense of analysis based on socio-political and ideological explanations and motivations.

We are told that the group is organised along the principles of the Communist Party in Moscow (RFS, p. 38) and we are constantly told of the group's idealisation of the Soviet Union. In the first formal meeting to which we are privy, most of the meeting is taken up with Anton's rhetorical explication of what a communist is and of how 'he' [sic] should behave (RFS, p. 37). His speech has the ring of a manifesto and his definition constructs a communist as

an ideal 'man'; an embodiment of human perfection in his conviction of the truth of his philosophy and the example set by his behaviour.

At the next meeting, which is the group's recruitment meeting, we are told that Anton will provide the group with an outline of Marxism. Instead the group are told of their responsibility as the bearers of enlightenment:

Upon us, upon people like us all over the world, the organized members of the communist party, depends the future of mankind, the future of our species. (RFS, p. 62)

The reader is told that Anton speaks for more than three-quarters of an hour (RFS, p. 63); but at this point the narration switches from quoted monologue to psycho-narration, and we are presented not with his actual words but with a psychological analysis of his tone and its effect on his audience. We are also fed the information that his words are copied from other political figures:

It would not be said of him that he was carried away - he was not; but his words had the power and passion of the great men from whom he had taken them; and the confiding silence of the fifteen people listening released in him a faith in them which had certainly been missing when he had begun to speak. His very pale-blue eyes, shining from the white light over his head, moved from one face to another - not in any sort of appeal; but in certainty, because the words he used were proof of goodness and trust. (RFS, p. 63)

This rhetoric is so clearly an anathema to the romantic notions of authentic selfhood which were approved by the narrator in Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage. When the narration reverts back to quoted monologue, it is to the conclusion of Anton's speech: 'And now comrades, I have laid before you the barest bones of that structure of thought, Marxism...' [idem.]. Because of the switch in narrative focalisation to an analysis of Anton's psychological motivation, his analysis of Marxism (and thus too, the basis of the group's ideology) is never relayed to the reader. Indeed, this scene highlights a huge silence in the text. Frederick Stern suggests that:

...the world view of Lessing's important left-wing characters is not in any full sense Marxist, although it is certainly radical. Anton Hesse reads

Lenin but never Marx; he discusses the need for a party but never talks about the fundamental ideology which leads to Leninist conclusions about the need for a party. Martha Quest understands a good deal and tells us a good deal about the forms of oppression she sees in her society, but she rarely if ever discusses, say, the Marxist concept of alienation which is really the underlying malaise she tries so desperately to escape.³⁸

The narration circumvents explication of the group's theoretical analysis. We come away with the idea that the intellectual capacity of the group is paltry; that notwithstanding the hostility of the colonialists, the group has no real contribution to make to the intellectual life of the colony. The point of view of the group is thus easily satirised by the narrator, because the reader is only allowed access to party rhetoric and not to the historical and social determinants of the group's analysis.

Similarly we are told that Anton and Andrew have produced a 150-page document setting out how the colony would be run were the communists to take power (RFS, p. 190). We are told that the document rejects racial prejudice, that it '...made provisions for any sort of contingency, ranging from war launched by other white-settled parts of Africa and backed by British and American capital to economic boycotts...' (RFS, p. 190). We are not told what the substance of the document contains. Instead we are told of its effect: the fact that a tiny group of white colonials sipping beer in the comfort of the home of a middle-class white trade-unionist, vote and accept the document 'clause-by-clause' (RFS, p. 191) without having studied it (RFS, p. 190). We are told in the voice of the narrator that the document ends with a style different from the rest, which was 'sober and precise', with '...an impassioned appeal to the masses to support the people's government' (RFS, p. 190).

The irony of this is spelt out. The narrator makes use of Maisie, supposedly the most unintellectual member of the group (and who is there only by virtue of her marriage of convenience to Andrew) to highlight the naïveté of the document:

Towards the end, contented with themselves and with the document, they were preparing to leave for bed when.... [Maisie] said: 'What I want to know is this. I mean to say, what's the point? You - I mean, we, aren't even standing for elections, so there's no chance of putting any of it into

practice. And Andrew explained to me yesterday that there's no revolutionary situation now, so you aren't thinking of being in power at all. So why go to all this trouble?' (RFS, p. 191)

Maisie's question is juxtaposed with the complacency of the rest of the group. Athen's patronising answer that a communist is never alone because of his ideals, is unconvincing.³⁹ The group's arrogance is also highlighted. Maisie's objections are dismissed because she is not an intellectual:

They went home feeling - in spite of the fact that Maisie's as it were lay objections had struck home uncomfortably into each of them - cheered and supported by the existence of the long and workmanlike Policy which, could they put it into practice [sic], could have the whole territory on the way to socialism in five years. (RFS, p. 192)

The use of the conditional tense 'could' rather than 'would' nevertheless indicates a measure of doubt as to the probability of their having the ability to realise their ideals. The irony of the situation only strikes Martha the following day when she realises that they had voted blindly on the programme because it had been presented by the two strong leaders of the group (RFS, p. 192). Thus Maisie's criticism is sustained and the document is effectively undermined.

Lessing often uses a 'common-sense' view as a means to satirise her perception of the pointlessness of organised politics. Her belief that political activism is devoid of intellectual content is summarised in Going Home where she states: 'Political emotion, that emotion which drives masses of people into action, is never reasoned and rational' (GH, p. 225).

There is much talk of the group's theoretical superiority although there is virtually no evidence of theoretical discussion or argument in the text. The narration persistently avoids attributing any intellectual content to the group's activities. The activities of the group consist primarily of fundraising for The Soviet Union,⁴⁰ and the selling of The Watchdog newspaper. Most of their time is spent in meetings supposedly organising these activities, but in reality their energies are consumed by argument over structural difficulties or haranguing each other over personal differences. No time is spent on actual self-education although there is much deliberation over this concept.

The only time that members of the group become involved with black people is when they sell The Watchdog newspaper in the 'coloured' community and effectively get drawn into fulfilling the role of social workers. These actions are denounced by Anton. He declares that the 'coloured' people are unimportant 'economically and politically' (RFS, p. 89). The reader is told that his statement is derived from the group's analysis of the class situation in the colony, the conclusion of which is that only the Africans are proletarians (RFS, p. 90). Again the actual analysis is an ellipsis in the text. As a result of Anton's assertion, the amount of time the group spends in the 'coloured' location is limited to one afternoon a week (RFS, p. 89), and relationships between members of the RAF and the 'coloured' women are condemned by the group on the basis that they will get into trouble. Effectively then, the group's work is confined to the white colonials, to the various reformist groups which exist as a result of the war-time pro-Soviet Union feeling in the colony.

As in Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage there is virtually no representation of the black community in A Ripple from the Storm. In Lessing's representation, the group are completely alienated from the black community. The members of the group feel a consistent guilt about their inability to reach the black oppressed: 'For these people continued to feel, deeper than anything else, a continued hurt and embarrassment on behalf of the Africans' (RFS, p. 166). Most commonly they construct an imaginary relationship with members of the black community as a means to assuage guilt (RFS, pp. 34; 201). Jackie Bolton embraces a black taxi-driver and then says of him: 'He's got an instinctual understanding of the fundamentals of politics' (RFS, p. 11). Moreover all of the group members keep servants who refer to their employers in the servile colonialist frame of reference 'baas'.

It is of particular significance that in Going Home, Lessing describes how associating with a communist group enabled her to meet others who fought the colour bar and also to meet people of other races, and on equal terms (GH, p. 311).⁴¹ We are told in A Ripple from the Storm that the communists are respected for their views on racism (RFS, p. 179). Yet there is never any discussion in the text of how the colour bar will be fought, nor is there any real interaction with members of the black community. The group merely include a

clause in their manifesto which rejects racial prejudice (RFS, p. 190). The fictional constraints rework Lessing's experience of communism (depicted elsewhere as sincere, consistent and responsible) into a parodic denunciation.

Elias, the only black member of the group, betrays his real role as a spy by announcing that all black people are '...backward savages and fit for nothing but servitude' (RFS, p. 167). He is merely denounced as 'unstable'. The narrative highlights the group's resistance to analysis:

In short, Elias, like the Kruegers and the R.A.F. group, was spoken of thus: 'He was never a communist at all. If he had been, he wouldn't have left'. (RFS, p. 167)

At the one meeting in the location in which the group participates as a result of a strategic alliance with the left wing of the Southern Rhodesian Labour Party (SRLP),⁴² the focal issue is that of African membership of the SRLP. The group, with the exception of Anton, are excited at the potential for participation in politics in the location, realising that the decisions they take as a group only affect themselves (RFS, p. 175). However, by the end of the meeting they are horribly disillusioned by the realisation of how sexist the black men are and by the manner in which sexism affords easy unity between black and white men. Despite their presence at a political meeting, the white women are regarded as little more than charity workers by both black men and women (RFS, p. 203). Lessing endorses this view of what communist work in the colony entails in Going Home:

For the backwardness of these countries is such that the sort of work a Communist does in them (as, for example, the work the South African Communist Party did before it was banned) is exactly the same sort of work a liberal or a progressive churchman does. (GH, p. 103)

In her representation the communists have no potential for participating in struggle on equal terms with the black people. Moreover, Sprague points out that the stance the group takes on the issue of African membership of the SRLP is in effect reactionary, because they support the notion of a separate African Branch rather than racial integration.⁴³ Just as Maisie, the so-called 'lay'

person was used to highlight the naïveté of the group's belief in their policy document, so Tommy, the working-class member of the group articulates the 'common-sense' view of the narrator by highlighting the reactionary nature of the group's decision to vote for a separate branch (RFS, p. 224).⁴⁴ As with Maisie, the group's response is patronising and self-righteous (RFS, p. 224).

Steele suggests that Lessing has given the 'Reds' '...more than their due prominence in the fight to save the African Branch of the Southern Rhodesia Labour Party (Social Democratic Party in RFS)'.⁴⁵ Further, he asserts that the split which:

...culminates in the disastrous 'Conference at G...' (Gwelo, Dec 1945 - see RFS, pp. 260 - 265), resulted from personality differences within the movement over the issue of leadership, rather than simply disagreement over racial policy, the impression conveyed by the novels.⁴⁶

Steele believes that Lessing exaggerates the implications of this particular event, which in the novel culminates in the split of the Labour Party which is summarised as such: "the Left' such as it was, was fragmented.... Any chance of either (faction) defeating the Government at the next election was over' (RFS, p. 280).

Steele, however, maintains that:

A sharp move to the right in local politics had already taken place before the end of the war, and all Labour parties suffered a loss of support at the polls; in contrast to Labour in Britain, its combined share of the poll in April 1946 was actually down on its pre-war showing.⁴⁷

In Lessing's depiction, the group's only real participation in practical politics is wholly dependent on the SRLP, of whom they are critical. Even this participation is limited. In her representation, the split in the SRLP occurs precisely because of the inclusion of the group members. Their presence in itself polarises the organisation. Their vote enables the left wing to win the argument over whether or not there should be a separate African Branch, thereby causing the split. They also manage to alienate their only trade union comrades. Lessing

has chosen to distort the historical evidence of the time, emphasising the destructiveness of the group's politics. In her depiction, the group's participation in party politics at the same time highlights the extent of its own weaknesses both in terms of the form and content of their political intervention. Once the SRLP collapses, the group itself collapses. By the end of the novel, only Martha, Marjorie and Anton are left.

When Martha realises that the group is about to disintegrate, she finds that she is left with no inner resources because she has devoted all her energy to practical work in the group, and has shaped her entire outlook on life in consonance with the rhetoric of the group:

In short, the group was at an end. At this, Martha felt herself cut off from everything that had fed her imagination: until this moment she had been part of the grandeur of the struggle in Europe, part of the Red Army, the guerillas in China, the French underground, and the partisans in Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece. (RFS, p. 278)

and:

That's another two years of my life gone. The phrase two years seemed meaningless: they had been years of such hard work, excitement, happiness and learning that they seemed more important than all the time she had lived before. (RFS, p. 280)

Again the focaliser and the focalised are at odds. Even while Martha is reflecting with longing and regret on the euphoria of the height of her political career, she already reflects that that time 'is over' (RFS, p. 280) and subconsciously 'desperately' wants to sleep. She longs for escape, a means to relinquish her present weight of responsibility, in order to transcend into another phase. Predictably, the novel ends with Martha surrendering to this desire: '...she allowed herself to slide into sleep like a diver weighted with lead' (RFS, p. 281). In the course of the novel, her sleep had been plagued by nightmares. As soon as she psychologically surrenders her 'communist phase', however, she is once more enabled peaceful slumber.

The detailed descriptions in the text of the struggle of Mrs Van, the leader of the Southern Rhodesian Labour Party, to assert her independence as a

woman, and of the compromises she has had to make in order to prosecute her ideology within the narrow confines of the colony, point strongly to an authorial assertion that one cannot hope to achieve any valid political goals by completely rejecting the social institutions of the society one is attempting to change.

Martha's failure lies partly in her incomprehension of this, and in her failure to grasp the complexity of Mrs Van's struggle - that Mrs Van could be a potential role model.⁴⁸

She concluded: But her life can't have anything to do with mine, she could never understand all this in a million years. (By all this Martha meant something dark and unhappy and essentially driven, something essentially foreign to everything Mrs Van was and ever could be.) (RFS, p. 220)

The full force of the narrative distance from Martha is realised because of Lessing's early condemnation of Martha's inability to relate fully to anyone other than a man.

The narrative details (and commends) the lone struggle of Mrs Van as a woman and as an anti-colonial colonial (an atheist, socialist and believer in racial equality) (RFS, p. 210) who is years ahead of her time (RFS, pp. 205 - 215).

Throughout A Ripple from the Storm, Lessing's narrator reiterates that both the individuals within the group and the group as a whole are alienated from themselves as well as the rest of society. She reiterates their emotional and intellectual sterility. In my view, this enables Lessing to distance herself from communism as a movement rather than from Martha. It is suggested that by joining the group the members compensate for their personal feelings of inadequacy and guilt as white middle-class colonials. Their personal sense of alienation finds resolution thus in an identification with political oppression.

As I have attempted to show, Lessing's novel is openly didactic, but exhibits less direct authorial intervention (compared to the previous novels) in shaping the reader's understanding of the main protagonist as well as the other characters. The narrator satirises the group's politics by means of a crude rendition of party rhetoric in the form of quoted monologue. She also uses verbal and dramatic irony to satirise the consequences of this empty rhetoric.

The characters' contradictions are thus revealed through their own utterances and actions, rendering the impression that we are privy to the 'truth'.

Martha's own sense of alienation is depicted by means of narrated monologue, which highlights her own internal contradictions. Martha has no recourse to her natural surroundings; and consequently the romantic construction of nature as a source of inspiration and a potential for unifying the political and the personal (depicted in the earlier novels), is lost to her. She represses her own intuition and her own intellectuality for the rhetoric of the party and consequently loses touch with her 'real' self. Her sense of social and historical place is lost since she is alienated from both the landscape and the black people.

Lessing emphasises that the Party suppresses humanism in the quest for a scientific approach which, in her view, does not exist at all. She deliberately foregrounds the validity of the 'common-sense' views of the unintellectual members of the group. At no time does Lessing explain the basis of the group's politics. This further endorses her view that their politics is devoid of intellect. In her depiction, the group's political interventions are disastrous, both in terms of the black community and in so much as it precipitates the split in the SRLP.

In A Ripple from the Storm, the narrative's closure fixes 'the subject to a position of intelligibility or self-apprehension in a single discourse'⁴⁹ or in Steele's terms, Lessing describes in 'absolutes rather than shades of grey'.⁵⁰ Lessing has left the party on the principled grounds of her rejection of Stalinist action, yet her depiction here reveals nothing of the dynamic and conflict which she discusses in Going Home, written a year before. Instead, she rejects organised communist activity out of hand and proposes her role model in the form of Mrs Van, whose individual struggle and whose belief in balance and moderation she champions. Lessing's belief in a humanism based on the individual, and her rejection of political groups, were evident only in the form of silences and contradictions in the earlier texts; but as the series progresses these ideas are increasingly openly expounded. In A Ripple from the Storm, organised politics are effectively expunged from Martha's quest.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (London, Verso, 1971), p. 205.

2. Lessing, who served on the first editorial board of The New Reasoner (later The New Left Review) in 1956, left the party at the same time as the Reasoner dissidents did. She signed a letter with E.P.Thompson, Rodney Hilton, Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill and others, which appeared in Tribune and The New Statesman, condemning the Soviet intervention in Hungary and the attitude of the British Party leadership. See Jenny Taylor, "Situating Reading", in Notebooks/memoirs/archives: Reading and re-reading Doris Lessing, edited by Jenny Taylor (Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 24 - 27) and Eve Bertelsen, "Chronology" in Doris Lessing, edited by Eve Bertelsen (Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), p. 6. In 1957 Lessing published Going Home, a travel narrative, which in its postscript aligns her with the socialist humanist opposition to Stalinism in the British Communist Party. Also in 1957, Lessing published "The Small Personal Voice" which affirms her adherence to socialist humanism.

See Lesley Johnson, The Cultural Critics - From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 150. Anderson analyses this intellectual formation (the New Left in the 1950's and 1960's) as a:

...conjunctural movement that arose out of a response to the two international crises of Oct-Nov 1956 in Hungary and Suez. These intellectuals were essentially concerned with a moral critique of industrial capitalism and were committed to a humanistic socialism.

3. See Roberta Rubenstein, The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 57. Rubenstein describes the novel as 'flat and undynamic' and refers to the 'somewhat tedious chronicling of the political activity that frames her emotional life'. See also Mona Knapp, Doris Lessing (New York, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), p. 44: 'The political technicalities involved here are not of great interest to the general reader'. According to Ruth Whittaker, Doris Lessing (London, Macmillan, 1988), pp. 48 - 9: "A Ripple From The Storm is probably the least interesting of the Children of Violence novels.... The agendas, the procedures, the rhetoric of the party meetings are tedious...'. On the other hand, Murray Steele, "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia" in Bertelsen (1985), finds that Lessing commits errors, both of fact and date, but that on the whole she depicts a 'true picture of the Rhodesian social and political atmosphere during the 1930's and 40's', p. 52. Claire Sprague, Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition (Chapel Hill and London, The University of North Carolina Press, 1987) finds A Ripple From the Storm 'a superb novel'. Moreover she asserts that '...the major political issues in the novel are not war

and socialism, which seem uppermost to the group, but racism and sexism', p. 132.

4. Alan Swingewood, "Structure and Ideology in the Novels of Doris Lessing" in The Sociology of Literature: Applied Studies, edited by Diana Laurenson (Keele, University of Keele, 1978), p. 46.

5. See Sprague (1987), p. 131.

6. See Sprague (1987), p. 133. Sprague does not however motivate why she isolates three particular meetings as the crucial ones in the text.

7. All of them are white and British except for Anton Hesse - who is a German enemy alien - and Athen, who is Greek. The only African member is Elias, a court interpreter who we learn is a spy for Mr Maynard, the magistrate.

8. See Rubenstein (1979), p. 58. She shows that the communist philosophy enables the perception of division as a political rather than a personal problem.

9. See Sprague (1987), pp. 146 - 148. She points out that Martha's insights as to her fragmented emotional state are derived from three of her many mirrors: Marjorie, Jasmine and Athen. She also suggests that Lessing's characteristic naming patterns which recur repeatedly in the text suggest that men choose identical women over and over, and vice versa.

10. See Rubenstein (1979), pp. 64 - 65. Rubenstein points out that the atmosphere in the group of alienation, failure and sterility reinforces the atmosphere of psychological determination.

11. See Eve Bertelsen, "The Golden Notebook: The African Background" in Approaches to Teaching Lessing's 'The Golden Notebook', edited by Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose (New York, Modern Language Association of America, 1989), p. 35:

Rhodesian radicals faced a two-fold difficulty, philosophical and practical. First, orthodox Marxist analysis casts intellectuals in a vanguard role vis-à-vis an industrial proletariat, fuelling the workers with ideas and organization that will enable them to exert a political presence and press their economic demands. But classical Marxist theory was inappropriate in a racially divided society where blacks were excluded not only from the unions but from all skilled labour.

12. See Steven Cohan and Linda Shires, Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 98.

13. Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 100.

14. Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 100.

15. Dorrit Cohn, Transparent Minds (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 103.

16. Dorrit Cohn (1983), p. 117. According to Cohn, p. 116, the narrated monologue is thus essentially an evanescent form, dependent on the narrative voice that mediates and surrounds it, and is therefore particularly dependent on the context.

17. See Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 141:

In regulating what is sayable, how it can be articulated, who can speak, where, and under what conditions, a discursive practice controls the dissemination of certain knowledges, thereby ensuring the domination of certain social interests by producing a certain kind of subject.

18. This idea is essentially derived from Foucault. Quoted in Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 142.

19. Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 142.

20. N.T. Bazin, "The Moment of Revelation in Martha Quest and comparable moments by Two Modernists" in Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 1980), p. 94.

21. See Eve Bertelsen, "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia: History into Fiction" in English in Africa, Vol. 11, No. 1 (May 1984), p. 31:

Aridity is paramount when the political Group collapses.... Martha makes love with Anton Hesse under a dry electric storm.

22. See Sprague (1987), p. 151: 'The natural landscape seems wholly absent in the indoor landscapes...'

23. According to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (London, Methuen, 1983), p. 110: 'Direct discourse creates the illusion of 'pure' mimesis, although it is always stylized in one way or another'.

24. Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 100.

25. See Rubenstein (1979), p. 63:

Martha's only means of maintaining wholeness is through her now characteristic defense of denying negative feelings or substituting for them fantasies projected into the future where they might still be attained.

26. See Doris Lessing, Going Home (1957) (London, Granada, 1984). In Going Home this perception is corroborated by Lessing's perception of her own political development. However, in her 1967 Afterword she writes:

When I wrote Going Home, I was a communist - that is, I was holding a party card. I am not one now. The trouble is, being an 'ex-communist' is just as much of a false position as being a communist. But I've long since understood that what it was like being a communist in a certain time and place can be understood by no one who was not. Which is why I am so grateful that I was one, had the experience. And I'm grateful to the communists for what they taught me: particularly about power, the realities of political power. (Going Home, p. 310)

And in the the postscript of 1982:

Looking back, I say to myself that ideally I would like to have been a communist for let's say two years, because of what I learned about the nature of power, power-lovers, fanatics, the dynamics of groups and how they form and split, about one's own capacity for self-delusion. Of course this is impossible.... It is unfortunately true that one may be cured of a faith in communism; but the scars remain, and it takes time to recognise them. The apocalyptic mode of thinking for one; the patterns of hell, purgatory, paradise, heaven; redemption and sacrifice, which originated in religion to become the structure of socialism. (Going Home, pp. 317 - 318)

We can see quite clearly the way in which Lessing adapts and re-adapts her politics as her distance from communism increases. Her erstwhile adherence to communism is displayed as fairly positive (in 1967) and subsequently as a mistake (in 1982).

27. Both Sprague (1987), p. 132 and Rubenstein (1979), p. 58 - 59 refer to Martha's dreams as an expression of her repression. It seems to me that Rubenstein's Jungian explanation, which describes Martha's dreams in terms of

archetypal motifs of innocence and negativity, occludes the political significance of Lessing's description of Martha's alienation. For a completely different perspective see Anthony Chennells, "Doris Lessing and The Rhodesian Settler Novel", in Bertelsen (1985), pp. 33 - 34. Chennells seems to read an entirely political explanation into the text which is not evident in it:

By allowing miners to appear, to vanish and to be replaced by the great lizard, Lessing is establishing an alternative focus of hope and permanence to the potential of the Rhodesian nation, to which the mythopoeses normally direct our attention, p. 33.

The miners he describes are certainly not evident in Lessing's description.

28. See Chennells (1985), p. 33. He notes that A Ripple From The Storm is the only Rhodesian novel which suggests that 'any immigrant group worked under black supervision'.

29. See Nicole Ward Jouve, "Of mud and matter - 'The Children of Violence'" in Taylor (1982), p. 108 and Bertelsen (1984), pp. 31 - 32 for a tracing of Lessing's symbolic use of wetness and mud.

30. See Sydney Kaplan, "The Limits of Consciousness in the Novels of Doris Lessing" in Doris Lessing: Critical Studies, edited by Annis Pratt and L.S. Dembo (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), p. 29. She asserts that the search for self-knowledge is associated with the search for the self in Lessing's work.

31. For a full discussion of Lessing's depiction of Martha's 'real' and 'other' self, see chapter two of this thesis.

32. See Sprague (1987), p. 144 for a discussion of Anton as parental figure.

33. By contrast Athen's humanism is approved (RFS, pp. 173 - 174). Carole Ferrier, "Lives in Conflict: Doris Lessing's 'Children of Violence'", in Hecate, v (February 1975), p. 33, aptly describes how Martha assents intellectually to Anton's analysis that divisions will disappear on the advent of socialism, but feels that his views lack a human perspective.

34. Rubenstein (1979), p. 62.

35. Ingrid Holmquist, From Society to Nature: A Study of Doris Lessing's 'Children of Violence' (Gothenburg, University of Gothenburg, 1980), p. 21.

36. See Lynn Sukenick, "Feeling and Reason in Doris Lessing's Fiction" in Pratt and Dembo (1974), p. 107:

For Lessing, intelligence is at the heart of liberation, and a fall from intelligence is, for her heroines, a cause of self-denigration. Intelligence, however, is precarious and beset by an irrational attraction to happiness.

37. This viewpoint is confirmed in a statement Lessing makes in the Afterword of Going Home:

There has never been a communist party in Rhodesia. They were a couple of dozen people scattered about the country who were inspired in the long, thankless, draining battle against colour bars and white supremacy by the glories of the Russian revolution.... (Going Home, p. 313)

38. Fredrick Stern, "Doris Lessing: The Politics of Radical Humanism" in Doris Lessing: The Alchemy of Survival, edited by Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose (Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1988), p. 54. Stern also asserts that 'having been "humanist" all along, rather than Marxist, the change is one in strategies, and not involving a redefinition of the nature of human experience', p. 57.

39. Anton also uses this rationalisation at an earlier point in the novel.

40. See Steele (1985), p. 51. He points out that the "Rhodesian Friends of the Union" are portrayed as "Sympathisers of Russia" and the "Medical Aid for Russia" organisation as "Help for our Allies".

41. In an interview with Stephen Gray, Lessing asserts: 'I didn't start meeting blacks until I came to London'. See Stephen Gray, "An Interview with Doris Lessing" in Research in African Literatures, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Fall, 1986), p. 330.

42. See Bertelsen (1989), p. 35:

The lines of battle (as depicted sketchily in The Golden Notebook and more fully in Children of Violence, especially volume 3, A Ripple From the Storm) were drawn between members of the Rhodesia Labour Party (RLP) who following the policies of the home party in Britain, wished to

retain the support of the unions, and the more radical wing (constituted as the Southern Rhodesia Labour party, or SRLP), which sought African participation.

See also Steele (1985), p. 51.

43. See Sprague (1987), p. 134:

The major paradox, that right-wing labour is for integration and Communists and left labour is for segregation, could not be more outrageous. The practical politics of this issue require those who oppose segregation to support it.

44. In Landlocked, p. 275, Maisie and Tommy are further linked in that it is hinted that they have a sexual relationship. See also Whittaker (1988), p. 49: 'Tommy acts as an unconscious foil to reflect the impracticality of the Marxist ideals'.

45. Murray Steele, "'Children of Violence' and Rhodesia: A Study of Doris Lessing as Historical Observer", Local Series Pamphlet No. 29 (Salisbury, The Central African Historical Association, 1974), p. 27.

46. Steele (1985), p. 50, also cites a letter by Doris Lessing which contributes to this view. See also Colin Leys, European Politics in Southern Rhodesia (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 184, who says that a more immediate cause of the split was a split between personalities, with Davies and Keller on one side and MacIntyre on the other.

47. Steele (1985), pp. 50 - 51.

48. See Sprague (1987), p. 146: 'Mrs Van's life is a major contrasting mirror to Martha's'. See also Rubenstein (1979), p. 145: 'Mrs Van is the most important of Martha's parental mirrors'.

49. Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 148.

50. Steele (1974), p. 28.

Chapter 4

Landlocked: Parables, Dreams and Mirrors and the Desire for exile.

Landlocked was first published in 1965, seven years after the publication of A Ripple from the Storm (1958), and three years after the publication of The Golden Notebook (1965). Although Landlocked is a continuation of The Children of Violence series, and although it broadly repeats the thematic concerns and subject matter of the earlier novels in the series,¹ its mode of depiction of these themes is markedly different.² Moreover the ideology of Landlocked indexes Lessing's increased conscious distance from marxist ideology and from Africa. It becomes increasingly clear in this text that, for Lessing, engagement with Africa was integrally linked to engagement with politics. In Landlocked, she overcomes the impasse reached in A Ripple from the Storm, where the narrator seems irreconcilably distanced from Martha. In Landlocked, empathy is restored by extricating Martha from Africa: by representing her further individual emotional and experiential growth in an essentialist manner - that is, as independent of the complex surrounding social and political circumstances.³

This concept of an 'essential' self is expressed in the form of a romantic discourse in the novel. This discourse is foregrounded - unlike the situation in Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage, where it surfaced only in the form of silence and contradiction. Whereas the romantic discourse of the earlier texts appeared to be informed only by Lessing's reading of western Romantic poetry and novels, the ideology of Landlocked is also strongly connected to her preoccupation and adherence to the philosophy of Sufism,⁴ a form of Islamic mysticism which spans some 1400 years.⁵

I shall argue further that the brand of Sufism which Lessing advocates, a popular version promulgated in the west by the religious leader Idries Shah,⁶ functions identically to, and is entirely compatible with, the romantic ideas of the previous texts. In A Ripple from the Storm, the narrative emphasizes the view that communism suppresses individual emotion in favour of cold rationality. The

narrator constantly undermines the intellectualism of members of the group. I shall argue that in the ideology of Sufism, Lessing finds a rationale and a discourse for this rejection of the intellect.

Sufism stresses the trusting of one's own experiences above knowledge that is intellectually acquired.⁷ According to Idries Shah:

Scholasticism is interested in accumulating information and making deductions from it. Sufism is engaged upon developing a line of communication with ultimate knowledge, not with combining individual facts, however historically exciting, or theorizing in any way at all.⁸

'Sufism has two main technical objectives: (a) to show the man himself [*sic*] as he really is; and (b) to help him develop his real inner self, his permanent part.'⁹ The emphasis in Shah's Sufism is thus on knowledge of the self through contemplation and inward illumination rather than by intellectual means. It also posits the notion of an essential self and of essential knowledge. The basic tenets of Sufism - the quest for a 'truth', for a 'unity of vision',¹⁰ the belief in the existence of inner essence which can be uncovered through a 'higher working of the mind'¹¹ and the belief in the authenticity of experience above intellect, all bear close similarity with what I have described in chapter two as Lessing's proclivity for romanticism.¹²

In Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage, Martha's individual essence distinguishes her from those around her and enables the critical faculty which, it was suggested, would enable her to break free of the cycle of predetermined role relations which (in Lessing's view) are the result of historical, social and psychological determinants. Martha's critical consciousness, it is implied, could potentially enable her creative involvement in the colony since it was closely linked to a radical political consciousness.¹³ Martha's moments of epiphany on the veld enables her to perceive wholeness and unity; as distinct from the other colonials, who are always represented as alienated from the land and its people. When Martha joins the group however, she loses her critical consciousness as she becomes alienated from the land, and thus from wholeness. The political vision of the group is satirised as being divisive and inappropriate for the colony.

In Landlocked, as the group disintegrates, Martha regains her capacity to be self-critical and questioning. In Landlocked, the belief that her understanding is the result of an essence, which resides in her unconscious, is foregrounded.¹⁴ A further difference from the earlier novels lies in the fact that, whereas in Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage the romantic enterprise had always been coupled with a desire to be at one with and to belong to the land, to Africa and its people, in Landlocked Martha desires escape from Africa, to a so-called Motherland, England, a place she has in fact never known. In Landlocked, the geography of the small colonial town has in itself become restrictive for Martha. Her spatial boundaries have altered, physically as well as emotionally. Instead of the vast open spaces of the veld, Martha yearns for the sea.¹⁵ It is significant that this alienation takes place at precisely the moment when the communist group collapses and when the blacks start to take political action - historical facts which Lessing chooses to conflate in time. The premise of Landlocked is that Martha does not belong to Africa, that she is experiencing a process of consolidation in preparation for a greater destiny. This knowledge, the knowledge that she should leave, is filtered to her through dreams and is affirmed by the narrator by the use of parables and mirror images.

In this novel, parables, dream visions and mirror images become central, and replace the earlier trope of epiphanies and 'moments' as the means by which 'truth' is represented. Here 'truth' represents the belief in the supremacy of emotion over intellect, the belief in the power of the individual to enable change,¹⁶ a striving to be at peace with oneself, the acceptance of an unknown future or destiny, a striving to uncover a 'real' self and a complete scorn for any form of group action and for the possibility of white anti-colonialist participation in the struggle against colonialism.

It is significant to note that there is an increased use of free-indirect discourse in Landlocked, so that it occasionally becomes impossible to decide whether the narrator or the character is focalising a particular section of narration. The concentration on scene enables sympathy and identification with Martha.¹⁷ She is presented as vulnerable and yet self-consciously striving for self-knowledge, which is depicted as an accessible goal, in contrast to the representation in the previous texts. Indeed Martha's source of knowledge is

affirmed by the narrator, as being her sub-conscious. Nevertheless, as I will show, the concentration on scene and the use of free- indirect speech, although seeming to imply less authorial control, belies the actual control established by the narrator. The use of the parable form, the mirror imagery and the repeated narration of identical dreams assume the position of a dominant discourse and establish a field of authority or knowledge which predetermines the reader's point of vision and by extension, judgment, for the rest of the text. The narrative is representing a particular view of reality and, by attempting to represent it as truth, is essentially assuming a didactic role.

The discourse of Landlocked is radically at odds with a historical-materialist discourse in its exclusion of social and cultural determinants, and its advocacy of a residual truth or essence. The sense of wholeness which Martha ultimately achieves, and which is approved by the narrator, is represented in the form of a sexual relationship. The landscape which is the site of Martha's sense of uncovering a 'real' self is not the veld, which in previous texts signified unbridled sexuality, but a domestic garden constructed by Polish exiles. The nature of this particular garden 'landscape' symbolically indicates Martha's novel encapsulation in a 'tamed' nature constructed by Europeans, even if this construction still (as it were) exists in parenthesis, surrounded by an untameable Africa: and even here, as I will later argue, this 'tamed' nature is no longer even potentially available to her - she remains in Thomas' hut within the garden.

I will argue that as an ideology, this romantic discourse (in both senses of the word, as pertaining to sexual love and to an affinity with nature) is used as a salve to resolve Martha's (and Lessing's) double alienation from politics and from Africa: to resolve the apparent contradiction of the personal and the political, by conflating the two conceptions. In the novel, Martha's mere presence in Africa as a white colonial is regarded as a false political act. By leaving, it is implied, she will better enable the political process and at the same time contribute creatively in her own motherland since she will no longer suffer this crippling personal alienation. I will show that in the novel a strong link is made between Martha's desire to leave the country and the failure of the communist group.

The fictional time of Landlocked spans the six years from approximately 1945 to 1951.¹⁸ The historical time it describes thus dates back some twenty years from the time of writing. It moves from a period immediately before the end of the war to encompass the end of the war, the effect on the colony of the cold war, the first mass action by urban Black workers (in the form of a general strike),¹⁹ and the period (often mentioned) during which the National Party took control in South Africa.

Although the historical time covered maps such substantial events, the text depicts (through the eyes of its central protagonist) a time of lethargy and isolation in the colony.²⁰ Towards the end of the war, the communist group disintegrates alongside the wave of militancy which existed in the colony during the war years. Individual members of the group desperately attempt to harness themselves to the increasingly militant black intellectuals, but are resoundingly rejected. In Landlocked, everyone in the small colonial Southern Rhodesian town is described as a victim. The power bases of the political activists have been eroded. The group members are revealed as petty and neurotic and are thus no longer satirised to the same extent as in the previous novels.

Martha on the other hand is described as being in a kind of incubation period. She is no longer satirised by the narrator. She is presented as questioning and taking stock. Martha waits (to leave for England) and grows through a love affair with Thomas Stern, one of the members of the group. She achieves a measure of reconciliation with Mrs Van (whose power base in the colony diminishes with the demise of the war-time militancy), as well as with her mother. Mrs Quest, previously a monstrous threat to Martha's well-being, is presented in an extended dream metaphor as a victim. She is represented as a woman tortured through a life-time of self-sacrifice by memory of a failed ideal, and who is desperately in need of psychological help (LL, pp. 68 - 73). Martha assumes the role in the group formerly held by Jasmine; that of efficient organiser and secretary.

During this period her father, Thomas and Athen all die. All three events are narrated in analepsis.²¹ They are not dwelt on or attributed any significance in the text. The text focuses almost exclusively on Martha's development, in sharp contrast to A Ripple from the Storm which predominantly

focused on the group. Martha becomes increasingly self-critical. Her dreams assume a central role in her emotional and psychic development, as does her relationship with Thomas.

Martha is portrayed as having grown and developed - as having achieved a heightened sense of self-consciousness and purpose - a new sense of emotional well-being: a goal described as enviable because it pertains to a life beyond the narrow confines of the arid colonial town. Our view of this altered construction of Martha is directed by a metalanguage which authenticates Lessing's alteration and repositions the protagonist and the protagonist's relation to the collective in accordance with Lessing's own altered relation to political organisation, and her physical and emotional distance from the events described in the text.²²

From the outset the narrator asserts the point of authority of the text.

Landlocked begins with the narration of a Sufi story:

The Mulla walked into a shop one day. The owner came forward to serve him.

'First things first', said Nasrudin; 'did you see me walk into your shop?'

'Of course.'

'Have you ever seen me before?'

'Never in my life.'

'Then how do you know it is me?'

THE SUFIS; Idries Shah (LL, p. 9)

Essentially the story asserts the discrepancy between appearance and reality. It stresses that a knowledge from 'outside', is superficial and therefore of no consequence; that 'inner being' is not readily accessible: knowledge of oneself and others has to be struggled for.²³ It also stresses a hierarchy of knowledge: the centrality of self-knowledge and awareness.

The narrative then proceeds to represent that struggle for self-knowledge in Martha.²⁴ It presents consonance in focalisation - between the narrator, the focaliser and the focalised.²⁵ The narrator no longer assumes a stance of ironic distance from Martha.

We are allowed to witness at first hand - mostly by means of the use of free-indirect speech Martha's physical and sensual behaviour, her thought-processes and her relationship to family and to the broader society:

Meanwhile she studied the burning or warm, or glowing sensation on her back. The window was two yards behind her, and it had a greenish 'folk-weave' curtain whose edge, or rather, the shadow of whose edge, chanced to strike Martha's shoulder and her hip. At first had chanced - Martha was now carefully maintaining an exact position. Areas of flesh glowed with chill, or tingled with it: behind heat, behind cold, was an interior glow, as if they were the same. Heat burned through the glass on to blade and buttock; the cool of the shadow burned too. But there was not only contrast between hot heat and hot chill (cold cold and cold heat?); there were subsidiary minor lines, felt as strokes of tepid sensation, where the shadow of the windowframe cut diagonally. (LL, pp. 9 - 10)

We witness here a Martha who revels in experiencing the sensuality of the body in sharp contrast to A Ripple from the Storm where Martha was totally alienated from her physical body (RFS, pp. 108; 193). At the same time she is aware of the power of illusion, the fact that the heat and cold appear to be the same.²⁶ She is also aware that they are not merely opposite, that they are integrally connected by 'subsidiary minor lines'. Martha no longer has the urge to intellectualise categories. She is prepared to accept contradiction.²⁷ The entire scene is narrated in free-indirect speech. We witness process: Martha's tentative experimenting with feeling and sensation after the emotionally numbing experiences of the previous novel. In Hardin's terms, Martha is here learning 'to trust her own senses'.²⁸

Usage of external narration²⁹ is circumvented by presenting us with a mirror image of Martha's reality (LL, pp. 19 - 22). In the cloakroom scene, it is implied that Martha is for the first time confronting her own contradictions:

And besides, what was real in her, underneath these metamorphoses of style or shape or - even, apparently - personality, remained and intensified. The continuity of Martha now was in a determination to survive - like everyone else in the world, these days, as she told herself; it was in a watchfulness, a tension of the will that was like a small flickering of light, like the perpetual tiny dance of lightning on the horizon from a storm so far over the earth's curve it could only show reflected on the sky. Martha was holding herself together - like everybody else. She was a lighthouse of watchfulness; she was a being totally on the defensive.

This was her reality, not the 'pretty', or 'attractive' Martha Hesse, a blondish dark-eyed young woman who smiled back at her from the mirror where she was becomingly set off in pink cotton that showed a dark shadow in the angle of her hips. (LL, p. 20) (my emphasis)

In Landlocked, Martha is presented as a self-conscious character, aware of her own contradictions. She is able to conceptualise her behaviour and the reasons for it. She is fully conscious of the manner in which she manipulates different roles and of what her 'real' nature is. Moreover she knows how to 'protect' herself against others; to prevent herself from becoming embroiled in situations that are detrimental to herself - to the 'real' Martha Quest.

In Landlocked the protagonist (focaliser) to a large extent, conceptualises and critically analyses on a par with the narrating agency. The use of the mirror image is double-edged: the reader is not only allowed into the intimacy of the cloakroom but is also offered a mirror image, a picture of reality. By contrast, in previous texts the metalanguage encouraged distance from the protagonist and strong identification with the narrator.³⁰ Now we are seemingly invited to look at the picture of reality for ourselves without the intervention of an omniscient narrator. But even in this exercise we are guided in the wisdom we have been given by the opening Sufi story not to be deceived by appearances, by the representation of a false 'reality'. The premise established here is that a 'real' or true self exists. We learn that the image that we are witnessing is a mere 'shell' used to protect herself.

The Sufi story has previously established our point of view so that we are wholly receptive to the notion that our gaze is superficial, and are willingly guided by the privileged information of the narrator/focaliser as to what is 'real' in Martha. This is then reiterated, in that we are told that Martha '...was a lighthouse of watchfulness; she was being totally on the defensive' (LL, p. 20).³¹ The narrator here establishes a premise that the individual has to defend her self-knowledge against the collective. It also connects to A Ripple from the Storm where group members were parodied for their denial of individuality. In Landlocked, we are taken to the other extreme.

In A Ripple from the Storm, Martha's point of view was shaped by the ideology of the group. The narrator consistently satirised this ideology by

parodying the group meetings. In Landlocked, the source of Martha's knowledge that she should protect, indeed preserve herself, '...holding at bay, what was best in her' for some greater destiny (LL, p. 21), is her dreams, affirmed by the narrator as: 'always a faithful watchdog, or record...a thermometer or gauge' (LL, p. 20):

...the monitor, the guardian, who stood somewhere, was somewhere in this shell of substance.... The guardian was to be trusted in messages of life and death.... (LL, p. 21)

Martha is '...obligingly provided with an image of her position' by her dreams (LL, p. 20). Similarly, in Martha Quest, Martha's moments or epiphanies are described by the narrator as her 'tuning fork or guide within' (MQ, p. 220).

Whereas in the earlier text, Martha's epiphanies are affirmed as a symbol of her connection to Africa, in Landlocked Martha's dreams symbolise her potential to play a role outside of Africa.

She dreams that her family's house on the kopje (which she considers her root in Africa) has collapsed (LL, p. 21), a consequence of the fact that she has not kept things 'separate', has not preserved wholeness in a time of dryness and disintegration (LL, p. 20). There is an obsession to escape the kopje as an embodiment of Africa, an Africa upon which she has imposed herself. Martha dreams that:

...the house of the kopje, collapsed into a mess of ant-tunnelled mud, ant-consumed grass, where red ant-made tunnels wove a net, like red veins, over the burial mound of Martha's soul, over the rotting wood, rotting grass, subsiding mud; and bushes and trees, held at bay so long (but only just, only very precariously) by the Quest's tenancy, came striding in, marching over the fragments of substance originally snatched from the bush, to destroy the small shelter for the English family that they had built between teeming earth and brazen African sky. (LL, p. 21) (my emphasis)

At first this passage appears merely to depict death and decay with the image of the 'red ant-made tunnels' with its 'red veins', the 'rotting' wood and grass and 'subsiding mud'. However, the image of slow death assumes a stridency as the trees and bushes are personified into 'striding', 'marching' beings which reclaim

the heritage which had originally been 'snatched' by the Quests. The fact that the entire image is presented in a single sentence, and the increased pace achieved by the use of active verbs, emphasises an urgency and an inevitability: that the indigenous landscape has the strength to triumph despite the intrusion of alien forces - that the colonised will reclaim the land from the coloniser.

The landscape was formerly a source of inspiration to Martha. Her construction of an ideal city in the veld represented the potential for unity between whites and blacks in Africa. Images of threat and violence were associated only with storms, necessary to enable rejuvenation and to break the tension of the heat.³² In Going Home (1957), Lessing asserts: 'The fact is, I don't live anywhere; I never have since I left that first house on the kopje' (GH, p. 37). In that text, she spends a great deal of time affirming her affinity with and nostalgia for the land - affirming her African identity. This is interesting both because Going Home was written at the time that Lessing was still a communist and would presumably still have felt considerable guilt at her decision to leave; and also because while asserting her longing for the house on the kopje frequently, she at the same time cannot bring herself to go there because (as she openly declares) she cannot bear to confront its disintegration.

Now in Landlocked the bush is only associated with threat and aggression. The knowledge imparted by Martha's dream is that she is an intruder and that she should leave. It is also indicated that her emotional being would not find fulfillment here where her soul is relegated to being a 'burial ground'. On the one hand Martha is devoting time to telling blacks that she can help them intellectually (pp. 47; 63; 126; 185), while on the other hand she is subconsciously dreaming of their savagery. Moreover we have already shown how the narrative approves the 'truth' value of the dreams.

This passage in effect bears a strong resemblance to the closing scenes in The Grass is Singing in which the protagonist Mary Turner, a colonial woman, visualises the rats, beetles, toads, worms and slugs overrunning her house and finally how 'the bush would cover the subsiding mess and there would be nothing left' (GIS, p. 242). This vision of primeval chaos (GIS, pp. 241 - 242) takes place shortly before Mary is murdered by Moses, the black domestic servant. In the closing passages of the novel, nature is personified to represent Moses: '...slowly,

slowly the shoulders of trees would press against the brick' (GIS, p. 242). At the same time, when Moses commits the murder, he is conflated with nature in Mary's perception: 'And then the bush avenged itself.... (GIS, p. 254), '...the trees advanced in a rush like beasts... (idem). Bertelsen has pointed out how in these passages which offer a '...mystical deterministic resignation in the face of the forces of savage nature',³³ The Grass Is Singing confirms colonial beliefs and undercuts the socialist-realist level of the novel which offers a damning critique of colonial practice. Bertelsen also points out how Lessing's resolution of the novel is an essentially 'European developmental or evolutionary idea' and fits into a type of romanticism.³⁴ In Bertelsen's terms:

In the cultural sphere the evolutionary idea provides the basis for the romantic myth of 'primitivism'....
...what makes the artistic version of the idea deeply ambiguous is that while it absorbs all the implications of hierarchy and normative evaluation, it simultaneously sentimentalises these, approving unspoilt nature and its representatives as both an insight into the complicated European's 'past', and as an antidote to its present ills.³⁵

This central contradiction is also played out in Landlocked, although less obviously. Martha's subconscious feelings of dread about the 'bush' avenging itself are not criticised by the narrator. And yet, the novel offers a biting satire of colonial fears of black revenge during the strike by black workers (LL, pp. 247 - 260). In the previous texts Martha attempts to embrace the 'otherness' of Africa both in terms of the land and its people. Now the otherness is described as the source of her alienation. It seems that Lessing is saying that Martha cannot escape the archetypal vision of the colonial. Martha's project is to protect her individuality, and to extricate herself from politics which poses a danger or 'threatens the lit space' (LL, p. 35). In Lessing's equation involvement in Africa equals involvement in politics. Martha's dream reiterates that she does not belong in Africa and thereby also justifies her extrication from politics. The dreams also distinguish Martha from the other members of the group, who are all suffering from various forms of psychological collapse or who have become reactionary as a result of the swing away from communism in the colony and the revelations about the atrocities of Stalin.

Martha's dreams all depict this physical and emotional distance from her former comrades.³⁶ She dreams of reaching a high dry rocky place '...and around it washed long shoreless seas' (LL, p. 134). From this place she can no longer relate to her former comrades: 'Across the sea, which she could not reach, no matter how much she leaned and stretched out her hands' (LL, p. 134). It is again emphasised that Martha will eke out her own individual destiny, which is perceived as greater because it is not confined by the narrow boundaries of Southern Rhodesia. In both cases this knowledge is asserted through her dreams. Her distance from Africa and from communism are both realities with which she is presented as faits accomplis.³⁷

In Landlocked Martha's actions and philosophy of life are for the first time in accord; and neither is intellectually determined, but rather a response to a sense of destiny established in dreams which are not questioned:

She had simply to accept, finally, that her role in life, for this period, was to walk like a housekeeper in and out of different rooms, but the people in the rooms could not meet each other or understand each other, and Martha must not expect them to. She must not try and explain, or build bridges. (LL, pp. 21 - 22)³⁸

This accords with Hardin's description of the Sufi attitude as 'undoubtedly that of 'being'.... He [the Sufi] distinguishes between the ordinary knowing of facts and the inner knowing of reality'.³⁹ According to Hardin, a central Sufi belief is the acceptance of dimensions of life that are not embedded in concrete reality but which are more meaningful although not logically explicable.⁴⁰ Martha has learnt to trust her own sense experience as a source of growth and construction rather than rely on outside authority. She has the potential to achieve an altered state of consciousness because she will now be receptive to it. She will be passive and accepting rather than critically questioning (as in the previous novels).

The idea is promulgated that her inner essence could exist independently without being created or in any way influenced by her social and cultural environment, 'And besides, what was real in her, underneath these metamorphoses of style or shape or - even, apparently - personality, remained

and intensified' (LL, p. 20). In other words the narrative is asserting here that the individuals can, by means of the imagination and dreams, create or determine their own reality, independently of material or cultural norms.⁴¹

At the beginning of part two we find that our 'picture of reality' is again rendered by means of a mirror image - this time an image of Martha in a marred glass after sexual intercourse with her new lover Thomas:

Six inches of marred glass in a warped frame reflected beams of orange light into the loft, laid quivering green from the jacaranda outside over wooden planks and over the naked arm of a young woman who lay face down on a rough bed, dipping her arm in and out of the greenish sun-lanced light below her as if into water. At the same time she watched Thomas's head a few feet below her through cracks in the floor: a roughly glinting brown head, recently clutched by fingers which now trailed through idling light, bent politely beside a large navy-blue straw hat. Thomas's voice, warm from love-making, answered questions about roses put in a voice that said it was going to get as much attention from the expert as her visit warranted. The two heads moved out of her vision into the garden. Martha turned on her back to stretch her body's happiness in cool, leaf-smelling warmth. Through the minute window the tree blazed out its green against violent sun-soaked blue against black, thunderous clouds which at any moment would break and empty themselves. A deep forest silence. This shed had been built at the bottom of a large garden to hold tools and seedlings. (LL, p. 102)

We are presented with a Lawrentian scene,⁴² redolent with images of happiness, of peace and ease, of reflected warmth and brightness ('orange light', 'greenish light', 'glinting brown head', 'idling light', 'warm from love-making', 'leaf-smelling warmth', 'sun-soaked blue'). The heavy adjectival build up produces an impression of sated passivity. The images are interchangeably applied to the two protagonists - Martha and Thomas, and the landscape, effectively constituting the landscape as harmonious, a harmony previously unattainable to Martha except in moments of epiphany, and completely denied her during her period of commitment to the communist group.

Interestingly though, the mirror - the instrument of illusion, enables the unity between outer and inner space - between Martha in the hut and the sunlit garden. Indeed, for every image of unity and harmony in the scene, there is a counter dynamic - that of threat of danger, the calm before the storm. Lessing again emphasises the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Martha's

vision is enabled by 'marred glass' in a 'warped frame'. The light which she revels in is 'sun-lanced'; her vision of Thomas is enabled by 'cracks in the floor'. Her only clear vision (through a tiny window) is a violent one ('the tree blazed', 'the violent sun-soaked blue', 'the thunderous clouds which at any moment would break and empty themselves'). In the conception of the focaliser, this image is represented visually as metaphoric of the stridency of the contrasting colours and the strength, the sheer power of the sun. On a physical level, it conveys the fact of the pending storm.

This last image is strikingly similar to images presented in Martha Quest (MQ, p. 253) and in the preface of Collected African Stories, Volume 1 (AS, p. 10), both of which were discussed in chapter two. In each of these extracts Martha/Lessing laments her exile/distance from the environment - exile from 'an inexplicable majestic silence' (AS, p. 10). The passage in Martha Quest carries very similar connotations about sexuality - except that in that text Martha is excluded both from the environment and from the possibility of embracing the sensuality she perceives in her surroundings.

Now in Landlocked Martha has experienced this sensuality but is still excluded from the environment. Martha is an illegitimate visitor to the garden which belongs to Thomas's brother. She can only visualise the land through 'marred glass', through a tiny window, through 'cracks in the floor'.⁴³ Equally she can only experience the dynamic tension - the harmony and silence, the threat of impending violence because of her sexuality - through Thomas the gardener.⁴⁴

We witness again a recurrent leitmotif of the Children of Violence series: Martha's obsession about her relationship with nature and with the African landscape. In this passage though (unlike in Martha Quest where there seemed to be a possibility of reconciliation), Martha is represented as fully an exile. She has however ended her 'division' (LL, p. 103) not by reconciliation, but by adding a new dimension to her life. The hut in which she makes love to Thomas is a site of a new physical and emotional space placed in a garden, but in a garden from which she has been excluded both physically and emotionally. Significantly too, Martha's new space is exclusive since it does not impinge on the part of her which she has placed in 'cold storage'.⁴⁵

After the representation of this scene, mainly in free- indirect speech, the narrator, the voice of authority and experience, affirms the object language:

Once upon a time, so it is said, people listened to their dreams as if bending to a door beyond which great figures moved; half-human, speaking half-divine truths. But now we wake from sleep as if our fingers have been on a pulse: 'So that's it! That's how matters stand!' Martha's dreams registered a calmly-beating pulse, although she knew that loving Thomas must hold its own risks, and that this was as true for him as for her. (LL, p. 103) (my emphasis)

First the passive tense is used to disguise the authority of the statement and thus render an effect of universal truth, thereby endorsing the authority of her statement - 'so it is said', 'people listened'. This enables the incorporation of the reader: 'we', 'our'. And, by the use of the more personalised direct speech the experience is rendered familiar, as the discourse of everyday speech rather than the discourse of science/ psychoanalysis. This then enables an easy empathy if not identification with the experience of Martha.

A central irony in the text is that the garden which Martha inhabits is tamed, nurtured, indeed controlled by Thomas and his family (unlike the unbridled sexuality of the country in Martha Quest). In Edenic terms, it is also a garden from which she is eventually expelled by Thomas's brother. At the moment when Martha is proclaimed to have ended her 'self-division' - to have attained a sense of emotional and physical self-knowledge and independence - she is most thoroughly dominated by a man, a domination which is described in poetic and phallogentric terms:

...Martha's stomach shrank, turned liquid, and her shoulders, breasts, thighs (apparently on orders from Thomas since her body no longer owed allegiance to her) shrank and waited for his touch. (LL, p. 104) (my emphasis)

and

He looked, smiling, at the naked woman lying face downwards, who then, because his gaze at her was apparently unbearable, turned over on her back. But her hand, obeying this other creature in Martha who was

Thomas's, covered up the centre of her body, while her mind thought: Look at that, how very extraordinary! For now that her body had become a newly discovered country with laws of its own, she studied it with passionate curiosity. (idem.) (my emphasis)

Martha's actions and emotions are determined and formed by the male gaze. We shift away from free-indirect speech here to external narration,⁴⁶ enabling an overall conceptualisation of the scene. The subject now becomes other. Martha is now 'the smiling woman'. And we are told that Thomas the conqueror, the coloniser, has inhabited Martha '...her hand, obeying this other creature in Martha who was Thomas's...' (LL, p. 104).

Indeed the male discourse of colonialism - woman as country⁴⁷ - is explicitly represented: '...her body had become a newly-discovered country with laws of its own' - that is, the vacant, innocent virgin has been called forth, nurtured and shaped by Thomas. In his words: '...in Poland when I had a woman I had a woman, here I take it for granted I'm going to be faced with a virgin....' and for Martha '...every other experience with a man had become the stuff of childhood', 'Of course, her real nature had been put into cold storage for precisely this....' (LL, p. 105) and '... Thomas, or the creature in him who corresponded to the Martha he had created, demanded that she should give herself to him completely ...' (idem.). This is significant also because at the beginning of the novel we are told that Martha is yearning for a man who will serve the function of unifying 'her elements', and that a man should be like '...a roof, or like a fire burning in the centre of the empty space (LL, p. 37).

Martha's new 'centre', the means of the resolution of her 'self-division' is first described as the hut⁴⁸ in which she and Thomas conduct their relationship: 'From this centre she now lived' (LL, p. 103) and then as 'the centre of her body' (LL, p. 104), her vagina. In other words, this 'centre' is in both instances essentially physical: a space, a landscape determined and inhabited by Thomas the gardener.⁴⁹

In all this is a remarkable passage, written as it is completely uncritically by an anti-colonial woman and one who presented a strong feminist critique in both A Ripple from the Storm and The Golden Notebook. The choice of discourse is particularly interesting since we have already witnessed in The

Golden Notebook Lessing's ability to write explicitly and candidly about sexual intercourse, whereas throughout Landlocked she resorts to a stylised, metaphoric language which, as I have pointed out, is essentially romantic, male and colonial. On the one hand, this language reproduces a conception of the mystique of sexual intercourse represented in popular romance novels written for women, and on the other hand repeats the discourse of patriarchal romance writing, with its conception of woman as landscape, as passive object to be conquered and then cultivated.

David Bunn, in an article on the portrayal of women in colonial fiction, discusses at length the way in which women in nineteenth century romance fiction were portrayed solely in terms of associations with pre-linguistic forms of expressions: the body, sexuality, the imagination, the irrational, dutiful servitude.⁵⁰ Ironically these are the terms upon which Martha conducts her relationship with Thomas. There is no intellectual content to the relationship, despite the fact that Thomas is referred to as one of the central ideologues of the communist group and that Martha has become its main organiser. Their discussions are centred around sexuality and body-consciousness (LL, pp. 105 - 108; 121 - 123).

Martha, who proves to be incapable of making decisions for herself, gives up her job and lives almost entirely in the hut:

Martha, on the simplicity of will that was Thomas's gift to her, walked into Mr Robinson's office and gave notice. By herself it would have taken weeks of thinking, I should do this or that, and then drift into a decision. But now she lived from this new centre, the room she shared with Thomas, a room that had in it, apparently, a softly-running dynamo, to which, through him, she was connected. Everything had become easy suddenly. (LL, p. 113)

This newly found space in the forbidden garden is Martha's only real physical space in Africa. The group office in Founders Street has been demolished, the house on the veld has sunk to its knees and her own flat is constantly being invaded by others. The new centre is also the alternative to Martha's alienation from her physical surroundings. In the discourse of Landlocked, Martha's

uncovering of a sense of identity and place, develops through a sexual relationship.

Sensual experience and self-knowledge are effortlessly conflated in this text, undermining the conception in the Sufi narrative at the beginning of the book of the difficulty of the struggle for self-knowledge. As Sydney Janet Kaplan says:

The evolution towards a universal consciousness in Doris Lessing's novels appears to begin with an approach to reality centred in the physical body and its relationship with nature.... Sexuality itself becomes inescapably linked with the search for knowledge in these novels.⁵¹

Martha's relationship with Thomas is described as a developmental growth point for Martha, the source, the 'dynamo' from which she draws strength to alter the quality of her life. For example, she is able to relate to her mother with a new sense of tolerance and understanding (LL, p. 113), and she is able to problematise and attempt to deal with her contradictory behaviour towards Anton (LL, pp. 117 - 121). Thomas teaches her the value of learning from experience (LL, pp. 122 - 123) and of learning to take risks (LL, p. 176). Even when he has left she is able to continue an imaginary debate with him. The relationship with Thomas becomes a new source of knowledge and energy, replacing the earlier source of knowledge, 'the moments of illumination'. And, as in the case of the epiphany, this source of knowledge is affirmed by the narrator.

Also pertinent here is Irving Howe's analysis of Lessing's depiction of women in The Golden Notebook:

She wants in her men both the intimacy and power, closeness and self-sufficiency, hereness and thereeness. Modernist in sensibility, she is traditionalist in her desires.⁵²

Howe here identifies the central contradiction in Lessing's work: between her Marxist analytical framework and her romanticism. Howe's statement is also interesting when viewed in relation to Lessing's Sufism. The passivity reflected in Martha's relationship with men accords with the ideology established in part one

of the novel where, as I have shown, the narrative affirms a necessary passivity and acceptance as a condition of self-knowledge: 'She must not try and explain, or build bridges' (LL, p. 22). Both the passivity and the self-absorbed individualism which characterise Martha's behaviour in parts one and two of Landlocked, are reflected in her attitude towards politics and towards Africa in parts three and four of the same novel.

All the members of the communist group are depicted in Landlocked as becoming increasingly stolidly middle-class in their interests, despite their ability to conceptualise and categorise their behaviour critically (LL, pp. 115; 121; 227 - 8). Marie, Marjorie and Anton are all cast in this mould. The die-hard members of the group (Martha, Jasmine, Athen and Thomas) either leave the country or die or both. The group is unable to come to terms with or even discuss, in any coherent way, the effects and consequences of the cold war:

As for world politics, the manifestations of 'the cold war', a recently christened phenomenon, made it impossible for this tiny group of people to communicate easily, since they represented between them every variety of 'left' opinion, each grade of it needing the most incredible tact and forbearance with the others. (LL, p. 115)

Neither can they analyse (without emotion) the revelations about Stalinism, since the revelations represent the negation of all their ideals (LL pp. 233 - 235). Most of the people present at the meeting called to discuss the issue wish to avoid the subject altogether, gripped as they are by the prevalent paranoia. Indeed the text reiterates the fact (as in A Ripple from the Storm) that they had never existed as a coherent group - on a practical level, they have an inability to organise any programme of action, let alone meetings (LL, pp. 32 - 6; 91 - 4; 183 - 6; 229 - 235). Moreover, the narrator constantly emphasises the fact that the disparate nature of the group impedes any theoretical meeting ground, and the fact that the group had only ever existed as a spin-off of the wave of militancy which had existed all over the world during the period of the war (LL, pp. 89 - 96).

All the members of the group (including Martha) are described as neurotic. They are however significantly different from Martha in that they are

all 'landlocked': caught in a form of stasis, without, and incapable of developing, a vision beyond their present impasse. Martha on the other hand, has the dynamic quality of the imagination and of dreams which enable an obsessive longing and a vision of the sea (LL, pp. 206; 224; 244) - of a larger and more fulfilling destiny.⁵³

In short, they were all, already, in their late twenties or early thirties, middle-aged women neurotic with dissatisfaction, just as if they had never made resolutions not to succumb to the colonial small-town atmosphere. And the terrible thing was, they could never forget it: they watched their own deterioration like merciless onlookers....
All these women envied Martha: you're all right, you're going to England! You're going to get out of here. (LL, p. 212 - 213)

Lessing's description of the anti-colonial colonials (at one point she refers to them as that 'ridiculous little organism' [LL, p. 90]), implies that they are impotent to play a role in the development of a mass democratic movement in Southern Rhodesia. She emphasises that the blacks themselves are not interested in help from the whites either intellectually (LL, p. 132) or practically in terms of organising the strike (LL, p. 250). She implies that the belief of the communist group that they could play a role in black politics was, by their own admission, misconceived:

It was during those few minutes while the hall seethed with angry shouting people that 'the group' finally realised how little they had achieved during their years of hard work.
For one thing, where were the Africans? There was not a black face in the hall - not even a brown one [sic]. The Africans, the Coloured people, The Indians - none were here. Yet when 'the group' started work, it was axiomatic that it was on behalf of the Africans above all that they would run their study groups and their meetings...
So in fact their work had been done for white people; hundreds of white citizens had been prepared to play with 'the left' while the war lasted, and now it was all over. (LL, p. 93)

In Landlocked every instance of interaction between the various white left tendencies, and radical blacks, (the various meetings, the study groups, the strike) is abortive. At the time when white left-wing organisation is at its weakest numerically, their primary engagement is still at the self-destructive level of petty

bickering and one-upmanship. Lessing's depiction of the communists as completely spineless and inept can be understood in the context of her statement in the 1967 postscript to Going Home:

If you were living in a country which is stifling, backward and provincial, and you are a lively idealistic person, you need something to buoy you up. For many people, in many parts of the world, this idealistic flame was Russia. (GH, p. 313)

This statement is then taken to its logical conclusion in Landlocked, where the implication is that because of their lack of political resources other than their idealism about the Soviet Union and Stalin, the communists were left completely floundering after the revelations of the atrocities of Stalinism. This idea is conflated with the belief that anti-colonial colonials could play no part in the struggle of blacks in Southern Rhodesia - a position which Lessing endorses (in retrospect) in Going Home by means of the intense cynicism with which she describes the politics of the Central African Federation of the 1950's.

In Landlocked, written nine years after the publication of Going Home, Lessing suppresses any identification of Martha as African. Instead, Martha's dreams and visions have enabled a new emotional space and the hope of a new motherland. Her dreams confirm the need to abandon any physical and emotional identity as a member of the colonising class (her parable is the re-absorption of the house on the kopje). Simultaneously, in the image of the physical gulf between Martha and her comrades, her emotional distance from communism and potential for an independent existence is emphasised. In Lessing's conception, Martha has moved beyond a static and reactionary milieu into a new and dynamic mental and physical environment, which will enable the resolution of her alienation because it will be free of the constraints she has felt hitherto and because she will be entering a territory to which she hopes she may at last belong uncontradictorily.

It is crucial to bear in mind that Lessing wrote Landlocked nine years after she left the communist party. In her own life she joined the Party after leaving Southern Rhodesia. Given the roughly autobiographical nature of the series, and given the statements made about her commitment to Africa and to

politics in Going Home, we are witnessing a very definite ideological choice in her deliberate attempt to distance Martha from politics and from Africa in Landlocked. As I have attempted to show, the ideological choices made in this text are expressed in a fairly conventional romantic discourse; which appears to be linked with, and function similarly to, her new-found interest in Sufism.

Further I have asserted that this depiction of Martha's development (which I believe has both conscious and unconscious dimensions) severely compromises a crucial previous aspect of Lessing's socialism: Landlocked emphasises the belief that anti-colonial colonials have no part to play in the struggle by blacks against colonialism. In her bid to describe emotional growth, Lessing also severely compromises the feminist stance she has taken in The Golden Notebook. Martha's newly found independence is highly romantic, almost solipsistic, and advocates passivity and anti-intellectualism.

It is only in Landlocked, where the narrator and protagonist concur ideologically, that the contradictions of the series become glaringly obvious. Landlocked, written so long after Lessing had left the Party and at a time when she has newly found an ideological niche (namely Sufism), enables her for the first time to present her fictional character without irony and cynicism. This in turn offers an opportunity to resolve her own contradictory feelings about having left Africa. It seems no accident that Lessing took so long to return to the series.

In the previous novels in this series, the possibility of change in the individual was always denied since every social unit is ascribed qualities of repression and dominance, qualities which render it a locus of oppression. In all we were told that Martha cannot escape her fate; she had to endure the endless cycle of repetition. For the first time in Landlocked we witness a possibility for escape from that socialisation through a withdrawal into the self. An essentialist rather than materialist conception of self, a conception discernible only in silence and contradiction in the earlier texts, is overtly advocated in Landlocked. Lessing affirms the notion of a residual truth which can only be attained by the individual outside of group experience, and indeed, out of Africa.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Here I am referring to the concern with the politics of the family, her critique of colonial life, involvement with the politics of the colony, Martha's relationship to men, her relationship and engagement with nature and so forth. Lorna Sage, Doris Lessing (London and New York, Methuen, 1983), p. 59, also points out that to a certain extent Landlocked takes up some of the images and conclusions from The Golden Notebook:

Martha imagines her life in 'rooms', separate compartments; we are told that her love-affair with the Middle European Jewish settler Thomas Stern (a heroic, but sketchy figure) unifies her ... but this blissful stage is abbreviated (shades of Ella and Paul) to make way for the realization that it is in their shared 'sickness' that they're really together (shades of Anna and Saul).

2. I tend to agree with the critics that this formal change can largely be attributed to the fact that Landlocked was written after The Golden Notebook. See Roberta Rubenstein, The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking The Forms Of Consciousness (Urbana, University Of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 113:

In working through the implication of Anna Wulf's fragmentation, Lessing found a way to carry Martha Quest beyond the point of impasse described at the conclusion of A Ripple From The Storm, while at the same time resolving her own aesthetic impasse.

Ruth Whittaker, Doris Lessing (London, Macmillan, 1988), p. 51 asserts that:

...although in Landlocked she employs a traditional realism...it is different from the first three novels in tone and style. The narrative is more fluid, and moves easily between external and internal world. The sentences are longer, more explorative.

See also Eve Bertelsen, "Introduction" in Doris Lessing, edited by Eve Bertelsen (Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), p. 18.

3. See Eve Bertelsen, "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia: History Into Fiction" in English in Africa, Vol. 11, No. 1, (May, 1984), p. 27. Bertelsen seems to be the only critic who has pointed out the significant change in Landlocked: Martha's detachment from her environment. I think this is largely because of the reason I identified in chapter 2 of this thesis, namely that the critics ascribe to the series an organic unity. Martha's journey from Africa to Europe is seen as a natural and logical progression, as a developmental process.

4. Her "conversion" to Sufism first emerges a year before the publication of Landlocked with the publication of "An Elephant in the Dark" in The Spectator, 213 (Sept 18, 1964), p. 373, in a review of The Sufi by Idries Shah, a foremost proponent of Sufism.

5. For detailed discussions of Lessing and Sufism, see Nancy Shields Hardin, "Doris Lessing and the Sufi Way" in Doris Lessing: Critical Studies, edited by Annis Pratt and L.S. Dembo (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 148 - 164, and Ann Scott, "The more recent writings: sufism, mysticism and politics" in Notebooks/memoirs/archives: Reading and re-reading Doris Lessing, edited by Jenny Taylor (Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 164 - 191. However neither of these two critics pays particular attention to Landlocked or to the significance of the use of Sufi ideology in the context of the Children of Violence series.

6. There are many divergent practices and practitioners of Sufism. Hardin (1974), p. 149, points out that it includes scientists as well as philosophers and writers in its numbers: 'Such diverse people as St Francis, Roger Bacon and Denis de Rougement were influenced by Sufi ideas'. It is also worth noting that Robert Graves was an avowed Sufi.

7. "We do not have opinions of our own.... It is becoming impossible for people to trust their own experiences. There is no way of communicating this. What matters is to learn it for yourself", quoted in Hardin (1974), p. 148, from Doris Lessing, New School for Social Research (Unpublished, Sept. 25, 1972), from one of six talks given in September 1972. Quotations were used by permission of Lessing to Hardin.

8. Idries Shah, The Sufis (London, The Octagon Press, 1977), p. xxv.

9. Quoted in Hardin (1974), p. 163.

10. Rubenstein (1979), p. 121.

11. Scott (1982), p. 166.

12. I have detected this romanticism largely in her belief in the authenticity of the imagination and of dreams and epiphanies, and her affirmation of the quest for a true self, in so much as the self is defined as an essence which exists within the individual. See for example William Wordsworth's "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting The Banks of The Wye During A Tour":

These beautiful forms,
 Through a long absence, have not been to me
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
 And passing even into my purer mind,
 With tranquil restoration: - feelings too
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
 As have no slight influence
 On that portion of a good man's life,
 His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
 Of kindness and of love.

13. See Eve Bertelsen, "Interview with Doris Lessing" (London, 9 January 1984) in Bertelsen (1985), pp. 107 -108. Bertelsen points out that when Martha first has her vision on the veld, it takes the shape of a marxist vision of a classless society. Doris Lessing vociferously denies this, asserting that Marxism 'took over a lot of Utopian ideas'.

14. Lessing's treatment of the subconscious also seems to point strongly to a usage of Freud and Jung in her emphasis on the knowledge contained in the sub-conscious, and the importance of the interpretation of dreams as a key to self-understanding.

15. See Claire Sprague, Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns Of Doubling and Repetition (Chapel Hill and London, The University Of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 131. Sprague asserts that: '...Landlocked, emphasises in another way the limits of the country and the individual it imprisons'.

16. Both Sufi philosophers and Romantics place a considerable emphasis on the personal values of the individual in a world which is corrupt. See David Wright, "Introduction" in The Penguin Book Of English Romantic Verse (Middlesex, Penguin, 1982), p. xix:

...the clue to the Romantic movement...is to be found in the Romantic accent on the individual as distinct from Man, on personal values, and in its interest in human psychology. Again the poets seem intuitively to have foreseen the threat posed by the growth of mass society with its necessary regimentation of the individual...

Sufism, too places this emphasis on the individual with "true" consciousness. See Robert Graves, "Introduction" in Shah (1977), p. x:

"To be in the world, but not of it", free from ambition, greed, intellectual pride, blind obedience to custom, or awe of persons higher in rank - that is the Sufi's ideal.

17. See Steven Cohan and Linda Shires, Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 88: 'A scene co-ordinates story and narrational times so that they appear equivalent'.

18. Quoted in Nancy Porter, "Silenced History - Children of Violence and The Golden Notebook" in World Literature Written in English, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1973), p. 166 and in Rubenstein (1979), p. 114.

19. See Murray Steele (1985), p. 50. He points out that Lessing merges the 1945 and 1948 strikes.

20. See Sage (1983), p. 58. Sage points out that Landlocked is hardly a narrative at all, and most of its 'events' are not new to the story.

21. Sage (1983), p. 59, also points out that 'Martha's father's death, Thomas's death, happen in casual aside...'.

22. Bertelsen (1984), p. 28, has pointed to the gap in time before Lessing returns to Landlocked (1965) after A Ripple from the Storm (1958). She also points out that Landlocked was written after Lessing had severed ties with the communist party and after she 'deconstructs' the whole process of writing in The Golden Notebook in 1962.

23. Hardin (1973), p. 151, also notes that Lessing uses the wisdom of Nasrudin teaching stories to underscore Martha's search for self-knowledge. See also Scott (1982), p. 172:

She is not saying that reality is spiritual, or that all is one, but that the 'truth' of a situation is obscured by a false, because limited perception of it.

24. See Dagmar Barnouw, "Disorderly Company: From The Golden Notebook to The Four-Gated City" in Pratt and Dembo (1974), p. 86:

...the author-narrator now tries to preserve a high degree of immediacy, which is extended also to the relationships that Martha forms. Martha is given time and space for confusion, eventually even chaos.

25. I have discussed the concept of focalisation in chapters two and three of this thesis.

26. This metaphor of heat and cold is used at other points in the text. See LL, pp. 48; 50; 108.

27. In The Four-Gated City, the Dervish story used as the "Dedication" serves to emphasise the need to learn to deal with multiplicity.

28. Hardin (1974), p. 152.

29. According to Cohan and Shires (1988), p. 96:

Focalization is external when the narrator also functions as a focalizer, restricting the scope of narration to what can be outwardly observed.

30. In Martha Quest and A Proper Marriage the narrator summarises and interprets Martha's behaviour fairly directly for the reader. In A Ripple From the Storm the narrator is less obviously present but the distance from the character is made clear by extensive usage of irony and the juxtaposition of Martha's contradictory actions and statements.

31. See Betsy Draine, Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing (Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 54. As Draine points out: '...Lessing is rather too obvious in her use of dream symbolism and in her directions to the reader in how to evaluate the dream'.

32. See chapter two of this thesis.

33. Eve Bertelsen, "Doris Lessing and 'Savage Africa'" in Publisher/Writer/ Reader: Sociology of Southern African Literature, edited by Susan Gardner (Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand, 1986), p. 123.

34. See Bertelsen (1986), p. 123:

A long view of this tradition of thought would probably take in a range of treatments of 'natural' as opposed to 'social' man, finding its modern ancestor in the mid-18th century in Rousseau's explicit formulation of the antithesis in his celebrated Emile, and moving through such apparently disparate characters as Blake's innocents, Wordsworth's rustics, Dickens's children and Tolstoy's peasants.

Lessing's patronisation of blacks is evidenced elsewhere in the novel, for example in her statement that the African group was 'like a small starving child...being torn to pieces by a group of adults' (LL, p. 49) and also in her assertion that in 1946 no history of black Africa existed (LL, p. 132).

35. Bertelsen (1986), p. 131.

36. The idea of the series dream appears to be derived from Jung. See Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology (Middlesex, Penguin, 1973), p. 98. According to Fordham Jung believed that:

A series dream makes a more satisfactory basis for interpretation than a single dream, for the theme which the unconscious is presenting becomes clearer, the important images are underlined by repetition, and mistakes in interpretation are corrected by the next dream.

In the novel the importance of Martha's dreams is stressed by describing them as an 'pseudo-iterative' event. As with the epiphany (as discussed in chapter two), the event is given narrational stress by the information that it occurs repeatedly even though it is only narrated once.

37. See David Stafford-Clark, What Freud Really Said (Middlesex, Pelican Books, 1973), p. 53. According to Stafford-Clark, Freud believed that the manifest dream which you know from your memory when you wake up is a disguised fulfillment of repressed wishes.

38. See Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook (1962) (St Albans, Panther, 1976), p. 75. Martha's behaviour bears a strong similarity to Anna Wulf's decision to separate components of her life into different notebooks.

39. Hardin (1974), p. 150.

40. Hardin (1974), p. 149.

41. See Michael Magie, "Doris Lessing and Romanticism", in College English, Vol 38, No. 6 (February 1977), p. 532, for a detailed historical analysis of this point in relation to Lessing's romanticism.

42. Rubenstein (1979), p. 124, and Mark Spilka in "Lessing and Lawrence: The Battle of The Sexes" in Contemporary Literature Vol. 16, No. 2 (1975), pp. 218 - 40, Eve Bertelsen (1985), p.98, have all alluded to similarities

between Lessing's description of love scenes in The Grass is Singing, The Golden Notebook and Landlocked and the writing of D.H. Lawrence, in particular Lady Chatterley's Lover. Lessing herself admits to having read a lot of Lawrence and Woolf in her interview with Eve Bertelsen (1985), p. 98.

43. This image bears similarity to Tennyson's "Lady of Shalot" which Lessing also uses as a metaphor in a short story "The Old Chief's Country", in Collected African Stories, Volume One (1973) (Triad, Granada, 1981), p. 13.

44. The impending violence of the storm also has echoes in the dream of murder of the coloniser by the blacks.

45. See Porter (1973), p. 15:

...(Anna Wulf's) final solution, withdrawal into an insular room where sex, politics, art intersect in madness and dream, is echoed in Martha Quest's addition of another room in her dream house, which becomes the life she shares with her lover Thomas in the loft above his greenhouse.

46. See Roger Fowler, Linguistics and the Novel (London and New York, Methuen, 1977), p. 93. Fowler asserts that external perspective is used to convey mystery or the unknown. It may also denote a distancing or dissociation on the part of the author.

47. See discussion of how the figure of the woman is co-extensive with the figure of the landscape in colonial writing in that both are unknowable quantities that lie on the margins of patriarchal knowledge in David Bunn, "Embodying Africa: Woman and Romance in Colonial Fiction", English in Africa Vol. 15, No. 1 (May 1988), pp. 1 - 28.

48. In Freudian terms, the female genitals are symbolically represented by objects which share the characteristic of enclosing, such as rooms. See Stafford-Clarke (1973), p. 71.

49. The image of Thomas as untutored and yet wise, vulnerable and yet strong, as a man who can teach and change the intellectual Martha through sexual communion, bears strong resemblance to the relationship between Mellors and Constance in Lady Chatterley's Lover.

50. Bunn (1986), p. 20.

51. Sydney Janet Kaplan, "The Limits of Consciousness in the Novels of Doris Lessing" in Pratt and Dembo (1974), p. 129.

52. Irving Howe, "Neither Compromise nor Happiness" in The New Republic, 148 (Dec 15, 1962), p. 19.

53. Going Home, p. 98:

I used to hunger for the sea so that it became a mania. That moment when, after five days in the slow, hot dusty train I smelt the sea at last, and a blue stretch of water and the masts and funnels and hills of ships appeared between factories at water level on the Cape Flats - that moment was always an explosion of relief after a long stretch of tension and nostalgia.

Chapter 5

'The Politics of Experience': An Analysis of The Four-Gated City¹

It was clearly not a question of discovering new plots, but of developing old ideas differently. (FGC, p. 528)

In this chapter I will examine the form and content of Lessing's resolution of Martha's development in the last novel of the series, The Four-Gated City (1969). Lessing's assertion in "The Small Personal Voice" that the Children of Violence is about the exploration of the self in relation to the collective,² is an accurate one. To this extent, the ideology of the Children of Violence series remains consistent, in so far as it may broadly be characterised as a humanist perspective which proposes the conception of an essential self.³ This, despite Lessing's radical shift of political alliances during the seventeen years of writing the series.

In the previous texts of the series, Martha's central dilemma, the condition of being both African and exile, prevents the resolution of the personal and the political. Martha cannot find a meeting place with the black people of Zambesia, either through her moments of epiphany on the veld (in Martha Quest), or through her participation in organised politics (in A Proper Marriage and A Ripple from the Storm). The narrative of Landlocked asserts that Martha does not belong to Africa and she constantly dreams of a return to her motherland, England. The Martha of The Four-Gated City finally arrives in England, and is severely disillusioned by the apathy and alienation of the inhabitants of post-war London and by the devastation of the landscape. At the same time she rigorously rejects all the existing forms of political action. Instead she finds resolution in mystical experience,⁴ in a condition in which (it is implied) that the ability of particular individuals to achieve transcendental communication will enable a more meaningful existence for all humanity.

I will argue that this resolution in turn produces the central contradiction of the novel. We are constantly told of the necessity to break down conventional barriers, about experimentation, about discovering new paths. On the other

hand, the overwhelming imperative of the text is towards teleological unity. The narrative repeatedly rejects all forms of intellectualisation, which it equates with authoritarianism. All knowledge, we are told, is fed by the same stream. And yet, self-discovery enables the goal of achieving resolution within the family unit and thereby with society.

In Macherey and Balibar's terms:

...literary productions must not be studied from the standpoint of their unity which is illusory and false, but from their material disparity. One must not look for unifying effects but for signs of the contradictions (historically determined) which produce them and which appear as unresolved conflicts in the text.⁵

This chapter will attempt to examine the process by which teleological unity is produced in the text, by examining the manner in which the narration reworks elements used in previous novels in the series in order to justify the strong didacticism of the text.⁶ I will focus particularly on areas discussed in relation to the previous texts in the series - such as Martha's moments of illumination, her conception of self and her relationship to the family and politics.⁷

Indeed, the romantic discourse which I have described in earlier texts is given further resonance here; as it is reinforced by Lessing's increasing deployment of a mystical discourse in the form of Sufism, and of a para-scientific discourse, in the shape of the philosophies of R.D. Laing; both of which are used to express Lessing's interest in the achievement of human perfectibility and social utopia, to be resolved (in her understanding) via an acknowledgment of the determining influence of the personal on the political. Both of these discourses stress the importance of transcendental experience and postulate the possibility of individuals with unique consciousness.⁸ Individuals with unique consciousness have experienced an 'inner' world of truth which then enriches their perception of the 'outer' world and enables greater understanding.⁹ Both also premise empirical experience over intellectualism, equating scholasticism with authority.¹⁰ Scott aptly describes the form in which Lessing uses these ideas to express her ideology:

...if we talk about mysticism in Lessing's fiction we're not necessarily talking about the literal advocacy of a particular set of beliefs about the nature of reality, space-time categories, transcendence, and so on; but about defamiliarisation, a writer's attempt to make use of a form of language, a way of looking at narrative, or an interpretative framework as a whole....¹¹

In The Four-Gated City, as in Landlocked, ideas of inner essence and of residual truth are overtly discussed and made prerequisites for the development of meaningful relations with any collective. Moreover, the romantic ideas of the previous texts are given a wider, more universal meaning in that Martha is questing in the interest of all of humankind and not merely for a personal goal.¹²

In the previous novels all collectives are depicted negatively - as enclaves of repressed violence and neurosis which reflect and reinforce the norms of the society. It is in the resolution of The Four-Gated City that, for the first time, the possibility of achieving change through a relation with a collective is mooted. The distinguishing feature of the collective Martha joins at the end of the novel is that it does not have a theoretical basis. Its principle of cohesion, we are told, is mystical union. Significantly, the reconciliation which takes place is described in a romantic discourse.

In the past Martha had always attached herself to one or other guru, submitting her own sense of self entirely to that proposed by Douglas, Anton or Thomas and their cabals. In The Four-Gated City, she discovers her own resources, her own potential for leadership. Martha is a seer in her own right. She embodies the characteristics and has had the experiences of almost all the characters in the novel, thus rendering her infinite authority and wisdom.¹³ Effectively, she becomes the omniscient consciousness of the book. She develops transcendental powers and, by the end of the novel, can relate to others with similar powers. Moreover, she exists comfortably in both the 'inner' world of mystical experience and the 'outer' world of ordinary life, and attempts to achieve unity between the two.

Sage has aptly noted that for ten years Lessing was engaged in writing herself 'out of Africa' in the Children of Violence series.¹⁴ In the previous chapter it was shown that for Lessing the disaffection with communism seems to

coincide with the need to dissolve her earlier strong identification with Africa. From A Ripple from the Storm onwards, the narrator refutes the possibility of creative involvement in the colony for Martha in her position as an anti-colonial colonial.¹⁵ Martha is definitively constructed as exile. Previously, in her moments of epiphany on the veld, Martha had striven to overcome that construction.¹⁶

This distantiating from communism and consequent rationalising of her position as an ex-communist is one of the substantial ideological shifts which takes place in the series. The Four-Gated City, which Barnouw has described as a Bildungsroman 'in itself',¹⁷ enacts the reshaping of Martha's identity. On the one hand she is described as more insightful, more experienced, more politically knowledgeable because of her African experience. She is able to conceptualise and pass judgment because of her broader life experience.¹⁸ On the other hand the narrative steadfastly attempts to insert her into an English identity. We are shown that it is only after Martha enters the cosmopolitan world of London that she is able to drop the mask she has had to wear while living in the narrow confines of colonial society. In London she is freed from colonial guilt. Being an outsider is posed as an advantage. She is enabled the freedom to explore the sub-conscious and experiment, and thereby discover a 'true' sense of self. Moreover, she is far more open to new experiences and tolerant of others. As Whittaker puts it:

It is precisely because Martha does not 'belong' that she has a very clear picture of post-war London, both physically and socially.¹⁹

In The Four-Gated City the tropes which Lessing uses to express the exploration of self change from epiphanies, dreams and 'moments' to mystical experience in breakdown or 'madness', 'tuning into' the thought patterns of others, prophecies of the apocalypse, and in its most extreme version, the depiction of a state of utopia.

In The Four-Gated City Martha is presented as being conscious of and able to conceptualise her mental processes. Even when she is undergoing mental

breakdown, the narrative is rendered in free-indirect discourse. In terms of a definition of free indirect discourse by Cohan and Shires:

...the narration is "free", not limited to what character thinks exactly, and "indirect", using language which the character himself could conceivably use but narrating rather than quoting it.

The narrator seems to "mimic" the voice of the character who functions as focaliser and focalised.²⁰

Lessing presents her protagonist as being in control, or having the potential to be in control of emotion and intellect at all times. Martha struggles consciously to achieve a sense of self, and that struggle is articulated in the form of inner debate. Lessing is now in sympathy with her protagonist and no longer has to represent the contradiction between Martha's actions and her unconscious knowledge and desire.

In her interview with Bertelsen, Lessing stated that '...the fifth book was not at all autobiographical'.²¹ The actual story of The Four-Gated City stretches from 1950 to the late sixties, and its Appendix discusses a future period between 1995 and 2000. The novel itself is particularly uneven in terms of the amount of time allocated to events, varying from descriptions of day-to-day events to the summarising of whole years.²² Rubenstein describes how the novel unfolds on two levels:

...the literal or phenomenal plane traces the development of events in the macrocosm, the world of other people, while the symbolic plane connects those events to the microcosm of Martha Quest's own consciousness.²³

Martha arrives in London five years after the end of the war. She is thirty years old. The landscape she encounters is 'rootless', piled with rubble and debris, the people guarded and hostile: 'there was no face that did not carry marks of strain, weariness or illness' (FGC, p. 18).²⁴ Martha 'freeboots' around London for a few weeks, acting out different personae, relishing her anonymity.²⁵ Gradually societal pressure and a lack of financial resources force her to choose. This is in itself a breakthrough for Martha, who has previously always waited to be chosen.

She rejects the conventionally most profitable career choice offered by Henry Matheson, Mr Maynard's wife's cousin. He offers her a post as secretary in his law firm. She also rejects the possibility of becoming one of the many live-in lovers of Jack, a man with whom she enjoys some of her best sexual experiences.²⁶

Martha knowingly chooses the most difficult and seemingly most conventional of the options open to her. She becomes the secretary, housekeeper, surrogate mother to the upper-class household of Mark Coldridge, a novelist and co-owner of an electronics factory.²⁷ Even before she starts her job Martha describes it as:

...everything as sick and neurotic and hopeless as you can imagine...and a dominating mother over all, and a wife in a mental hospital, and a man just sitting waiting for a sucker like me to cope with everything. (FGC, p. 107)

Martha constantly intends to leave but stays because of one crisis after another. She becomes the stable factor in the household. She also becomes a surrogate mother to Francis, Mark's son. Mark's wife Lynda is perpetually in a state of nervous break-down. She is variously described by psycho-analysts as manic-depressive, paranoid and schizophrenic. Lynda lives first in a mental institution and then in the basement of the Coldridge house.

Between Lynda and Martha a growing affinity develops. At first Lynda is portrayed as other. Gradually the language of the basement encroaches on Martha's life.

Martha experiences with Mark and the Coldridge family, the changing political trends over the years - the cold war of the 50's, Mark's encounter with communism, the left preoccupation with Africa, the invasion of Hungary and Suez, the preoccupation with art, food, decor of the late sixties, the concern with nuclear disarmament and the Aldermaston Marches of the sixties. She encounters, through the social life of the Coldridge family, a range of artists, journalists and politicians to the left and right of the political spectrum.

By the end of the novel, with the Coldridge house about to be demolished, there is an overwhelming sense of doom about the future. Mark

and his new wife Rita (Maisie Macgrew's daughter) leave to attempt to build a city in Tunisia with funds from an American industrialist. Francis, his friends and extended family of cousins seek refuge on a farm. Lynda moves into a flat with a friend while Martha is left undecided about her future.

At the end of the novel, a lengthy Appendix is attached in the form of a documentary exchange of letters between Martha, Francis, Mark and Amanda (Francis' step-daughter). We are told that a 'Catastrophe' has occurred (which Martha and Lynda had predicted) in which a nuclear accident causes the destruction of England. Martha ends up on an island with a handful of people who manage to escape with her.

As in Landlocked, Lessing starts The Four-Gated City with a Sufi story, this time a dervish teaching story from The Way of The Sufi by Idries Shah.²⁸ As in the earlier text, the story establishes theme and authorial point of view.²⁹

Once upon a time there was a fool who was sent to buy flour and salt. He took a dish to carry his purchases.

'Make sure,' said the man who sent him, 'not to mix the two things - I want them separate.'

When the shopkeeper had filled the dish with flour and was measuring out the salt, the fool said: 'Do not mix it with the flour; here, I will show you where to put it.'

And he inverted the dish, to provide from its upturned bottom, a surface upon which the salt could be laid.

The flour, of course, fell to the floor.

But the salt was safe.

When the fool got back to the man who had sent him, he said: 'Here is the salt.'

'Very well,' said the man, 'but where is the flour?'

'It should be here,' said the fool, turning the dish over.

As soon as he did that, the salt fell to the ground, and the flour, of course, was seen to be gone. (my emphasis)

The story emphasises a sense of collapse, of disintegration and loss,³⁰ which is the consequence of a lack of self-reflection. Not only the fool, but also the man who sends him on the errand (who gives him only one bowl) as well as the shopkeeper, fail to reflect on the consequences of their actions and thus fail to see the obvious until it is too late: '...and the flour, of course, was seen to be gone'. The last clause is phrased in the passive tense (unlike the rest of the story) and emphasises the word 'seen' which is in fact redundant in the sentence.

The superficiality of the protagonists' gaze is also emphasised. They 'see' for the first time only after collapse has already taken place and the situation cannot be redeemed.

Lessing has in fact shortened Idries Shah's version of this dervish tale. Shah's version concludes:

You have laughed at the joke of the fool. Now, will you do more, and think about your own thoughts as if they were the salt and the flour? ³¹

The men in the dervish story each have access to individual facts which are meaningless because they fail to make any connections for themselves and because they fail to communicate, to share knowledge.

It is implied in the story, and spelt out more clearly in the course of the novel, that intellectual categories generate division and hence a limitation of thought. The men in the dervish story have failed to deal with multiplicity. In Rubenstein's words:

The "Dedication" of the novel is a Sufi teaching story which alludes not only to a foolish man's misunderstanding of the obvious but to the loss that results from categorization, from trying to keep things separate. ³²

The only way the men can deal with the concept of division is by splitting, by separating out ideas. The need to learn to cope with multiplicity, that is to overcome division in order to achieve unity, is stressed throughout the text. The first step is to overcome socialisation - the way the mind ordinarily works. This insight is represented first as a passing remark and then as the culmination of Martha's knowledge at the end of the novel:

There was something in the human mind that separated, and divided.
(FGC, p. 93)

There is something in the human mind which makes it possible for one compartment to hold Fact A which matches Fact B in another compartment; but the two facts can exist side by side for years, decades, centuries, without coming together. It is at least possible that the most fruitful way of describing the human brain is this: 'It is a machine which works in division; it is composed of parts which function in compartments

locked off from each other.’ or ‘Your right hand does not know what your left hand is doing.’ (FGC, p. 538)

This is the central justification in the text for the power of transcendental experience. The community on Faris Island are superior because they can transcend the limitation of compartmentalisation by their powers of ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ and can thus make connections.³³

Throughout The Four-Gated City, Lessing stresses the need to reflect on and learn from ordinary individual experience as a way to learn to deal with self-division.³⁴ A repeated refrain in the text is that there is ‘no substitute for experience’ (FGC, pp. 112; 121; 216; 354; 385). This fits in with Lessing’s rejection of political organisation in The Four-Gated City. From as far back as A Ripple from the Storm, Lessing equates intellectualism with authoritarianism.³⁵ In The Four-Gated City, she stresses time and again that intellectual knowledge is redundant without knowledge of the self. The narrative repeatedly rejects intellectual categories as limiting because, in her opinion, people become entrapped by forms, slogans and clichés, and do not engage with their own ‘thoughts’.³⁶ We are told that: ‘...it was into no cage of dogma that Martha was going to allow herself to be led; because by definition there were no grounds for dogma’ (FGC, p. 234). The narration promulgates Rousseau’s idea that knowledge and the consciousness of how to acquire it, are somehow instinctive:

Somewhere in Martha’s life it had been instilled into her, or she knew by instinct, that one should never read anything until one wanted to, learn anything until one needed it. (FGC, p.233):
 ...if you don’t know something you can’t know it. You can only learn something you already begin to know. ‘I can’t tell you something you don’t know.’ (FGC, p. 565)

In Lessing’s view, Martha has acquired knowledge of truth, of an ‘essence’ or ‘pith’ (FGC, p. 233) which can be extracted from reading to confirm knowledge already held. Similarly, in Martha Quest, Martha resents the fact that she has been supplied with radical intellectual texts by Joss Cohen. She exclaims: ‘Yes, of course poverty is stupid so why say it again?’ (MQ, p. 66). In The Four-Gated

City one of Martha's central insights is that it is not what one knows, but 'how one knows' (FGC, p. 253). The dervish story thus expresses one of the most crucial aspects of the ideology of The Four-Gated City; that empirical knowledge, the knowledge gained from one's life experience, is the only valid knowledge. It also expresses the fact that intellectual training merely mystifies knowledge into a rhetoric; which, because it is inaccessible to ordinary people, sets up power relations. We are told that 'These practitioners of a science, or art, agreed about absolutely nothing' (FGC, p. 234).

According to Shah:

Teaching-stories are told in public and form part of the outer activity of dervishes. They are intended to lay a basis of knowledge about Sufism and its characteristic methods of thought. They are seldom employed for didactic purposes.³⁷

Ironically, Lessing's use of the story as a "Dedication" has a distinct didactic functioning, since by its prominence it admonishes the reader not to judge the text in terms of conventional modes of thought. It establishes a sense of 'otherness', a sense of being exotic. In The Four-Gated City, Martha's search for self-knowledge is associated with the idea that there is 'inner' truth from which we are excluded by establishment forces of power. As in the previous novels, Martha's quest is for personal wholeness and for a sense of unity with a community. The crucial difference in this novel is that an acceptance of mysticism is explicitly made a prerequisite for the achievement of unity. In Lessing's view, it is because we are taught to deny 'mystical' knowledge, and are therefore unable to communicate fully, that societies fail. In her view knowledge in our society is acquired through canonisation or fashion. This idea is repeated throughout the text, and is thereby authenticated through the endorsement of both Martha and the text's narrator.

The ideology of The Four-Gated City stresses the view that real knowledge can only be obtained through empirical experience, and that complete, 'true' knowledge is only accessible to individuals who have transcendental powers and are prepared to use these creatively. This ideology is legitimated in the text by describing the process of Martha's own conscious

struggle to accept her 'real' self, to achieve 'true' consciousness. It is given further resonance by a series of rhetorical statements about the failure of intellectuals to resolve the problems of the world, and by satirising intellectual figures such as politicians and psychotherapists. Further, the narrator also proposes that society (in particular psychotherapists) conspire to suppress knowledge of transcendental powers because of the threat such insights would pose to establishment forces.

In The Four-Gated City Martha seeks to employ a knowledge of self creatively. She is fully aware of 'Matty' the artificial mask who was:

... rather amusing, outspoken, competently incompetent, free from convention, free to say what other people did not say: yet always conscious of making a burnt offering of these qualities. (FGC, p. 14)

This is the self she presents to London in various guises. To Stella and her friends she presents 'the hip-swinging sexually gallant girl' (FGC, p. 25), to Henry, 'a slaphappy freebooting adventuress, cousin of 'Matty'' (FGC, p. 29). Martha actively attempts to suppress this part of herself - to achieve union with the 'real self which is preserved behind a mask' (FGC, p. 14), the self which society has forced her to deny by compelling her to embrace convention. Later, when Martha experiences mental breakdown, this self is defined as the 'watcher': '...the best part of me. The only part that is real - that's permanent anyway' (FGC, p. 249) and as 'her deepest self' (FGC, p. 252). It is defined as an integral part of the process of schizophrenic breakdown.

This construction of self is identical to R.D. Laing's conception of an 'inner self' imprisoned in the socially conditioned self and requiring deliverance.³⁸ Laing believes that the real self becomes imprisoned in an ego which is the construction of social conditions. This imprisonment constitutes 'psychic illness' and is a condition which is all-pervasive in society. Cure can be realised by the dissolution of the ego (by drugs, religious experience or 'madness'). The self is then released and experiences 'other worlds' as well.³⁹

I have shown that in Landlocked Lessing's conception of a residual self bears strong affinity with the Romanticism of English thinkers such as William Wordsworth, and perhaps even more so with the heterodoxy of William Blake

and with Shah. In The Four-Gated City, Lessing seems to draw on Laing's discourse as a means of concretising her belief in a residual self and the potential for transcendental communication.

Walking through the London streets towards Jack's house, where she will finally make the decision that she will not choose his way of life, Martha discovers that she no longer fears loneliness.⁴⁰ She regards it as a 'gift' (FGC, p. 47) which allows her to explore inner being:

...if only she could stay here in this area of herself she had found ... her mind was swinging slowly from light to dark, dark to light. Into it came impressions: a tree, an intensely variegated mass of light.... Her mind was soft dark empty space. That was what she was. 'Matty' was an intolerably tedious personage she could think of only with exhausted nausea and fear that she might ever again be afflicted by her. Martha - well, ordinary Martha too had moved away, could be looked at: she did well enough, was not important. (FGC, p. 48)

Martha is able to isolate and analyse her different senses of self: the self which is her mask and the self which (in Laing's terms) is the product of social conditions. Neither is adequate. What is asserted as important is a concrete essence in Martha, a 'soft, dark space' which transcends boundaries of space and time:

No, nothing but a soft dark receptive intelligence, that was all. And if she tried - but not too hard, a quick flash of effort, a light probe into a possibility, she could move back in time, annulling time for the moment of the effort, and stand in another country, on another soil. ...she was, nothing to do with Martha, or any other name she might have had attached to her, nothing to do with what she looked like, how she had been shaped. (FGC, p. 48)

The narrative does not define the nature of Martha's 'real' self. We are merely told that it has 'nothing to do with' 'how she had been shaped' (FGC, p. 48).

This, despite the fact that she can clearly visualise her younger self '...not in imagination - there she sat'.

In this incident, the trajectory of Martha's experience is rendered as photographed action. Martha's experience is presented as a pause in the narration.⁴¹ We are told at the outset that the incident is typical of many Martha has already experienced, thus authenticating it.⁴²

The scene is dramatised by the use of imagery of light and dark: ‘...her mind swinging slowly from light to dark, dark to light’, ‘intensely variegated mass of light’, ‘Her mind was a soft dark empty space’, ‘nothing but a soft dark receptive intelligence’ (FGC, p. 48). Her mind is variously ‘soft dark’, ‘empty space’, ‘quiet empty space’, ‘quiet space’, ‘soft space’, ‘soft dark’, ‘quiet swinging dark’ (idem.). The narration focalises Martha’s mind as an empty but nonetheless receptive ‘soft’ vessel which has to be filled with knowledge. The method consists of switching off the ‘current of ordinary thought’ (FGC, p. 47), ‘a quick flash of effort, a light probe of possibility’ (FGC, p. 48), ‘anulling time’ (idem.) and ‘tuning in and listening’ (FGC, p. 49) in order to enable ‘a flash of forseeing’ (FGC, p. 50) which is rendered ‘like fireworks’ (FGC, p. 51). The use of this dramatic language of telecommunications and electromagnetism represents this process as dynamic interaction. The irony is that despite our witnessing the process of that interaction, the scene is devoid of content. It is as though we were viewing the special effects of a film without actually knowing why. We then have to be told its purpose by the voice-over in the form of the ‘jiggling fool or idiot’.⁴³

This histrionic language is used throughout The Four-Gated City, first metaphorically to verbalise Martha’s emotional state, and then gradually quite literally as we are introduced to Martha and Lynda’s transcendental powers of ‘hearing’ and ‘seeing’.⁴⁴ As the text progresses, Martha’s emotional experiences are rendered in free-indirect speech because the point of knowledge has already been established. We have been introduced to the discourse of mysticism by the narrative agency and can hereafter accept its truth value.

In Martha Quest, Martha’s moments of illumination on the veld renders her affinity with the veld and affirms her sense of wanting to belong to Africa (even though this sense of belonging was never realised). It increases her perception of unity and taught her respect for the land and its inhabitants. The knowledge that she acquires from her moments of epiphany in effect constitutes a rejection of all that her colonial upbringing has taught her. It teaches her a critical awareness. In The Four-Gated City she is by contrast taught passivity and duty to the family structure by her illumination: ‘...a thought had floated in’, ‘...it was simply a question of tuning in and listening’ (FGC, p. 49).⁴⁵ In The

Four-Gated City the narrator is essentially still using the romantic idea that truth is revealed through the moment of illumination. However the content and form of the epiphany has changed in accordance with Lessing's adaptation of her romanticism to the terms of Sufi ideas, and because her protagonist is no longer on the veld. In Sage's terms: 'Lessing recalls and reworks her heroine's moments of illumination'.⁴⁶

In The Four-Gated City knowledge comes to Martha in the form of a seemingly banal tune from 'the jiggling fool or idiot', reminding us of the dervish story and also of Lessing's belief that it is the knowledge gained from ordinary sources (as opposed to books) that is most useful:

...why resent the method if the information was of use.
How did she want useful information to be given? In crashing chords no doubt, or with trumpets? (FGC, p. 50)

Martha learns that she wants to find a home (phrased in Lessing's language of predestination, 'wanted to go home') and:

...she understood that in fact she was under great strain: and in a flash of foreseeing, realized the plunge into inert exhaustion that would follow the height. But who, what, was tired, that she needed to be told she was? (FGC, p. 50)

The 'jiggling wave-length': 'Jack fell down and broke his crown' (FGC, p. 50), also tells her that the home is not with Jack: 'rootless, untied, free' (FGC, p. 50). Rather, she has to find her place with responsibility: '...she had debts to pay...' (FGC, p. 51).

The knowledge that Martha gains from this episode is that she has to struggle to break the ego which is formed by the social world, that she has to achieve a unity of self. It is implied that she will then have access to truth: she will have learnt how to read the signs, to be open: 'a soft dark receptive intelligence' (FGC, p. 48). Further, this truth will of necessity have to be passed on to others. From the outset Martha is authenticated as a leader figure, as one who has intuitive knowledge and a willingness to struggle towards the attainment of truth. Moreover, she also has a sense of social responsibility. Like the Sufis

and Laing, Lessing is concerned with the individual first, with the attainment of 'inner' truth which will later inform the material world.⁴⁷

In A Ripple from the Storm, the narrator satirises Martha's unwillingness to question the group's rhetoric by depicting a contradiction between what Martha observes and her actual thoughts. In that text the focaliser and focalised are radically at odds. In The Four-Gated City there is no such contradiction since we are rendered a photographic image of the process of Martha's mind. The narrative presents thought and feeling in perfect unison. Martha does not know what 'debts' she has to pay or why, but she does not question the payment.⁴⁸ The fact that she does not question this is narrated as a positive quality. As in Landlocked, where Martha's dreams inform her that she must '...not try and explain, or build bridges' (LL, p. 22), Martha accepts the truth value of her information despite the fact that her source of knowledge is a 'jiggling wave-length'. Her mind is a passive recipient rather than a questioning intellect. Martha is not only presented as accepting of her intuitive knowledge; that knowledge is legitimated by the narrative focalisation.

Daymond points out that:

Lessing structures Martha's re-experience of woman's traditional roles, wife and mother, to suggest that although Martha is repeating her life in one sense, she is also being made a new person by that repetition.⁴⁹

This is certainly valid in the context of the story of The Four-Gated City. However, in terms of the wider context of Children of Violence Lessing's representation enacts a recuperation of the ideology of the family and its role relations. I have shown that in Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage and A Ripple from the Storm the family unit is constructed as a primary site of oppression; as a site of capitalism which can only be transformed through revolutionary change. In Landlocked Martha achieves a relationship of ironic tolerance with her mother.

In The Four-Gated City, Martha grieves over the fact that she had set her daughter Caroline free from the family (FGC, p. 80). Significantly too, she identifies her mother as the chief source of her pain in Africa. Martha's struggle is to resolve the estrangement between the 'inner' and 'outer' experience. What

she achieves is a gradual reconstruction of her childhood by means of recalling past incidents:

She worked, laying hold of a detail, a cushion, a flower, a voice, the light on the lenses of a pair of spectacles. White shoes: small white shoes, a child's: a small girl with a pink dress and shining black curls. She turned her face towards Martha, a small, rather sharp face, watchful. Her smile was strained. Martha reached towards the smile, saw it dissolve in tears: Martha heard herself crying. She wept, while a small girl wept with her, mamma, mamma, why are you so cold, so unkind, why did you never love me? (FGC, p. 243)

Martha and the small child of her past become one in their appeal to the mother. The term 'mamma' suggests the language of the child while the past tense '...did you never love me?' indicates the adult Martha's participation in the appeal. Martha thus gradually learns to articulate and conceptualise the nature of the emotions associated with her mother:

... My mother was a woman who hated her own sexuality and she hated mine. She wanted me to be a boy. She had a boy's name for me. My way of fighting her was - to be a clown.' (Martha, saying this, realized that after all, saying something, made one understand it differently.) (FGC, p. 252)

The persona of 'Matty' is accounted for in terms of Martha's mother. We are struck by the significance of this because (as mentioned in chapter 2) Martha's childhood has in fact never been narrated or even referred to previously in the series. The Martha Quest novel starts at the point of Martha's adolescence.

The contradiction suffered in earlier texts of being both African and exile is not mentioned here. Martha's guilt about leaving Africa is depoliticised: her earlier depiction of this guilt as arising from a failure to connect with the blacks in Africa ('For these people continued to feel, deeper than anything else, a communal hurt and embarrassment on behalf of the Africans' [RFS, p. 166]), is displaced and projected onto the family. In Martha's attempt to reconstruct the past, there is no attempt to come to terms with the schisms of her political past, the fact that the group has collapsed, the revelations about Stalinism and why the group had not been able to connect with the black population. Moreover it is

implied that Martha had adopted communism because it was a system which had expressed her feelings about the family: 'All of us lot, we were communists, we felt the same...' (FGC, p. 80). Martha is able to recall the atmosphere of her relationship with Thomas and the social aspects of her days in the 'group', but nothing more:

She held Thomas. Holding Thomas, using his strong presence as guide, she moved out of the loft, into the cafe with its smell of the army, and hot fat, and floor polish. She let the great room and its eating people come back, with Athen, and Solly and Joss and Jasmine; holding them, she moved up into the avenues and the gardened house where her mother...and now pain came in a hot sear, and it all collapsed. (FGC, pp. 241 - 242)

In the recollection of her childhood, Martha relates interactively with her childhood persona, becoming one with the past. By contrast, in this scene we witness how Martha guides and controls the images she recalls: 'She let the room...come back' (FGC, p. 242). Martha moves quickly from one scene to another. She does not allow herself to stop to interact or become emotionally involved. The verbs employed are all active, until the moment that Martha recalls her mother and 'pain came in a hot sear' (FGC, p. 242). Despite the fact that the 'group' had been an alternative family to Martha and the people with whom she had spent all her free time over a period of about eight years, she does not explore this area of her past at all.

I would argue that this silence in the text highlights a major contradiction in The Four-Gated City. Martha spends a great deal of her time in self-exploration - questioning her past and present self. And yet her political life, her formative intellectual experiences are absent. We are told without reason that she has '...had enough of organized politics for the time being' (FGC, p. 97). And we are faced with an extreme superiority in Martha vis-à-vis politics and intellectuals. The source of that assertiveness is always justified as her experience of politics in Africa. Phoebe, Mark's sister-in-law and a Labour activist tells Martha:

We do need someone with real experience of the colonies - someone who knows the conditions, experience with the natives. (FGC, p. 95)

And Martha replies: 'For a start you can't use that word any longer - natives' (idem.). Martha is affirmed by the English as an authority on Africa and its politics, as someone '...with a wider experience than most English girls have' (FGC, p. 42). She herself confirms this view by steadfastly rejecting all the job offers made to her, not because she does not believe that she has experience, but because she wishes to distance herself from her previous life.

The imminent arrival of Martha's mother in England precipitates Martha's mental breakdown and at the same time facilitates her first exploration to uncover her 'real' self.⁵⁰ The process is represented in the text by the use of the mirror image. There is no element of the 'fireworks' and 'light flashes' of the previous experience. Martha's process of uncovering a 'real' self is represented as a struggle. We view it through a series of scenes. Martha stares at her image in the mirror repeatedly to attempt to see the 'real' Martha:

In the mirror she saw a solid, competent-looking woman with a fresh light make-up and hair that gleamed an attractive gold. The dark eyes, made-up, seemed unchanged. (FGC, p. 234)

Sometimes she got up and looked into the mirror, in an urgency of need to see a reflection of that presence called, for no particular reason, Martha. In the mirror was a pleasant-faced woman whose name was Martha. She had dark eyes. She smiled, or frowned. Once, bringing to the mirror a mood of seething anxiety, she saw a dishevelled panic struck creature, who was in agony of fear. Who watched? (FGC, p. 236)

and once while trying to remember her adolescence:

She returned to the mirror and remembered the face of that girl: she saw it again, a shadow behind the face she saw now, two faces, the present face and one of the faces of the past. They were connected by the eyes. (FGC, p. 240)

In Laingian terms, Martha's preoccupation with her image in the mirror is also an expression of extreme self-consciousness. She experiences what Laing terms

an estrangement of self and body - whereby the body acts in an outwardly normal way, but inwardly it is felt to be acting on its own.⁵¹ What unites all of these images of reflection is the emphasis on the eyes: 'the dark, unchanging eyes', and on watching. This emphasis stresses the fact that the vision, and the knowledge gained, is accessible only to Martha. These scenes are mainly narrated, as can be seen, with an over-emphasis on verbs of perception and adominant use of past participles.⁵² All of the vision we are presented with is real, that is, can be seen by the objective world. The narration posits a separation of focaliser and focalised. Martha's mind is estranged from her reflected image. The narrator conceptualises the scene, representing the disjuncture by describing the mirror image as though it were a separate person.⁵³

Later Martha imagines herself to be an empty pool with various reflections, including her own. Here disembodiment is taken to its most extreme:

...look, feel, as empty as a pool. Who? Into the pool came a word, sycamore. Came chair. Into the pool came scents, sounds, voices, pictures. When scents, sounds, pictures, words, went, she remained. Who?... Who are you then? Why, me of course, who else, horse, woman, man or tree, a glittering faceted individuality of breathing green, here is the sense of me, nameless, recognizable only to me. Who, what? (FGC, pp. 242 - 243)

In this quotation we note the change in the presentation of consciousness, the use of the first person pronoun and present continuous verbs, and the questioning. The images of the pool, horse and tree are all imagined subjective images. The pool in itself reflects a more introspective state. As Martha progresses further into the world of 'madness' and increased disembodiment, the scenes are almost entirely represented in free-indirect speech. The narrative has already established authority by first depicting Martha's sub-conscious in the 'objective' world by the use of the metaphors of electromagnetism and telecommunications, the mirror and various references to external reality. The reader is then open to being taken one step further into the world of transcendental vision.⁵⁴ In The Four-Gated City the presentation of mirror images becomes a narrative technique (an extended metaphor) which serves the

function of repetition, of representing the same fact in a range of guises and thereby asserting its truth value.⁵⁵

The emphasis on perception in the text also has a basis in Laing's analysis of schizophrenia:

These two forms of awareness of self, as an object in one's own eyes and as an object in the other's eyes, are closely related to each other. In the schizoid individual both are enhanced and both assume a somewhat compulsive nature. The schizoid individual is frequently tormented by the compulsive nature of his awareness of his own processes, and also by the equally compulsive nature of his sense of his body as an object in the world of others. The heightened sense of being always seen, or at any rate of being always potentially seeable, may be condensed with the idea of the mental self being penetrable and vulnerable, as when the individual feels that one can look right through him into his 'mind' or 'soul'.⁵⁶

The narrative presents this extreme awareness of self in Martha as a positive quality. It is what sets her apart from other characters, and has been so since Martha Quest. What is different in The Four-Gated City is that Martha attempts to achieve a balance between the two senses of self 'as an object in the other's eyes' and 'as an object in one's own eyes'; whereas in previous texts the former had always been preferred. The quest in The Four-Gated City is the Sufi one to 'Be in the world but not of it'.⁵⁷

The climax of Martha's self-exploration occurs when she supports Lynda during one of Lynda's periods of mental breakdown.⁵⁸ Martha's empathy with Lynda enables her to work out the psychological motivations for Lynda's actions. She works out that Lynda is in fact in control, that she had calculated the moment of breakdown (FGC, p. 500), and that she is shrewdly treating Martha as an authority figure (FGC, p. 503). Once Martha refuses to play an authoritarian role, Lynda's aggression ebbs (FGC, p. 506). Martha then proceeds to become 'part of Lynda' (FGC, p. 505), to go 'a long way inside of Lynda's country' (FGC, p. 507). We are told that she is invaded by a telepathic 'current' or 'energy' from Lynda (FGC, p. 510), that '...she could easily hear what Lynda was thinking' (FGC, p. 512).

The narrative is redolent with the imagery of telecommunications and electromagnetism which predominates in the discourse of Martha's first mystical

experience in England: 'plugging in' (FGC, p. 511), 'energy' (FGC, p. 512), 'volts' (FGC, p. 510), 'sound barrier' (FGC, p. 514), 'current' (FGC, p. 514):

It was as if a million radio sets ran simultaneously, and her mind plugged itself in fast to one after another, so that words, phrases, songs, sounds, came into audition and then faded. (FGC, p. 513)

The connection to Martha's first 'mystical' experience in England (FGC, p. 512) and to similar experiences in her childhood is also made explicit (FGC, p. 508). Further, we are told that Martha has always had this capacity to 'see' and 'hear' the thoughts of others, but that she has suppressed the knowledge (FGC, p. 516). We are told that Martha has known: '...this area of the human mind where the machinery of ordinary life seemed more than absurd, seemed like a frightening trap' (FGC, p. 508). She rebukes herself for having allowed herself to be '...sucked in, she had become a liar and a coward like the rest' (FGC, p. 508). We are not told the significance of what 'Lynda's country' is, or how Martha has learnt from Lynda, apart from the fact that she has been there. The narrative concentrates instead on legitimating its discourse of vision through madness.

The narrative proposes a type of group unconscious,⁵⁹ whereby people with special consciousness can communicate with each other, can achieve a whole understanding through their ability to foresee future events and to 'hear' each other's thoughts:

...it is not a question of 'Lynda's mind' or 'Martha's mind'; it is the human mind, or part of it, and Lynda, Martha can choose to plug in or not... (FGC, p. 513)

We are also told that this self-awareness has been suppressed in most human beings by indulgence and drugs. When Martha emerges from Lynda's basement to go outside, her viewpoint of the world has been determined by Lynda. Human beings appear to be 'half-drugged' or 'half-asleep' (FGC, p. 521), as if 'hypnotized or poisoned' (FGC, p. 521) in their 'fouled and disgusting streets full of odure and bits of refuse paper' (FGC, p. 521):

There they were, all soft like pale slugs, or dark slugs, with their limp flabby flesh, with hair sprouting from it.... (FGC, p. 521)

This image bears strong resemblance to Martha's first appraisal of Lynda:

...her hair hung in lank colourless strands. She seemed all great staring eyes and skull. The illness, or the pills she took so many of, made her sweat a lot: she smelled sour. (FGC, p. 132)

Martha's viewpoint has undergone a complete inversion. She now sees the rest of the world through Lynda's eyes, as defective, as mad:

But the most frightening thing about them was this: that they walked and moved and went about their lives in a condition of sleep-walking: they were not aware of themselves, of other people, of what went on around them. (FGC, p. 522)

This viewpoint is authenticated by the fact that it is focalised through Martha. We are witnessing Martha's thought process seemingly without narrative intervention.

Despite the fact that Martha is having a breakdown, she is asserted as an omniscient presence, as the central consciousness of this experience. It is reiterated that Martha is perfectly sane (FGC, p. 507), that she is conscious of the process of her experiences because she has already witnessed Lynda's experience of breakdown. We are told that Mark's advice to Lynda: '...keep her in touch with reality' (FGC, p. 502), had been completely wrong, that he had failed to understand Lynda because he had assumed his own 'rational' viewpoint of reality to be correct. The fact that Martha had earlier undergone these 'mystical' experiences but had suppressed the knowledge, is further used to assert her authority. She can control and use the experience of breakdown creatively because she is aware of the pitfalls. She is authenticated by Lynda as a potential leader figure (FGC, p. 517), as someone who has the capacity to avoid drugs and the psychiatric institutions and thereby use the process of breakdown creatively. Lynda warns:

But you must be careful, Martha, careful, you mustn't say what you know, they'll lock you up, they want machines, they don't want people...but you can do it. Once I thought I could do it, but I can't. (FGC, pp. 517 - 518)

Martha and Lynda conclude that Lynda need never have been ill, that she has been duped by psychiatric institutions into suppressing her transcendental powers.

Martha's new 'knowledge' of the power of transcendental communication is finally legitimated by her reading:

...all these different faiths, or sets of ideas were talking about the same processes, the same psychological truths. She was reading different languages, or dialects, describing the same thing. This was true of all of them from the poems of St. John of the Cross to states of mind described in the Upanishads. (FGC, p. 530)

The narrator here asserts a universal knowledge of transcendental communication which extends across cultures and faiths and across time without having been fully expressed and without the connections having been made by anyone other than Martha. The blame for this is laid on the education system, which we are told suppresses this information in the same way as the psychiatric institutions suppress the insights of those who are proclaimed mad:

...it was surely a remarkable fact that her education, the education of everyone of her generation (and of many generations back?) had been so set, programmed, that not a word of any of this information had been able to come through to her except in odd fragments, phrases, notions, each one soaked in, redolent of, 'dottiness', 'eccentricity', shadiness, unpleasantness. (FGC, p. 530)

This is the summation of Lessing's criticism of intellectuals and the intellectual establishment. The narration reiterates a conspiracy theory of knowledge and power among intellectuals. In Lessing's view, whether consciously or unconsciously, politicians, psychiatrists and educationalists do not question the establishment. Moreover their own categorisation of knowledge into disciplines results in an evasion of truth. She casts Dr Lamb, Lynda's psychiatrist (whom Martha also consults during her own period of breakdown) as a type, someone

who blindly follows and implements a doctrine over which he has little or no control and which he does not question. He is cast as a product of social, cultural and political circumstances:

This was not Dr.[sic] Lamb's fault, who administered machinery he had not invented. Like the educators, and the ordinary doctor, and like everything else - he was part of a bit of machinery which was supposed to be working to a blueprint which in fact had never been put into operation, because there was never money for schools, hospitals, mental hospitals. The money was spent on war. (FGC, p. 336)

This statement legitimates the view that one should trust one's own experience rather than submit to the seeming authority of intellectuals. The narration casts intellectuals as victims of economic and social systems which dictate blueprints. Martha is able to resist the power of Dr Lamb and the institution he represents which would lead her into drugs because she is able to analyse his modus operandi.

Dr Lamb is characterised in a very similar manner to Anton Hesse, the leader of the communist group. Both are cast as victims, in that they are enslaved to a particular doctrine. Nevertheless both are depicted as rigid, impersonal, authoritarian and manipulative:

When he put on that suit in the mornings, he put on his profession; when he came into this room, he entered the impersonal. Yet, if one could only see them, this room's air must be saturated, crammed with painful and violent emotions; years, probably, of anguish and terror were concentrated in it. The walls must be sodden, vibrating with them. Emotions. But not Dr. Lamb's. (FGC, pp. 244 - 245)

Like a character in a play who wore a mask which said 'I am Wisdom', it did not matter what he was personally. (FGC, p. 245)

As with Anton, what is criticised is Dr Lamb's lack of empathy, his insensitivity to the individual and his uncompromising commitment to a particular theoretical position. We are told Dr Lamb's form of therapy is based on manipulation (which causes Martha to explode at calculated moments), and on an engendering of dependency which leaves her 'emotionless', 'without energy' (FGC, p. 247).

Lynda's advice (to stay away from psychiatrists), borne of brutal experience, is authenticated:

Finally the central fact. If at any time at all I had gone to a doctor or to a psychiatrist, that would have been that. I'm over the edge. But even if I stay here I can manage (like Lynda). Why? Because I know just that small amount about it not to let myself be stampeded. (FGC, p. 569)

This series of didactic 'factual' statements characterises all of the narration's descriptions of institutions in The Four-Gated City. Interestingly, it is a form that Lessing has not employed in her previous novels, where her criticism always took much more crafted forms such as irony and satire. In this respect The Four-Gated City does not, despite what many critics would seem to intimate, explore new forms.

Lessing's attitude towards psychiatry is (as I have attempted to show) profoundly anti-intellectual. Her attitude to organised politics reflects the same position. She forecloses criticism of her stance by always denying that she has a stance.⁶⁰

In The Four-Gated City, left-wing politicians all express the same truths but only in different discourse, so that they fail to understand each other (FGC, pp. 165; 455). Political organisations are described as a kind of ritual enactment:

They all agreed about Africa, about Kenya. They agreed about - a large number of matters, but not about what had constituted this group's chief reason for existence in the first place. The meetings became fewer, then stopped. (FGC, p. 222)

In the same way, people affiliate to different political groupings not because of a particular theoretical understanding, but because of personal emotional experience. Mark, for example, becomes a communist when he feels betrayed by his fellow countrymen after Colin flees to Moscow.⁶¹ The narrator comments:

There is a certain type of Englishman who, on learning that his country (like every other) employs spies; or (like every other) taps telephones, opens letters and keeps dossiers on its citizens; or (like every other) employs policemen who take bribes, beat up suspects, plant information, etc. - has a nervous breakdown. In extreme cases, such a man goes into a

monastery, or suffers a sudden conversion to whatever is available. (FGC, p. 192)

Mark's behaviour is not focalised from Martha's perspective. The narrator intervenes directly as the voice of authority and experience to conceptualise Mark's behaviour. As in previous novels, the narrator casts political behaviour into 'types' of neurosis. Martha's authority is further consolidated in The Four-Gated City in that she has had the experience of communism. The narrative's omniscience can thus be shared with Martha. Like Anton and Dr Lamb, Mark's behaviour can be cast as typical:

Mark had suffered a conversion, sudden and dramatic, and Martha was able to follow it through its rapid stages, since it was identical as far as she could see, with the one she had undergone ten years before. (FGC, p. 193)

Mark's conversion to communism is described thus, as a kind of malady:

In short, his diversion from himself into communism was over. He had had a dose of communism. Some people can fall in love often and violently, but it doesn't affect them. When it's over they haven't changed. Similarly, some people get doses of this or that kind of politics or religion: but it doesn't really affect them. (FGC, pp. 224 - 225)

In Lessing's terms Mark had changed personalities, '...walked into a state of mind' (FGC, p. 194). The communist Mark is a mere facade which will change in due course.

The narration uses all the rhetoric of A Ripple from the Storm to condemn communism but this time it is expressed directly by Martha rather than filtered through the satire and irony of the narrator. This is legitimated because we are told that the language being used 'is identical with hers of ten years ago' (FGC, p. 193): 'She looked when she looked at him, at herself of the past: hot-eyed, angry, violent, unable to listen. They had changed roles' (FGC, p. 194). She stereotypes the communist lack of humour (FGC, p. 224) and the 'communist sneer'. Mark's naïveté is underscored (FGC, p. 194).

In Lessing's depiction, people who seek official capacities in political organisations, seek power because they are desperately attempting to compensate for their own psychological problems (for example, Patti and Phoebe⁶²). To this extent Phoebe, Mark's sister-in-law and Patti, his lover are pitied; they deny the fact that they are having nervous breakdowns because:

The trouble was, nervous breakdowns were not considered possible for progressive people. Socialist circles were not admitting the possibility that mental troubles existed.... (FGC, p. 223)

Consequently they cannot accept and use the experience as Martha has. As in A Ripple from the Storm, the communist women are described as ultimately wanting marriage and security: 'Underneath all that jolly competence was a very tired woman. And a frightened one' (FGC, p. 217).

In other people (such as Graham Patten, Mark's step brother and Margaret, his mother) political affiliation is determined by the Zeitgeist - they follow the fashion of the times (FGC, pp. 159 - 61; 353 - 4) and take up various causes accordingly.

Martha's omniscience in the story of The Four-Gated City is endorsed by the fact that she is a woman of experience. In effect she has, to varying extents, had the experience of every member of the household: of being part of a political group in popular and unpopular times, of having left school early, of bad relations with parents, failed marriages and nervous breakdown.

She can endorse Lessing's view of history as an endless cycle of repetition of role relations which are pre-determined and over which the individual has no control. She authenticates the view that alternatives can only be found through mystical experience, both by virtue of the fact that she is presented as a paragon of experience in the material life, and because she has visited 'Lynda's country', the world of 'madness'.

As antidote to the dystopia of London and the dismissal of orthodox politics, the narrative of The Four-Gated City proposes three potential models of a future utopian society.⁶³ Mark's depiction of a city in his novel, Francis' description of the commune he has established in the English countryside and Martha's description of her Faris Island.

Mark's city '...had been planned as a whole once, long ago: had been built as a whole...' (FGC, p. 151). It is described as integrated in function, and a great deal of emphasis is placed on the gardens: 'It was a garden city. A great number of the inhabitants spent their lives on the gardens, and the fountains and parks' (FGC, p. 151). The central feature of this city is that it is protected by the 'hidden people', the gardeners (FGC, p. 151). We are told that the city has a 'secret' which is the reason for its harmony and bounty (FGC, p. 152). The people who invade The City are unable to uncover this 'secret'.⁶⁴

Francis' commune also fosters this ideal of a rural communality and harmony. It also bears resemblance to the ideal city of Martha Quest with its 'many fathered children' (FGC, p. 616) and its emphasis on engagement with the land (FGC, p. 614). The salient feature of this commune is that it has no theoretical basis, is 'unorganized, unregimented', 'undocinaire' (FGC, p. 620). As soon as there is an attempt by the outside world to compare it to communism and to force the inhabitants to commit themselves to a theoretical basis, the commune disintegrates (FGC, p. 621).

In both cases, the narrator asserts that the Western world is unable to conceive of truth or essence. She also asserts that real communality cannot be achieved by means of a theoretical basis. Further, it is implied that such a society would never be allowed to exist because its lack of policies and regulations will be conceived of as a threat to the broader society. Francis asserts:

In all the histories of the many utopias or ideal communities has there been one without any kind of religious, political or theoretical basis? I don't think so. And they all grew, prospered or faded - conformed to the laws of change. (FGC, p. 619)

Finally the culmination of Martha and Lynda's self-exploration results in Martha's guidance and leadership of Faris Island. The highly gifted mutant children who are born of this community are lovely, have peaceful natures and have a wisdom which transcends human history. As in Martha's vision of an idealised city on the veld (MQ, p. 17), the fact that the children are of different nations is stressed, as is an idealised relationship to the land (FGC, p. 662). The

children possess highly developed and diversified capacities for extra-sensory perception and communication (FGC, p. 660). Singleton explains that:

Sufism maintains that humanity has an inherent ability to evolve consciously toward a new and perfect state. The first step in such a development appears to be destructive, since old patterns must disintegrate.⁶⁵

Martha believes that the children are the hope for the future, and in the end one of the children is sent to Mark's refugee camps in Tunisia. Again this reiterates the Sufi belief that the 'Perfect One', the person with perfected consciousness, has a duty to serve humanity as a whole and to help teach others to evolve to higher consciousness. Predictably his talents are not recognised and he is sent to work as a gardener (FGC, pp. 663 - 664). Here again Lessing sets up hope in the symbol of the gardener as one who holds 'the secret' for the future.

Critics of the Children of Violence series (with notable exceptions which I have mentioned in earlier chapters) either present the series as an organic whole, the product of a unified consciousness, or they describe The Four-Gated City as an entirely separate novel, the product of Lessing's newly found belief in Sufism.

It has been the contention of this study that, the Children of Violence series represents a writer's attempt to shape a symbolic and unified pattern out of a period of her life which embodies radical change. In her interview with Bertelsen, Lessing asserts the importance of her own life experience in the shaping of the series:

And I had all these complicated ideas in my mind as I recall, and then I suddenly remember very clearly thinking why do all this when I was having the experience which is really quite extraordinary.... What I wanted to do was try and use experience as a framework.⁶⁶

I have attempted to show that the series as a whole consistently conveys the ruptures and contradictions in Lessing's own life experience: her adolescence on the farm, her marriages, her experiences of the suburbs and of organised politics.

Martha of The Four-Gated City is represented as the product of this experience. However, it is of the utmost significance that The Four-Gated City is

far less of an autobiographical text than its predecessors. For instance, Martha does not belong to the Communist Party in London, a marked departure from Lessing who joined in 1952, after she arrived in London. Lessing seems keen to downplay this fact, declaring, as I have shown, that she was not politically active during this period. The fact remains that she joined the Communist Party at a time when very few were doing so. Moreover, her commitment to communism is strongly evident in Going Home. In August 1956, she declares:

I believe that in a decade the Communist countries of the world will be freer, more democratic (in the political, as well as the economic sense of these words) than the Western world, which is rapidly becoming less democratic. If I did not think this I would not remain a Communist.
(GH, p. 102)

A Ripple from the Storm, written after she had left the Party, avoids discussing the content of communist party theory; and in Landlocked, the subject of the consequences of the revelations about Stalinism is avoided. Instead the narrative in both these texts affirms and focuses on Lessing's belief in human essence and her conviction that organised political activity suppresses individual thought and emotion. Communism in effect alienates Martha from the landscape and from Africa.

Martha of The Four-Gated City is described as an outsider in Britain because her entire life experience has been in Africa. However this is presented as an advantage. Martha is attributed the omniscience accorded to the narrator in Martha Quest, A Proper Marriage and A Ripple from the Storm. Moreover the narrator in A Four-Gated City continually has to justify and reinterpret Martha's past because, crucially, Lessing has now left the Communist Party. The most overt example of this, as I have shown, is the rewriting of Martha's relationship to Africa in terms of psychological explanations - focused especially on family relationships - rather than on political or sociological explanations. The text examines the process of Martha's attempt to come to terms with a unified sense of psychological self, but rejects the concept of a political self. All politicians are people who have psychological problems and turn to political organisation as a means of sublimating that division. Martha does not come to

terms with the profound dislocation rendered by her political experiences. She merely deals out didactic statements on the subject. She is accorded authority on the basis that her life experience is authenticated by the narration as all encompassing.

In A Ripple from the Storm Lessing's resistance to intellectualism is already evident. Both Landlocked and A Four-Gated City convey a profound rejection of intellectual, political and psychiatric institutions. In Lessing's equation intellectualism equals division equals authority. In effect the depiction of her protagonist in The Four-Gated City as a guru figure who has had the experience of all the characters in the text in one form or another, is an extremely authoritative rendition itself.

Throughout the series Lessing deploys a range of discourses to express her ideology. Moreover, the positioning of the narrator in relation to the protagonist changes from narrative omniscience in the earlier texts, to a predominant use of free- indirect speech in Landlocked and A Four-Gated City. The changes in narrative form in the Children of Violence series are, I have attempted to show, over-determined by Lessing's belonging to and subsequent withdrawal from the Communist Party and the consequent change in her relationship to Africa, and by her own need to depict these changes in her life experience as part of an evolutionary development, a Bildung. At the same time, the series reflects a high degree of consistency in Lessing's intellectual belief: a belief in experience and the power of the individual imagination; in the existence of an individual human essence which can strive towards, and find, true consciousness; and in the potential for human beings to achieve unity between the individual and the collective by these means. In The Four-Gated City, Lessing reiterates her rejection of organised politics and her belief in a Utopia which can be achieved through individuals with special consciousness.

It has been argued in this thesis that the romantic ideology remains consistent throughout the Children of Violence series although it has been depicted via a range of different discourses. Lessing's own belief in the ability of the creative writer to enable change through the creative imagination is inextricably bound to Martha's quest to achieve union between the personal and

the political. In this she remains faithful to her early assertions in "The Small Personal Voice":

Once a writer has a feeling of responsibility, as a human being, for the other human beings he influences, it seems to me he must become a humanist, and must feel himself as an instrument of change for good or for bad.⁶⁷

However, this overarching desire for a unifying humanist vision which can act in the world as a force of good can, if too readily accepted by the critic, come to conceal ideological and narrative dislocations in the individual novels and in the series as a whole. It can moreover serve to obliterate Lessing's own willingness to select narrative strategies of an overweening authoritarian and didactic nature in her textual dismantling of social collectives, intellectual knowledge and other forms of outside authority as useful sources of understanding and Bildung for her chief protagonist.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. This title refers to the title of a seminal work in R.D. Laing's oeuvre in the 1960's: The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967) . The text outlines his theories on schizophrenia and his view that the transcendental experience of psychosis can be related to experiences of the divine in religion, p. 108. In my view this title neatly locates the ideology which Lessing extracts from the philosophies of Laing and Idries Shah (a popular Sufi leader), namely the importance of transcendental experience and also the authority of empirical experience over intellectualisation. I hope to expand on the centrality of both of these concepts in my discussion of the relation between form and ideology in The Four-Gated City.

2. Doris Lessing, "The Small Personal Voice" (1957) in A Small Personal Voice, edited by Paul Schlueter (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1974), p. 14.

3. For a critique of Lessing's essentialism, see Michael Magie, "Doris Lessing and Romanticism" in College English, Vol. 38, No. 6 (February 1977), p. 531:

We have no self, she has said, or only such a one as is developed in the habits, inclinations, roles, and choices of ordinary intercourse with others. ...she has no less persistently used her imaginative powers to explore inner experience in quest of the self, as if such a thing really were dwelling in us like a god....

See also Frederick Stern, "The Politics Of Radical Humanism" (Chicago, MLA, 1973) republished in Doris Lessing: The Alchemy of Survival, edited by Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose (Ohio, Ohio University, 1988), p. 57. Stern argues that Lessing's ideology was never marxist:

Never thoroughly Marxist, never fully conversant with Marx's most profound thought..., many radicals of the forties and fifties did indeed suffer disillusionment so profound that they searched for other, non-political means for responding to a world their sensibilities continued to find disastrous.

This position is also close to that of Rebecca Rourke, "Doris Lessing: exile and exception" in Taylor (1982), p. 219. Rourke also questions the extent of Lessing's marxism:

Communism because it was the form most easily available to, the only stance from which to, oppose racism and colonialism [sic]. In England, the situation was different: an anti-colonial position did not necessarily need to be allied to communism: Lessing's early reputation in England was as a writer concerned with race and the colour bar.

See also Alan Swingewood, "Structure and Ideology in the Novels Of Doris Lessing" in The Sociology Of Literature: Applied Studies, edited by Diana Laurenson (Keele, University of Keele, 1978) p. 51:

These novels [Memoirs Of A Survivor, Landlocked and The Four-Gated City] are closed forms, claiming an essentialist notion of man, an essence, a truth which lies outside ordinary experience and consciousness.

Swingewood, however at the same time claims that The Four-Gated City is not a humanist text. In my view, this is not consistent with the resolution of the novel, which poses a little boy as a potential saviour of the world.

4. See Ann Scott, "Sufism, mysticism and politics" in Notebooks/memoirs/ archives: Reading and rereading Doris Lessing, edited by, Jenny Taylor (Boston and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 179:

...'mystical' is thus encoded as meaning 'non-political' - a personal endorsement, on Lessing's part, of some brand of idealism - as when a positive concern with religious language is juxtaposed against the apparent failure of a political movement.

5. Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, "On Literature as an Ideological Form" in Untying The Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader, edited by Robert Young (Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 87.

6. See Eve Bertelsen, "Doris Lessing's Rhodesia: History into Fiction", English in Africa, Vol. 11, No. 1 (May 1984), p. 28.

7. The Four-Gated City is redolent with motifs which I will not have the space to go into here. Moreover, a number of critics have discussed various aspects of the symbolism in the novel. On the use of names, naming patterns and doubling and repetition, see Claire Sprague, Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition (Chapel Hill and London, The University Of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 85 - 107. On the significance of four gates and the theme of enclosure, see Frederick R. Karl, "The Four-gated Beast of the Apocalypse: Doris Lessing's The Four-Gated City" in Doris Lessing, edited by Eve Bertelsen (Johannesburg, McGraw- Hill Book Company, 1985), pp. 152 - 162. On the significance of the number four (quaternity), see Roberta Rubenstein, The Novelistic Vision Of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms Of Consciousness (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 126 - 128. On Lessing's Sufi imagery, see Nancy Shields Hardin, "Doris Lessing and the Sufi Way" in Doris Lessing, edited by Annis Pratt and L.S. Dembo (Madison, The University Of Wisconsin Press, 1974), pp. 148 - 164 and Ann Scott (1982), pp. 164 - 190. Dee Seligman, "The Sufi Quest" in World Literature Written In English, Vol. 12, No. 2 (November 1973). pp. 190 - 206.

8. See R.D. Laing, Sanity, Madness And The Family (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1964) in which Laing suggests a radical re-examination of conventional ideas of schizophrenia, p. 34:

If the human race survives, future men will, I suspect look back on our enlightened epoch as a veritable age of Darkness. They will see that what we call 'schizophrenia' was one of the forms in which, often quite ordinary people, the light began to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds.

See also Idries Shah, The Sufis (London, The Octagon Press, 1977), p. 20: 'Only the search for truth is valid, the desire for wisdom the motive'.

9. See Andrew Collier, R.D. Laing: The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy (Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 158. The idea that 'madness' is a form of cure, is derived from Laing. Collier summarises Laing's views thus:

'Madness' is then a name for the curative process when stopped midway by adverse conditions (i.e. by psychiatric hospitals). The nature of this 'curative process' and the need for it, seems to be conceived as follows: we live in two worlds, an 'inner' and an 'outer', 'sanity' is an impoverished form of experience, limited to the 'outer'; 'madness' is a corrective, a voyage into inner space; if one returns from the voyage, one will be able to pass between both worlds at will.

See also Javad Nurbakhsh, Sufism: Meaning, Knowledge and Unity (New York, Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1981), p. 25:

The most painful form of asceticism and mortification in the eyes of the Sufi is to live in harmony with society. Sufis consider this harmony to be the symbol of human perfection and believe that a person who is able to live on good terms with his fellows is in fact unhealthy.

10. See Shah (1977), p. xxiii: 'Sufism...is not available on the basis of assumptions which belong to another world of intellect'. See also Andrew Collier (1977), p. 173 for a description of Laing's criticism of existing psychiatric institutions as authoritarian and characterised by misunderstanding.

11. Scott (1982), p. 167.

12. See Lessing's comments on subjectivity in the preface (1971) to The Golden Notebook (St Albans, Panther, 1976), p. 13:

The way to deal with the problem of 'subjectivity', that shocking business of being preoccupied with the tiny individual who is at the same time caught up in such an explosion of terrible and marvellous possibilities, is to see him as a microcosm and in this way to break through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general....

13. See Eve Bertelsen, "Interview with Doris Lessing" (London, 9 January 1984) in Bertelsen (1985), p. 109. Lessing asserts that:

...in The Four-Gated City what happened was that various aspects of myself were parcelled out between the different characters. They were a fairly interesting map of myself, that roll of characters, actually.

14. Lorna Sage, Doris Lessing (London and New York, Methuen, 1983), p. 39.

15. I disagree with Gillian Whitlock who says that it is only the form which has undergone radical changes in the Children Of Violence series:

Indeed, if we think about this pattern of the Children of Violence in relation to the Golden Notebook we can see the degree to which form determines mode of presentation, for in these novels Lessing is working with the same ideas in almost opposite structures.

See Gillian Whitlock, "Fashion and Form: Children of Violence as Bildungsroman" in Bertelsen (1985), p. 136.

16. A further example of the way in which Lessing conflates her past affiliation with communism, and her identity as African, can be seen in the way she compulsively rewrites the afterword to Going Home in an attempt to justify why she had become a communist. Each time she locates the reason as the anti-colonial colonial struggle. See Doris Lessing, Going Home (1957) (London, Panther, 1984), pp. 310 - 311.

17. There has been considerable critical debate about whether or not the rest of the series constitutes a Bildungsroman in relation to The Four-Gated City. According to Dagmar Barnouw in "Disorderly Company: From The Golden Notebook to The Four-Gated City" in Pratt and Dembo, (1974), pp. 83 - 84:

The first four volumes of the Children Of Violence are not Bildungsromane in the strict sense of the concept. Matty is neither moving toward a choice, a determining decision she will make at one time or the other, nor is the fact that she is incapable of such a choice integrated into the substance and structure of her development.

For opinions which argue against this view see Betsy Draine, Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in The Novels Of Doris Lessing (Madison, The University Of Wisconsin Press, 1983). p. 46; Susan Gohlman, "Martha Hesse of The Four-Gated City: A Bildungsroman Already Behind Her" in South Atlantic Bulletin, 43 (November 1978), pp. 95 - 107, Frederick Karl, "Doris Lessing in the Sixties: The New Anatomy of Melancholy" in Contemporary Literature, 13 (Winter 1972), pp. 15 - 33. I tend to agree with Barnouw that Four-Gated City describes a different kind of Bildung to the previous novels, but I agree with the other critics that the first four novels of Children of Violence do indeed describe a process of growth and development. Lessing has in the last novel merely changed the discourse of the Bildung. As Rubenstein (1979), p. 166, has pointed out:

In the seventeen-year time period between the publication of the first and final volumes of Children Of Violence, Lessing's own orientation modulated from a political ideal to a psychological ideal to a psychological and spiritual resolution of fragmentation, from material and psychological reality as the form of primary truth; her socialisation has slowly evolved into a more inward transcendental vision.

18. This is ironic because, as I have shown in chapters three and four, Martha constantly laments the smallness and the restrictiveness of the colony. In this, her attitude is identical with colonial defensiveness in asserting that the British cannot understand the colonial experience. Both Martha and her mother lament this fact.

19. Ruth Whittaker, Doris Lessing (London, Macmillan, 1988), p. 55. See also Lessing (1971), p. 18: '...the reaction of someone from the outside is valuable simply because it is fresh and not biased by allegiance to a particular education system'. See Rubenstein (1979), pp. 134 - 135: 'Significantly, the Martha Quest of The Four-Gated City is without a family or a country, a position that facilitates her leap from the private to the transpersonal'.

20. See Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 102.

21. See Bertelsen (1985), p. 107. Indeed, this fits very aptly with my thesis that Lessing is bent on distancing herself from the identity with Martha Quest, an identity that also associates her with Martha's African and communist path.

22. It would seem useful to trace an outline of the actual plot of the novel because it covers such a vast time span.

23. Rubenstein (1979), p. 130.

24. Her descriptions of London bear strong resemblance to Blake's description in his poem "London".

25. See Sprague (1987), p. 89: 'Instead of fearing the multiple self, she [Martha] courts it'.

26. See Margaret Daymond, "Writing The Future: Doris Lessing's The Four-Gated City" (Association Of University English Teachers Of Southern Africa, unpublished conference paper, Pietermaritzburg, 1982), p. 12:

Sex is being moved from a central place in human activity and pleasure to a more peripheral role; it is also no longer a uniquely based activity if it is one manifestation of an energy which may take other forms.

27. See Florence Howe, "A Conversation with Doris Lessing (1966)" in Pratt and Dembo (1974), p. 16. Lessing asserts:

...during the first years I was in England, most of my friends were actively political. I wasn't... I'm going to make her a secretary or something like that to involve her in the kind of left-wing activity that was going on in England then. You know, I know enough about what some of my friends were doing.

See also Bertelsen (1985), p. 107 in which Lessing asserts:

And I also wanted to find a fairly typical English upper class family. It's surprisingly common to find in them these political differences...one a communist or one extreme left labour or one a Tory....

28. Idries Shah The Way Of The Sufi (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1970), p. 213.

29. See Scott (1982), p. 172:

Lessing is suggesting that the language of the parable can serve as an appropriate meta-language with which to grasp the 'heart' of what is happening in time and space.

30. Scott (1982), p. 171, also alludes to this. However I disagree with her further interpretation:

Perhaps the disorder on the surface alerts us to an 'interior' layer of meaning or plane of significance that leads us to ask (though not necessarily to provide answers to) questions like why the man failed to see what was there to be seen, or why he had thought that one dish could contain both flour and salt and keep them separate.

This reading seems to me to be purely speculative, since there seems to be no basis for such a reading in the text itself.

31. Idries Shah (1970), p. 213.

32. Rubenstein (1979), p. 128.

33. See Lessing (1971), for her own assessment of The Golden Notebook (St Albans, Granada, 1976):

Throughout the Notebooks people have discussed, theorised, dogmatised, labelled, compartmentalised - sometimes in voices so general and representative of the time that they are anonymous, you could put names to them like old Morality Plays.... But they have also reflected each other, been aspects of each other, given birth to each other's thoughts and behaviour - are each other, form wholes. In the inner Golden Notebook things have come together, the divisions have broken down, there is formlessness with the end of fragmentation - the triumph of the second theme, which is unity. (GN, p. 7)

...the essence of the book, the organisation of it, everything in it, says implicitly and explicitly, that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalise. (GN, p. 10)

34. See Doris Lessing, "An Ancient Way to New Freedom", in The Elephant in the Dark and Other Writings on The Diffusion of Sufi Ideas in the West by Idries Shah and Others, edited by Leonard Lewin (New York, Dutton, 1976), pp. 73 - 4.

Sometimes, when we look back on our lives, we may think: 'I have learned more through that experience than in all the rest of my life put together'. The experience may have been a tough job of work, a phase of marriage, a serious love, an illness, a nervous breakdown. This way of learning, a time of crammed, thoughtful living, is perhaps nearer to the learning of the Sufi Way than any other.

See also her statements about the importance of an oral tradition over and above a written historical record in her introduction to Lawrence Vambe, An Ill-fated People (London, Heineman, 1972), p. xiii and in a review of several Sufi texts in "The Ones Who Know" (Times Literary Supplement, London, 30 April, 1976):

Sufi literature, as well as the practices used by exponents, must be regarded as locally valid extrapolations from a centre of experience which underlies the outward form.

35. See chapter three of this thesis.

36. Sprague (1987), p. 104, has commented that:

...The Four-Gated City is shaped with the layerings and juxtapositions of persons and places. The layering image is finally stronger than the splitting image.

37. Shah (1970), p. 215.

38. See Andrew Collier (1977), pp. 184 - 185.

39. Collier (1977), p. 192.

40. I have pointed out in earlier chapters how Martha resists being alone in all four of the novels despite her knowledge that this results in compulsive group behavior and (in Lessing's view) a lack of self-reflection.

41. See Cohan and Shires (1988), pp. 88 - 89, 'A pause ...occurs at any point in the text when the time of the narration continues and that of the story ceases'.

42. I have shown in previous chapters that both the epiphany in Martha Quest and Martha's dreams in Landlocked are narrated in this manner - as a pseudo-iterative event - one in a long series. This has the effect of stressing the importance of the narrated scene.

43. See Dorrit Cohn, Transparent Minds (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 48 - 49. Cohn points out that most writers narrate non-verbal experience by using psycho-narration, i.e. intervening to summarise and conceptualise. She also points to the predominance of metaphoric usage 'made up of all kinds of electromagnetic, igneous, and meteorological hyperboles', p. 49.

44. See Draine (1983), p. 58:

Especially through the second and third sections of the novel, when she is trying to store the energy of madness with Lynda, images of vibration, wires, dynamos, volts, currents, tension, and fields or grounds fill Martha's narrated monologue.

See also Scott (1982), p. 170:

The body of the novel calls on a range of different vocabularies: those of psychotherapy (ideas of 'containing' and 'working through'), telecommunications (radio sets, and being 'plugged in'), and of religion (Christian images of the Stations of the Cross, Martha's experience of the devil).

45. This passivity would seem to accord with Lessing's conversion to Sufism and in particular the element of asceticism in Sufi belief. See Dr Javad Nurbakhsh, Sufism: Meaning, Knowledge and Unity (New York, Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1981), p. 22. Abu Na'im, a Sufi, defies Sufism as the need to:

...adhere to humility and happiness, to root up restlessness and impatience.

Sufism is contentment with one's portion and generosity with one's bounty.

46. Sage (1983), p. 60.

47. This ideology is closely connected to Sufi ideas of the path of the 'Perfect One'. See Dr Javad Nurbakhsh, What The Sufis Say (New York, Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1980), p. 25:

...the Perfect One is that person who has escaped from the domination of the nafs-i ammareh [the commanding self]. Both his outward and his inward reality have been determined by qualities of a sublime nature from which there results a unification with God after his liberation from the individual ego. He has become a mirror reflecting in every aspect the Absolutely Real. Gazing upon him, one sees Nothing but the Truth.

Laing also places this stress on the individual and micropolitics. See Collier (1977), p. 165: 'Laing ...intends social phenomenology to be a theory on which a practice of liberation at the micro-social level can be based.

48. Seligman (1973), p. 201. As Seligman points out, it becomes apparent that Martha's debts are 'psychological' debts to her family.

49. Daymond (1982), p. 10.

50. See R.D. Laing, The Politics Of Experience and The Bird Of Paradise (Middlesex, Penguin, 1971), p. 110:

Madness need not all be breakdown. It may also be breakthrough. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death.

See also Rubenstein (1979), p. 147:

The catch-all phrase "mental breakdown" is the verbal label for the psyche's reshuffling of its own contents in the process of confronting new experiences and either synthesizing them and thus transforming them into passive form or, as in Lynda's case, having the deepest self pathologized by the orthodoxy of medical and social opinion.

51. See R.D. Laing, The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (Middlesex, Penguin, 1965), p. 78.

52. See Cohn (1978), pp. 50 - 51; 72 - 74; 132 - 134 on the narration of sub-verbal states.

53. I have shown that when Martha views her image in the mirror in A Ripple from the Storm, the narrator highlights the discrepancy between what the mirror reveals and how Martha actually feels. Martha's denial of her physical decline is juxtaposed with the 'objective' knowledge that is presented by her image in the mirror. This measure of irony is centrally achieved by juxtaposition. The reader is struck by the discrepancy between focaliser and focalised. In Landlocked this disjuncture occurs but in that text Martha is conscious that her mirror image and her 'real' self are different.

54. The mirror image becomes a signifier for self-reflection and analysis and in this respect is also a Sufi construction. See Nurbakhsh (1980), p. 29:

The heart is considered to be a divine gift. It is often likened to a mirror which must be cleansed of the rust of the natural and material world until it becomes polished and reflects the Truth.

55. See Sprague (1987), p. 88. In her chapter on The Four-Gated City, she describes how:

The walls, rooms, houses and cities in The Four-Gated City also function as physical mirrors of psychological realities. ...the novel's explicit and

frequent use of doubling imagery and vocabulary - for example, shadows, mirrors, opposite, underside, inside out, reverse - is a distinctive feature.

56. Laing (1965), p. 106

57. Robert Graves, "Introduction" in The Sufis, Idries Shah (London, The Octagon Press, 1977), p. x.

58. See Marion Vlastos, "Doris Lessing and R.D. Laing: Psychopolitics and Prophecy" in PMLA, Vol. 91 (March 1976), p. 250. Vlastos points out that this idea of people helping each other through the process of breakdown is derived from Laing who says that what is needed:

...instead of "the degradation ceremonial of psychiatric examination is an initiation ceremonial" through which the person on the verge of a schizophrenic breakdown will be guided "further into space and time, and back again" by people who have already made the journey.
"Psychiatrically [sic], this would appear as ex-patients helping future patients to go mad".

59. See Carole Ferrier, "Lives in Conflict: Doris Lessing's Children of Violence novels" Hecate, Vol. 1 (February 1975), p. 41. Ferrier points out that Martha's capacity for 'hearing' the thoughts of others has strong parallels with Jung's theory of the collective unconscious:

Lessing's aim here appears to suggest that the voice one hears speaking in this way is a more truthful and communicative one than the normal one.

60. See Lessing's denial of any political position in her interview with Bertelsen (1985), p. 116. In this respect her rejection of sloganism and her assertion that her philosophy is all inclusive, is close to Shah's position. See Scott (1982), p. 167 for her assessment of Shah's pronouncement that his philosophy is all embracing:

There is a fairly classic ambiguity here. By excluding almost nothing from his temporal and intellectual reference - indeed, by combining authorial intention, unconscious influence, and cultural parallel so freely - Shah leaves Sufism virtually undefined and certainly unlimited.

61. Mark is particularly outraged when a spy attempts to elicit information from him by pretending to be a member of the family.

62. Although Phoebe is a Labour Party activist, she is to all intents cast in the same mould by the narration. See Vlastos, p. 248. Vlastos points out:

...in case readers of The Four-Gated City should entertain any hopes about what can be accomplished within the conventional processes of government, Lessing takes great pains to document the futile case of Phoebe Coldridge, hard-working, self-sacrificing Labourite.

63. In her interview with Bertelsen (1985), Lessing asserts that Romantics always have a tendency towards prophecy, towards the idea of the apocalypse and of new faculties emerging, p. 117.

64. See Mary Ann Singleton, The City and the Veld: The Fiction of Doris Lessing (Lewisburg, Bucknell Press, 1977), p. 199. According to Singleton this description bears a strong resemblance to Sufism:

...with its many stories of lost or hidden knowledge - held by superior gardeners or boat builders.... Idries Shah in "The Sufis" frequently refers to the secret that protects itself - presumably because those who do perceive it have the wisdom not to adulterate or misinterpret it.

65. Singleton, p. 121.

66. Bertelsen (1985), p. 103.

67. Lessing (1957), p. 7.

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