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ALIENATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

Thesis submitted to the University of
Glasgow

By
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In fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

© A. Foukara

Departments of Adult and Continuing Education and
English Literature.

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N-O-T-E

The following gaps exist as a result of a computer fault which occurred in the pagination system during the printing process. They are not gaps in the actual content of the thesis:

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p. 169

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p. 260

To my father,

he taught me how to read, write and persevere.

To my mother,

she taught me how to dream.

And to my brothers and sisters. With them I learned how to conquer solitude.

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Abstract

This study of alienation is centered on the process of exchange between power and knowledge primarily within the context of South African fiction as represented by Alan Paton, André Brink, Nadine Gordimer and Ezekiel Mphahlele. Through a brief discussion of romance, it is established that the genre was deployed as a satellite of European imaginative geography at the time of colonial expansion. It is argued that the genre's vision strongly subscribed to the political project of Empire and lent itself to the task of justifying its aims and ambitions. This called for a particular process of "otherisation" whereby a perception of the Other as a radically different form of being was established. It could be said that the thrust of the romance genre as a mode of imperial perception went towards conferring legitimacy upon the treatment such 'radical difference' solicited. It had to be tamed in order to make it approximate the boundaries of the Self. Such an approximation project was carried out in the name of reason and civilisation, tenets which seem to have dominated discourse throughout that period. It is submitted that this provides an interesting example of how civil and political societies operated with each other's blessing.

Such a perspective might be construed as a little platitudinous. It could be argued that, after all, the perception of the Other which the writings of Rider Haggard and John Buchan (two exponents of the genre examined in this study) offer intimately subscribes to jingoist discourse which is so blatantly racist as to be vulgarly simplistic. In other words, the genre's perception of the Other should not be taken seriously.

Contrary to this assumption, the romance genre must be recognised for what it actually is, beyond childishness and triviality, epithets commonly attached to it. In fact, such an assumption seems to be a projection of the genre itself. In order to mystify its real nature and enhance its purity and independence from the political

rationale governing it, it addresses itself specifically to a child audience. Besides, a genre that has exerted such considerable influence on an entire subsequent fictional tradition could be described as anything but childish or trivial.

Making use of the principle of knowledge and power in the context of contemporary South African fiction gives us scope for seeing the element of continuity in an entirely fresh light. There are patterns of perception of Africa, both as a geographic domain and as a human dimension, consistent enough to suggest that the romance genre as a mode of imperial perception has vigorously projected itself onto the contemporary South African fictional scene. While it had entrenched the notion of otherness as a radical difference and superposed it with imperial intervention, what has been conventionally referred to as the liberal literary tradition has mediated the same notion virtually unaltered. This is the main argument in the part of this thesis dealing with Alan Paton's fiction.

By the same token, the principle of knowledge and power could be used to elucidate the element of discontinuity. André Brink and Nadine Gordimer seem to take cognisance of the real implications of the romance genre as a mode of cultural perception. Their writings testify to an anguish to throw into doubt the whole romantic edifice and reflect their intention to bring back into perspective the major components of colonial discourse. They both adopt narrative strategies whereby they are able to challenge the ideological tenets of political society. Thus notions of reason and civilisation are presented as forming the external gloss of a reality that has continuously been governed by manifestations of violence and chaos and dominated by visions of apocalypse. The major underlying implication in their fiction is that if such notions have ever had a *raison d'être*, it has been outlived.

Such radical deviations are reflective of an interesting paradox, however. It is argued that while they provide salvation for the authors concerned, giving them scope for extending the boundaries of African writing in a way that is as ingenious

as challenging, they nonetheless constitute an all-consuming dilemma. On account of the continuity they objectively have to accommodate, Brink and Gordimer stand half way between joining the ranks of political society and breaking with it.

The acuteness of this paradox is, however, abated when considered against the backdrop of Ezekiel Mphahlele's writing. Besides acting as a connecting bridge between the South African and the North African authors examined in this thesis, namely Kateb Yacine from Algeria and Driss Chraïbi from Morocco, Mphahlele epitomises the real paradox. He seems more prone to association with Alan Paton than with any other author examined herein. His location to the text poses a real problem in that his writing, almost naturally, lapses into the fictional assumptions of the liberal tradition. His adoption of apolitical narrative strategies, it is argued, reduces the relevance of his writing to constraining limits.

While it is true that Mphahlele seems to share with the North Africans the expression of frustration at the lack of control over their own lives, he nonetheless omits the accent they, not unlike Brink and Gordimer, lay on the question of identity and the sense of crisis pervading it.

Finally, it is argued that the juxtaposition of the literatures of South Africa and the Maghreb can be justified on the ground of colonisation as a common denominator and in terms of some of the issues both set of writers have to contend with, especially the constant danger of irrelevance and neo-orientalism. Equally, such a juxtaposition is a symbolic protestation at the amputation from the rest of the continent which Maghrebian literature suffers in the hands of literary critics.

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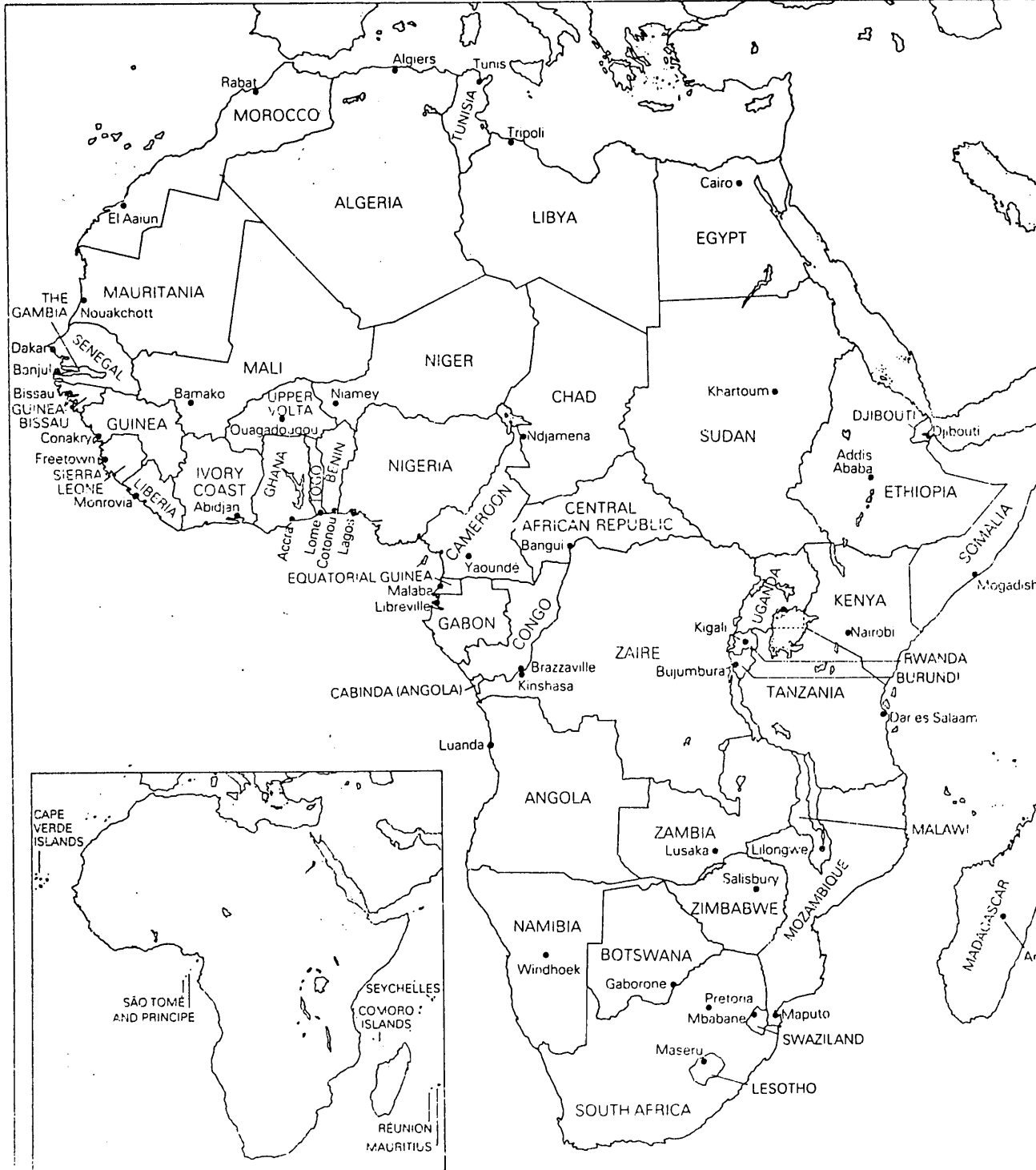
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CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

THE STATES OF AFRICA



Source: Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa, p. 222

Chronological Table of Significant Events In South
African History

1652, the first date of this chronology, must on no account be taken as indicating the beginnings of South African history. The chronology opens with the beginning of European settlement in South Africa strictly to conform to that part of this thesis which takes patterns of colonial discourse and white settler ideology as a main focus. Also, the chronology stops at 1982 as all the fiction examined in the thesis was published prior to this date.

**1652 The Dutch East India Company founds a
refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope.**

**1652-1795 Dutch settlers' expansion into
Khoisan territory and the beginnings of slave-
importation.**

1795 Britain takes the Cape Colony

**1811-12 British and colonial forces expel
Africans from the territory west of the Fish
River**

**1815 Rising of frontier Boers (later known as
the Slagstersnek rebellion)**

1816-28 King Shaka creates Zulu kingdom;

warfare among Africans in southeastern Africa
(the Mfecane)

1828 The Cape Colony liberates "Hottentots
and other free persons of colour" from legal
disabilities

1834-35 Frontier war between Xhosa and the
Cape Colony

1834-38 The British parliament emancipates
the slaves

1836-40 Five Thousand Boers (later known as
Voortrekkers) leave the Cape Colony with
their coloured clients (a movement later
known as the Great Trek)

1838 An Afrikaner commando defeats the Zulu:
the Covenant and the battle of Blood River

1843 Britain annexes Natal

1852-54 Britain recognises the South African
Republic (Transvaal) and Orange Free state as
independent states

1867 Diamond mining begins at Griqualand

West

1868 Britain annexes Basutoland (Lesotho)

1877 Britain annexes the Transvaal

1880-81 Transvaal Afrikaners regain their independence in the First Boer War, or the First War of Freedom

1886 Gold mining begins on the Witwatersrand

1898 Transvaal forces conquer the Venda, completing the white conquest of the Frican population of South Africa

1899-1902 The secons Anglo-Boer War of Freedom: Britain conquers the Afrikaner republics

1910 The Cape Colony, Natal, The Transvaal, and the Orange Free State join to form the Union of South Africa, a white-controlled, self-governing British dominion

1912 Foundation of the African National Congress (ANC)

1914 J. B. M. Hertzog forms the first
Afrikaner National Party

1914-19 As a member of the British Empire,
South Africa participates in First World War

1933-38 Hertzog heads a fusion government,
then a United Party government; D. F. Malan
forms the new Afrikaner National Party

1939-45 South Africa participates in the
Second World War on the Allied side, with J.
C. Smuts heading a United Party government

1948 D. F. Malan's National Party wins
general election and begins to consolidate the
policy of apartheid

1952 The Passive Resistance campaign
launched by the ANC and its allies

1960 Police kill 67 African anti-pass law
demonstrators at Sharpsville, the government
bans African political organisations

1961 South Africa becomes a republic and
leaves the British commonwealth

1966-68 Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland

become independent states and members of the
United Nations

1975-76 Mozambique and Angola become
independent states and members of the United
Nations

1976-77 At least 575 people die in
disturbances in Soweto and other black
townships

1976-81 South Africa grants "independence"
to the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and
Ciskei "Homelands", but they are not
recognised abroad

1980 Zimbabwe (previously Rhodesia)
becomes independent and a member of the
United Nations

1981 The National Party wins its ninth
successive general election

1982 ANC guerilla bombings in Pretoria,
Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, and Durban.

A. Chapter One

General Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this study:

The present study of alienation hopes to subscribe to the ongoing general debate on such issues as the cultural impact of colonialism, cultural difference and, above all, racism. It is no platitude to advance that racism is one of the most obsessive, if nagging, issues in the world of today. And not so surprisingly, Africa constitutes a major pivot round which such a debate has hardly ceased to evolve. This brings us directly up against an inevitable question: if the case is such, why single South Africa out for study? Why not East, West or indeed North Africa?

As a matter of fact, some focus will be directed at a few examples from North African literature. And although there is a multitude of reasons for the inclusion of that part of the continent into this study's configuration, it would be sufficient to say at this stage that such a choice is, somewhat paradoxically, dictated by a factor of a personal dimension. Being from Morocco myself, I can claim that North Africa is the part of the continent I associate with the most naturally and of which I have first-hand knowledge and experience.

Where South Africa is concerned, the choice can be amply justified on at least two major considerations. The first consideration is of a scholarly nature: whether within or without the sphere of academia, North African scholarship (besides its local concerns of course) continues to lend considerable attention to Middle Eastern, European and American literatures to varying degrees¹. Where it occasionally remembers African writing, it almost never fails to accord priority to East or West Africa while excluding much of what has been produced in South Africa despite its unmistakable richness and despite the fact that some South African writers have, as will be seen subsequently, thrust African writing into new territory. Thus in Morocco, for example, a standard list of well-known foreign

¹ Refer to 1.4. of this study.

writers might cover names such as E.M. Forster, Albert Camus, William Faulkner, Chinua Achebe and James Ngugi but hardly any names from South Africa.

This deficiency exists invariably whether the medium used is Arabic, French or English. Such lamentable neglect can be attributed in large measure to matters of geographical, historical and cultural distance and to a common, though utterly false and unsustainable, assumption that to be white South African is automatically to subscribe to the racist formulas of segregationist society. This damaging assumption smoke-screens the real value of many a white South African novelist and renders them 'unworthy of study'. It is needless to point out that moral considerations of this kind are as erroneous as irrelevant. As the case may be, part of what I have to say in this study goes towards refuting such falsehoods and towards demanding justice for such authors as Nadine Gordimer and André Brink even though I will have harsh words for them at times.

This brings us to the second consideration which is of an intellectual nature. For if racism is overwhelmingly associated with Africa as a whole, particularly within the framework of black-white encounter, then South Africa ought to be seen as representing that phenomenon in its most nefarious forms, given its Apartheid system which institutionalises colour racism and lends it immediate, meticulous and aggressive socio-economic pertinence.

It ought, however, to be underlined that this study is not primarily concerned with how patterns of racism are installed and how they generate corresponding patterns of psychological alienation for instance. Although these patterns are indeed an obsessive preoccupation, the scope of this study embraces other related considerations which I will explore in detail subsequently. It is sufficient to say at this point that I am more concerned with the construction and maintenance of ways of cultural perception within the interplay of knowledge and power : how colonialism produces forms of otherisation and capitalises on them to perpetrate itself and how the writer can either condone those forms and produce his/her

fiction within their dictates or choose to adopt counter-strategies. To better clarify these ideas, I will first of all establish a perspective on the concept of alienation in broad terms and then determine its exact meaning within the context of white South African fiction as treated in this study.

1.2. Concepts of alienation — A general survey:

Alienation is a concept that has been twisted into so many different shapes to suit an unlimited number of situations and contexts as to be imbued with meanings. Therefore, out of technical impossibility, this study cannot promise to provide an exhaustive listing of all the meanings and shades of meaning the concept of alienation has hardly ceased to take on, or the various stages of its development since, say, the time of Plato. However, I find it useful to give an informative survey of the major contexts in which it has either manifested itself or been deliberately used..

In his introductory essay to Richard Schacht's Alienation (1973), Walter Kauffman expresses the opinion that Plato "knew the experience of the divided self"('The Inevitability of Alienation', xxviii). In addition to the polarity between the world of the senses and that of the shadows, Plato's philosophical thought reflects, among other things, his dissatisfaction with the former on the grounds that it is unreal or untrue. Clearly, the making of such a distinction and the ontological and epistemological reversal of standards it involves _what is real becomes unreal and vice-versa_ indicates that a case of alienation has already obtained. Refusal of this world and its social order entails flight from it, 'refuge' into a philosophical vision of another world beyond the senses. Corresponding to this division of things universal is a division of body and soul, the former being relegated to second-class status and considered, not without a measure of contempt, as a mere tomb imprisoning the former. And yet this is by no means to argue that Plato consciously dealt with alienation as part of his philosophical system. As Kauffman rightly points out, although Plato "offers a path to salvation", he was not even aware of the concept in any major sense('The Inevit. of Alien.', xxviii).

In passing, and just by way of useful analogy, I could invoke the case of alienation in its religious context. In Estrangement, Alienation and Exploitation (1977), John Torrance for example sets forth two different meanings to the concept. The first one, hinging so closely on Plato's thought, is described as "estrangement" between God and man. Estrangement according to Torrance is "the breach of a pre-existing harmony" generated by Adam's disobedience and his subsequent expulsion from Eden.(E.A.E., 4) The second meaning Torrance sets out is alienation as a remedy to estrangement. Alienation takes the form of sacrifice:

"Sacrifice or ritual alienation is therefore the most elementary form of religious alienation. It expresses and maintains a cult community between believers and their God, which bridges, but thereby also recognises their irremovable estrangement.(E. A. E., 5)

Despite all that could be said about the concept either in Plato or in religious mythology, one would have to concede that it found its conscious and elaborate treatment for the first time only as late as the nineteenth century. Hegelian thought for example deals with it as an inevitable phenomenon("The Inevit. of Alien., I-II). On the social level, it obtains when a person takes conscience of himself. Self-conception leads to alienation from the substance and to loss of actuality or universality. Self-conception, like other-worldliness, ensues in the individual's isolation from society and therefore from himself; it nullifies the substance of the individual's relation with reality. On the material level, money for example makes a double performance. It acts as a mediator between the individual and his material independence. It follows that self-conception, an important aspect of independence, is not possible without money. What obtains then is a new condition of dependence, hence the inevitability of alienation.

John Torrance distinguishes four different uses of alienation in Hegel. The first use is in the sense of estrangement between persons. This involves "a

straightforward social relationship" such as the master-slave one(E. A. E., 47). An individual may be said estranged or alienated if he has come to feel himself in "the power of a stranger"(E. A. E., 41). The slave for example "appears as an extension of another hostile personality"(E. A. E., 41). In this case, alienation can be mutual or unreciprocated. Unreciprocity applies particularly to what Torrance rather cautiously calls "the natural man" versus an alien culture which is indifferent to him but to which he must assimilate(E. A. E., 41-42). The second use is in the sense of "renunciation or sacrifice of autonomy to another"(E. A. E., 44). Alienation here refers exclusively to the case of acculturation. The third use hinges on the definition of the concept in the field of psychology. This is the sense in which "the unhappy consciousness was estranged within itself"(E. A. E., 44). The subject of alienation here has alienated his/herself from "an imaginary being" thus internalising a social relationship(E. A. E., 44). Torrance points out that the subject is not necessarily individual, but may also be collective, in which case "collective consciousness internalises an imaginary social relationship posited by ideology"(E. A. E., 44). Lastly, the fourth sense refers to what Hegel calls "spirit" self-estranged. This means the state of spirit, human or more precisely European culture, society, and consciousness as a whole, when not only consciousness, but likewise culture and society are also divided into two contraposed spheres whose representations are mutually estranged(E. A. E., 44).

In Marx, the tones of alienation are reduced to much more tangible dimensions in so far as "its primary location", Torrance writes "is in general reference to social life"(E. A. E., xii). Here of course, the concept becomes potentially sociological as it serves to "describe a complete transfer of claims from one party to another, representing the beginning and end of a social relationship"(E. A. E., xii). In this context alienation is the equivalent of renunciation or relinquishment. It can also be the equivalent of estrangement designating a case where people have become

strangers or enemies.

Having described these two variations of the concept, it is interesting to note how Torrance carries the distinction even further. He emphasizes that estrangement refers to emotions whereas alienation to actions, which seems to square with R. N. Kunango's definition of alienation in Marxian theory as "a lack of freedom and control at work" ('The Concept of Alienation and Involvement Revisited', 1979, 121). For Marx, labour is not just a maintaining but an existential activity whereby man develops his universal nature.

Thus, as R.N. Kunango rightly observes, although the concept dates back to an early phase of human thought, it is by general consensus a distinguishing feature of modern times ('C. A. I. R.', 123). Alienation, at least in individuals, has come to be regarded as a distinctly post-industrial adjunct. Social science has treated it as a "dissociative state of the individual (a cognitive sense of separation) in relation to some other element in his or her environment" ('C. A. I. R.', 120). This dissociation or feeling of separation ensues in frustration or tension.

Frank Johnson sets out three major manifestations of the concept (Alienation: Concept Term and Meaning, 1973). Feeling: this is a state of alienation that could be accounted for in terms of feeling-obliviation resulting from isolation. Cognition: self-alienation here means that there is a fault at the level of "concept-formation". At the basis of this fault, could be "loss of mental function"; hereditary, toxic or degenerative processes, or simply constriction of familial or cultural training (A. C. T. M., 5). Existence: the individual might find his/herself in a state of disappointment, isolation, and for this matter meaninglessness. Although this case occurs in most societies, Johnson sees it as typical of highly industrialised ones. The individual finds himself estranged from another worldly power and thrust into a denaturalised environment. Being surrounded by standardized institutional ideology, "religion", "commercialism", "nationalism", "scientism" etc., the individual may feel that his grip on his own existence is slackening. In this case, he

would feel he has been made to fit within one category or another (a father, a teacher...).The result is that he would begin to see himself too as just another standardized, manufactured social product. However, social psychologists insist that by

"being a member of the group and by adhering to the group norms, the individual fulfils his or her need to belong, to love, and to be loved by others."('C. A. I. R.', 120)

On the whole, what should be retained is that the concept of alienation suggests an idea of crisis in all the instances I have cited so far; it has disconcerting overtones. But it is in literature that the expression of crisis manifests itself most clearly. To substantiate this claim, I will treat two examples. Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis(1913) and Albert Camus' L'Etranger(1942).

The treatment of alienation in these two novels seems to corroborate Kauffman's view that modern times are marked with a "things-have-never-been-worse" conception('The Inevitability of Alienation', xlvii-xlviii). Both Kafka and Camus, writing in times of great social change, came to express the sum of human tribulation and anxiety in some of the most disturbing forms. Both of them subscribed to the notion of life-absurdity which is supposed to have struck their respective eras with tremendous vigour. And it is their respective ways of dealing with the absurd that I treat here as indicative of alienation.

There is nothing more disturbing in The Metamorphosis than the matter-of-factness with which Gregor Samsa wakes up to his new ordeal of turning into a large and grotesque insect. Critics like Homer Swander(1958) have argued that this appalling state of metamorphosis is the ultimate expression of a culture undergoing deep changes. One of them is the shift in the balance of powers, which overwhelmed the individual and pulverized his sense of security and his system of

values. Samsa in this case is "guilty of an original and unforgivable sin", that of trying to take his father's position as "the head and breadwinner of the family"(Franz Kafka, 1958, 45). This attempt to effect a transfer of power had the serious impact of shattering what R. D. Laing calls "the ontological security" that was once governing Samsa's sphere of existence(The Divided Self, 1960, 40).

Lionel Trilling looks at the sense of metamorphosis from a different angle. He dives deep into Kafka's sense of evil. Commenting on Mr. K.'s trial in Kafka's other novel The Trial, he wrote:

"In Kafka, long before the sentence is executed, even long before the malign legal process is even instituted, something terrible has been done to the accused. We all know what that is... he has been stripped of all that is becoming a man except his abstract humanity, which, like his skeleton, never is quite becoming a man.(The Opposing Self, 1955, 38)

Evil has been instigated in Samsa as well in a way so bizarre as to make it seem intrinsic to his character. But what is all the more shocking about his evil degradation is precisely his complete lack of reaction, horrified or otherwise. He takes it in his stride as if it were the order of the day or an every-day-life-event. His main concern is that he will not make it to work in time. Nor is he alone in so reacting. His family find out about his metamorphosis in a second-hand-news manner, as if that were the boring fact of life outside of which Samsa has never existed. The Samsa-case embodies Kafka's notion that

"life is a continual distraction which does not even allow us to reflect on that from which we are distracted."(The Opposing Self, 36)

In his introduction to the Mythe de Sisyphe (Oeuvres Complètes D'Albert Camus,

1983), Albert Camus states that "les pages qui suivent traitent d'une sensibilité absurde qu'on peut trouver éparse dans le siècle." (134) At the basis of this absurd sensibility Camus sees:

"[la] confrontation de l'appel humain avec le silence du monde, des exigences raisonnables de l'homme et de l'irrationalité du monde".(QCAC, 134)

L'Etranger deals with the same themes and looks at the position of man against the absurd sensibility and the irrationality of the world. Meursault receives news of his mother's death in what seems as a non-committal and totally indifferent manner. But as Camus is to comment:

"Dans notre société tout homme qui ne pleure pas à l'enterrement de sa mère risque d'être condamné à mort [...] le héros est condamné parce qu'il ne joue pas le jeu. En ce sens, il est étranger à la société où l'ont vit, il erre en marge, dans les faubourgs de la vie privée, solitaire, sensuelle".(QCAC, 21)

Camus was not speaking of the problems of social conformity. Meursault's rebellion, as it were, has more general dimensions. It is an act of protest at people's attempts to rationalize the irrational. For if nature is by far a superior contestant, crying at his mother's death would imply solemn refusal to admit the final act of absurd verity. Otherwise, why does death exist? seems to be the question. It is also an attempt to break down the forces of alienation. What could crying at death signal except surrender to the notion of the unknown, which is in itself an acceptance of alienation. Instead, Meursault commits himself to a vision and a programme of action, indifference. This we find expressed at the very beginning of the novel:

"Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut être hier, je ne sais pas."(O.C.A.C., 31)

And yet, no matter how strongly he is committed to indifference, Meursault never gets bogged down in nihilism. For as Camus wrote in 1955, "even within the limits of nihilism, it is possible to find the means to proceed beyond nihilism."(The Myth Of Sisyphus, 1975, 7) For this reason Meursault continues to have pleasures, passions, and love for both man and life. L'Etranger ends on this note of faith and hope:

"Si près de la mort, maman devait [se] sentir libérée et prête à tout revivre [...] Devant cette nuit chargée de signes et d'étoiles, je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde... De l'éprouver si pareil à moi, si fraternel enfin, j'ai senti que j'avais été heureux et que je l'étais encore."(O.C.A.C., 118)

1.3. General Problematics:

1.3.1. Knowledge and power:

In order to arrive at a definition of the concept of alienation within the specific context of white South African literature in this study, a certain number of issues have to be raised first. In the course of the LTP conference (Literature Teaching Politics), Glasgow 1985, one of the workshops retreated to the discussion of an embarrassingly ambitious topic. Is it at all possible for the human mind to do away with the notion of otherness when visualising another culture? In the specific context of a colonial situation, can we talk of another culture without necessarily othering it. The question was asked out of tacit general knowledge that to otherise is to confine to pejoration. The interesting thing is that the workshop topic was spurred by Sara Mills' paper 'Alternative Voices To Orientalism' delivered earlier and which strongly rejected Edward Said's tangential argument in Orientalism (1979) that knowledge of the Orient was geared towards dominating it geographically, politically and militarily. This argument, Sara Mills submitted, served to press the Westerner's nose tight against the window because it made "simply writing about another race a statement of power over that race." ('Alternative Voices To Orientalism', LTP, 80)

Said's book is certainly full of methodological gaps of which I will mention a few here. It receives the manipulative political discourse of an Alfred Balfour with the narrative discourse of a Gustave Flaubert on the same wavelength. It puts British, German and Russian orientalisms all in the same bag. Thirdly and most significantly, it travels through the corridors of Western perception of the Orient from Homer up to the Carter administration as if those corridors were straight and well sign-posted². Admittedly, Sara Mills points out, jingoist discourse was

² Denis Porter's article 'Orientalism and Its Problems' (Essex Sociology of Literature Conf., 1982) is useful in this regard. He also argues for types of discourse that are not

snudged by its essentially masculine strategy which was fascist at worst and reductionist or essentialising at best. But a careful search within the orientalist edifice for those who are different of garb, physiognomy and function in the social topology, "those who were not sufficiently integrated in Western institutions which promoted this type of discourse" (LTP, 86) would reveal a different mode of perceiving the Orient. Hence she proceeds to investigate the writings of three 'counter-hegemonic' women travellers who lay considerable stress "on personal involvement and relationships with people of the other culture" and who take "a less authoritarian stance... vis-a-vis narrative voice." (LTP, 83)

necessarily orientalist, Marco Polo's writings for example.

1.3.2. Colonial discourse, politics, gender and cultural hegemony:

As I understand it, the idea in Sara Mills' argument is that knowledge is not militarised, so to speak, in all cases. There are areas where one can write about other cultures from a position of power without necessarily making a statement of power over them. And yet, it seems that 'Alternative Voices To Orientalism' is in itself more political than it actually means to be. Answering the question of why white women's relationship with other imperial subjects was different from men's, Sara Mills posits the matter as harking back to women's strait-jacket position in late nineteenth and early twentieth century England:

"[w]omen of the middle-class were very restricted in their movement; many women at this time had to be chaperoned around, to protect them from what was rampant male sexuality, and the appearance of encouraging sexual advances."(LTP, 85)

Which is good and fair. But this social position shaped the nature such women writers' reaction was going to take. One can deduce that such a reaction in itself came as a political statement on their situation; a reaction against the status quo, which, coupled with the lack of physical advantage acting as the driving force behind the male jingoistic showdown with nature, produced not alternative voices as such but reactions or exceptional voices to male discourse.

This is to say that the politics of gender intervened against social attitudes but did not however question or stand in the way of imperial attitudes (we shall find a parallel to this in Alan Paton). The fact that Empire opened the option, regardless of how constricted it was, of travelling to subject countries for women, was tacitly responded to with the positive. They might have been branded 'eccentrics' but they were ready to cash in on the greatest opportunity to have come their way

to show both their discontent with social institutions and their personal worth as a species on the imperial stage. Their prowess and agility at handling human relationships with subject peoples had to be displayed even if that meant flowing into the current of an essentially male project, Empire. (Male) domination of other cultures had their implicit though ambiguous consent.

For the sake of clarity, I would like to reiterate the following principle. My argument here must not be interpreted as in any way implying that all opposition to a dominant system shows complicity with it inevitably. We have to remember that the discussion is carried out strictly within the context of the colonial situation. And it appears that colonialism generates a state of socio-political consensus with a large base because of its attempt to project its own problems, attention and energy on an outside element which is represented as vile, inferior, barbarous and what-not. In this regard, the importance of the notion of 'reaction' or 'exception' (as opposed to 'alternative') is that it highlights the fact that while those women writers cannot be said to show complicity with the very system they opposed, they cannot be shown to have actually opposed it in terms of their narrative strategy either.

Rather than complicity with a dominant system, would it not be appropriate to talk of captivity? For while the circumstances of those women's actuality as an oppressed segment of society necessitated they distanced themselves from male discourse, the circumstances of their actuality as white agents on the imperial scene projected them into the imperial role whose tasks and appellation they could not do but assume. This, coupled with the reactionary nature of their behaviour towards foreign subjects, seems to reduce their stance to something short of counter-hegemonic. Of course, this argument can be sustained on condition that 'counter-hegemonic' is held to designate a negation of the idea of 'alternative'. I shall argue that counter-hegemony as a narrative strategy is a constrained and very relative idiom. This is because civil society can, in many ways, disclaim

political society without necessarily breaking with it. Consciously or unconsciously, the former may continue to be, if not regulated then at least, constrained by the latter's general dictates. Such issues will be discussed in depth later and account for my choice of a female novelist(Nadine Gordimer).

How these women benefitted Empire is a long and different subject. It is sufficient to say at this stage that they acted as the tender, penetrating, if one can use such an oxymoron, anthropological eye of Empire. It seems a little reductionist and erroneous to argue that this category of women acted counter-hegemonically by applying a different strategy in narrative intervention. The fact that they dramatised themselves as women for whom the jingoist option was inaccessible does not change the fact that they implanted themselves as the source of narration and especially observation of the foreign peoples they inter-mingled with. To recapitulate, the social duality injected by the politics of gender finds its smooth dissolution in the physical orientation of Empire.

Also, the fact that these women travellers "almost invariably"(LTP, 85) travelled ex officio does not alter much in the picture I have drawn. In fact, recent historiography of colonial literature has shown that this is not a trait peculiar to women travellers but one in which they shared with other colonial species, namely the frontiersmen. The frontiersman felt threatened by officialdom which severely curtailed his freedom to explore and trace new frontiers and which he consequently hated and despised. But as I explain subsequently, the frontiersman is one of the keenest, most devoted servants of Empire. So by river or undercurrent the flow eventually poured into the sea of Empire, to use a crude metaphor.

The fundamental contradiction Sara Mills' thesis runs into is that by seeking to devilify women travellers' discourse, restore its historical 'truth' with regard to power and race, and assert it as the alternative to male power practice, she denies it one of its essential ingredients. This is to say that she reduces the worth of

women's agency in the making of imperial history to nil. For unless she is prepared to squarely deny the usefulness of the imperial project for metropolitan Britain, socially, economically and politically, which she evidently does not do, women travellers would have to be seen in terms of active contribution to Empire-making and hence to imperial history. To advance the argument that their statements over other races are devoid of all political import or that those statements were not at least liable to appropriation by power is to brand those women as the invisible ghosts of Empire whose acts were so devoid of political import they seem to have operated in a historical vacuum. In this sense, 'Alternative Voices To Orientalism' ends where it had begun; it denies the very idea it had set out to assert...

But is it right or adequate to throw so much weight behind an argument like mine in such indiscriminate manner? The truth is that there are so many factors to take into account and so many subtle distinctions to make. This is a separate issue in its own right and deserves to be the subject of a more thorough investigation. What I would like to point out though is that it is neither right nor adequate to see all writing about the Other in the same light as the blatantly racist discourse of a Rider Haggard or, more particularly, a John Buchan for example. More importantly, it is essential to distinguish between those who give their writing immediate political, cultural or racial urgency making it directly accessible to political translation such as anthropologists, ethnographers, sometimes missionaries, and those who take a certain degree of neutrality or independence for granted not necessarily realising that in some way or other their writing would acquire political value. I suppose this is a question of the discrepancy between the author's particular intentions and the text's collective actuality. I do not think that meaning can be tightly regulated or calculated by the author.

1.3.3. Imagination, poetics or politics?

In 'The Writer's Imagination And The Imagination Of the State'(The New York Review of Books, 1986) Nadine Gordimer expresses the view that

"The imagination can never be the product of a collective. It is the most concentrated of cerebral activities, the most exclusive, private and individual".(24)

Would Nadine Gordimer say the same applies to the physical medium of imagination, language? Can there be imagination without language? Is not language the collective reservoir of memories and perceptions? Given that language constitutes a crucial link between the individual and the collective, is it at all possible for the individual imagination(which is expressed in language) to do without the tenets of the collective altogether? I will put this question differently. The process of deconstruction that both Nadine Gordimer and André Brink engage in, while indicating that the attack on certain themes such as civilisation and reason has started in earnest in south African fiction, does it depart from a serious intent to install a credible 'alternative' or is it the expression of a state of crisis thrusting the imagination into the kind of obscurantism characterising some post-modernist cultures³ which, *out of a sense of colonial guilt*, have abolished all hierarchy of values and lent an air of interchangeability to "civilisation" and "primitivism"?

³ Some of the French post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida for example are a good case in point. Besides writing so densely as to be virtually incomprehensible, Derrida has produced theories of textuality which contest such concepts as reason or logos, justice etc.,

1.3.4 The concept of alienation used in this study:

1.3.4.1. Definition:

It could be stated that my treatment of alienation in this study will only marginally hinge on the socio-psychological import with which the concept has conventionally been associated. What I intend it to express in the final analysis (at least in the context of white South African literature) is a certain cultural discrepancy on the epistemological level, to use a rather pretentious phrase. Alienation will be used as a qualitative concept designating what might be a continuum of a past cultural practice promoted to serve the purposes of dominion into the present effort at decolonisation in white South African fiction. In a brief discussion in chapter three of the romance genre and how it was used by Rider Haggard and John Buchan, I try to investigate the position this hallucinatory practice occupied in the interplay between the power of colonialism and its culture, how it reflected the notion of the Other and even entrenched it. Here again I ask, if such a notion, usually associated with geographic remoteness and historical identity and difference, is to be found still in exercise in white fiction, would that not be a prime example of alienation?

Social criticism maintains that as long as socio-political fragmentation still exists in South African society, one should say societies, there is bound to be alienation. To what extent is this premise tenable? Does there not seem to be something larger at play, a wider perimeter of alienation which harks back to cultural difference especially that white culture in South Africa is, in a certain metaphysical sense, a legitimate descendent of a Western tradition in thought? And finally is socio-political fragmentation really the only key to alienation?

1.3.4.2. Problematising of alienation in South African white fiction:

Now I come to the key point which I would like to make in this introduction. This study of alienation in South African literature indirectly tries to grapple with the very issues discussed so far. I am motivated by a desire to check for myself the validity of the argument for or against the relation of knowledge to power in colonial discourse using South Africa as a focus. To what extent can the notion of Otherness be averted in a power context? What are the contributions of gender in this area? If there can be counter-hegemonic voices, and I argue there are in the case of André Brink and Nadine Gordimer, how far can they go in disclaiming or subverting the tenets of colonial ideology, discourse and perspectives? In other words, even on conscious effort and out of political conviction, can their writing go completely against those tenets? To put all these questions in a comprehensive form, can civil society decolonise itself when the political environment where it functions remains largely and essentially colonial?

1.4. Geographical distance, critical juxtaposition:

This study is also about North African francophone literature in the post-Second World War era up to independence. The idea behind my inclusion of two chapters on this literature is to support my argument about alienation and cultural difference. In both Kateb Yacine and Driss Chraïbi alienation is a city-phenomenon. But we shall see that the city is more than geographical space. It is a cultural symbol of foreignness and conquest. The inclusion of these two writers is also governed by a wish to create ground for dealing with Gordimer, Mphahlele and Driss Chraïbi for instance in the same work.

The language and cultural priorities may differ in each part but there are certainly common denominators. There is an Arabo-muslim tradition that links North Africa with the Arab East as in Driss Chraïbi but there is also a Berber-muslim tradition that links it with Africa as in Kateb Yacine. It would be interesting to see what Ezekiel Mphahlele makes of colonisation and how his treatment of the question compares with that of either author from North Africa.

It is a thing to be deplored that literary criticism of either North or sub-Saharan African literatures treats these two geographic dimensions as if they were not even part of the same continent. While American and British critics appropriate sub-Saharan literature, largely in English, Franco-Belgian critics show special interest in North African literature. This is how a divide is maintained outside the continent. What is more deplorable, however, is that critics within Africa itself have mainly focused on literature produced in their own culture-areas. I believe that such a treatment is as narrow-minded as unprofitable...

1.5. The novels discussed:

I shall start by examining two romances, King Solomon's Mines (1885) and Prester John (1910), by Rider Haggard and John Buchan respectively. My discussion on Alan Paton focuses on two of his novels, Cry, The Beloved Country (1948) and Too Late The Phalarope (1955). For Nadine Gordimer and André Brink, I examine The Conservationist (1974) and July's People (1981), and also An Instant In The Wind (1976) and Rumours Of Rain (1978) respectively. Equally, my discussion of Ezekiel Mphahlele is centred on his autobiography Down Second Avenue (1959) and his autobiographical novel The Wanderers (1971). As To Driss Chraïbi and Kateb Yacine, I have chosen Le Passé Simple (1954) and Les Boucs (1955), and Nedjma (1956) respectively.

B. Chapter Two

Theoretical Questions

2.1. Introduction:

This chapter deals with two theoretical aspects of the work at hand. The first aspect is in two parts. In the first part, I try to forge a particular stance on the subject under study. The question here is how to transplant a certain body of ideas and conceptions promoted by the colonial enterprise and examine them without ever denying or forgetting to acknowledge their dynamic relation to the whole. To clarify this point, I focus analysis on Octave Mannoni and Bernard Magubane whose treatments of culture represent two extremes of the analytical spectrum. The second part introduces the question of critical theory. Here, I try to justify my adoption of the concept of 'Orientalism' and its applicability in the context of South African literature.

In recognition of the fine and sometimes peculiar texture of the relationship between the power of colonialism and its culture, one ought to be extremely wary when dealing with this culture. It would be easy to lapse into unrealistic or oversystematic analyses, as Mannoni and Magubane do in Psychologie de la colonisation (Seuil, 1950) and The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa (Monthly Review Press, 1979) respectively. On the whole, Mannoni's approach is much too imaginative and though—rather equivocally—it admits the fact that there is a constant exchange between the culture of colonialism and its power, reaches some very strange and ahistorical conclusions. This study is a failure in so far as seeks to lay exaggerated emphasis on the psychological mechanisms of colonialism, thus reducing the whole enterprise to a mere neurosis the seeds of which are sown in the individual during his or her childhood.

By stark contrast, Magubane's approach seems vulgarly mechanistic, displaying little or no critical imagination. It allows very little room, if any at all, for the possibility that ideas might have a history of their own or that they can and do

affect the physical world just as it does them.

The second theoretical aspect of this chapter looks at the nature of romance. I have argued that romance is constructed from wish-fulfilment and cultural hallucination material and that it casts some of its own characteristics on its subject. Applied to the 'Other', its reductionist nature comes to the foreground to give him pejorative undertones.

2.2.1. Ethno-psychology and the colonial situation:

Octave Mannoni's approach to the colonial situation in Psychologie de la colonisation is interesting in that it seeks to treat the question of colonialism and its metaphors on a complex level. A positive aspect of this approach is that it is not only the "Other " who is subjected to the process of medicalisation characteristic of African psychological research or ethnopsychology. For once, as Manganyi observes, both Prospero and Caliban undergo the same process.('Making Strange' Europe and Its Others, 1984, 160). However, where this approach also tragically fails is in the terms it sets for the exchange between the power of colonialism and its culture. By this I mean the sense of " inevitability of the colonial relationship" coupled with its "unrealistic", "emotional" and "neurotic" character.('Making Strange', 160)

Mannoni makes use of the figures of Crusoe, Prospero and Caliban as historical metaphors representing the colonial relationship. As to why the romance genre occupies such a highly sensitive position in his analytical scheme, he wrote:

"C' est justement parce qu'elle est une fable que l' aventure de Crusoe, sortie directement de l'inconscient de son auteur, touche facilement le notre"(Psychologie de la colonisation, 96).

what is Mannoni actually saying here? In a sense, he is pointing to the way the dynamics of culture function. The author is conversing with his audience at the level of the unconscious. He is trying to bring to light the components of the process I referred to as conversation or exchange. Apparently, Mannoni does not abide by the idea that colonial ideology is subject to the principle of stasis which exposes it to the sheer will of a colonial bureaucracy craftily manipulating various

agencies. He subscribes to the opinion that neither Defoe nor Shakespeare nor, for that matter, any other romance writer was exclusively expressing the fantasies of bureaucratic officialdom. Mannoni unequivocally admits that such fantasies were also representative of the culture at large. Defoe and Shakespeare were responding to some sort of stimuli in operation within their own culture and, by so doing, were also creating new ones or at least endorsing those already in existence:

"De là est sorti Robinson à la manière d' un rêve. Et quand ce rêve a été publié, toute l' Europe s' est aperçue qu'elle le rêvait"(P.C., 101).

The point here is that there is something fascinating about how a collective dream or fantasy finds its expression in a work of literature with such a strictly channelled conception of the "Other" and how that work sees to it that the fantasy is even more deeply printed in the memory of the culture that has produced it, both individual and collective. This is a prime example of how culture goes into exchange with itself while at the same time preserving its drive for consensus.

Notwithstanding, Mannoni's approach has a few disconcerting aspects. The fact that he deals with colonial imago, motivation, perseverance and what-not from the exclusive point of view of psychoanalysis has led him to the inevitable and astounding conclusion that if the unconscious is a zone highly charged with oppressed desires for escape and consequently a formidable generator of colonial vitality, colonialism should be treated as a neurosis. Is this some sort of apologia in itself...? What interests me here is the ideas of neurotic culture which I would like to stop at for a while. Here is how Mannoni sees the neurosis develop:

"L'enfant rêve évasion. Il y a un âge, après quatre ans, où l'enfant essaie en cachette de sortir seul. Quelque fois il se 'perd'. Il fait le tour d' un pâté de maisons et retrouve son point de départ, comme si il vérifiait une intuition topologique, comme s' il avait démontré que la terre est

ronde. Variante : il rêve d'être invisible. Alors il se cache. Sa mère inquiète, l'appelle; il néglige de répondre. La mère qualifie ses jeux de stupides. Ce sont peut être plus que des jeux. Enfin, l'enfant rêve d'aller se cacher loin où il n'y a personne. Il s'en va au fond du jardin jouer à Robinson[...] Il faut se défendre contre l'intrusion"(P.C., 99).

As to the fact that we take so much interest or satisfaction in reading a romance like Robinson Crusoe, Mannoni explains that

"[elle] permet d'affirmer l'existence dans l'âme enfantine d'un trait en partie misanthropique, en tout cas anti-social, que faute de mieux, l'on peut appeler 'la tentation d'un monde sans hommes.'"(P.C., 99)

The outcome is

"Misanthropie, mélancholie, besoin pathologique de solitude, projection de ses fautes sur autrui, culpabilité à l'égard du père, sentiment refoulé pour une fille dont on veut ignorer le sexe"(P.C., 101).

Mannoni's logic is highly consistent and compelling. But a fundamental criticism that can be directed against it is that it enfolds a potential danger. What Mannoni is actually saying is that the family neurosis projects itself on the socio-political structure as if by way of spillage. This parameter permits a view at the colonial situation only from within. For what becomes of the "other" in this case? We should remember that this "other" was neither a frozen body whose impact on European imagination could be regulated wholly to her desire or wish, nor a historical or geographical accident which Europe had suddenly allowed to happen and therefore had to be engulfed into this terribly unconscious zone of high fantastic activity. The "Other" was there, historically and geographically, moving

and fluid. It was not devised for the first time¹. As Nadine Gordimer pointed out, Africa is an old concept ("The Novel and The Nation" 1961, 521). What was new and devised was means of receiving and pigmenting it in ways that abated its colours and made them less striking to the European eye.

What is more, this "Other", challenger of the familiarity of the "Us", was pertinent, especially materially. To contain it politically, economically and militarily, meant to contain it also culturally or, in this case, imaginatively. For the "Us" he had to be appallingly different, or appallingly inferior, or appallingly degenerate, and sometimes beyond lies, beyond deceit and beyond fabrication. What he was made to look like had the complacency of truth and the seriousness of firm belief. The colonial experience therefore cannot yield to the description of being merely a "residu d'une tentation mal liquidée". (P.C., 102) As Manganyi argues, one would be hard put to it to subscribe to such a view that reduces "[a]ll other expressions of white power, military, economic, and political [to] the primacy of the unconscious" ("Making Strange", 160)

Another debatable aspect of Mannoni's approach is his views on racism. For example, he wrote:

"La civilisation Européenne et ses représentants les plus qualifiés ne sont pas responsables par exemple du racisme colonial; mais celui-ci est l'oeuvre de subalternes, de petits commerçants, de colons qui ont beaucoup triché sans grand succès." (P.C., 16)

There is a major contradiction here in logic as well as in terms. For if we accept his previous idea that when Defoe published his dream, the whole of Europe realized that it was dreaming it, it would be totally unjustifiable to confine a type

¹For an interesting history of African cultures refer to Basil Davidson's Les Africains trans. Michel Janin (Paris, Seuil, 1971) and The Story of Africa (London, Mitchell Beazley Publishers, 1984):

of thinking and behaviour like racism to one specific social category or stratum in total isolation from the others. It is cultural or societal beings who help carve such historical moments as the colonial experience.

2.2.2. Historical materialism and the colonial situation:

Magubane's main focus falls on religion or missionary discourse. It is considered a main pillar of the colonial enterprise and missionaries are seen as crucial agents in the furthering of colonial interests. Among those he quotes to make his point is Louis Wright who clearly testifies to the fact that the Church had been used by colonial policy-makers who made it play the same role that the present-day mass media would be expected to perform. Louis Wright wrote:

"No better medium for propaganda existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Lacking the facilities of a British Broadcasting Company and a highly developed press, the government and the stock companies utilised the next best thing to a loudspeaker : they induced the preacher to broadcast their information, and commendations of their projects."(P.E.R.C., 56)

Another similar view quoted by Magubane is held by John Philips who takes the propaganda role of the Church for granted and tries to establish a more dramatic point whereby the Church is considered as an instrument for more complex and far reaching objectives. If only policy-makers knew how to manipulate it, it could prove a very efficient, cheap but above all pacifist institution for the consolidation of imperialist achievements:

"Missionary stations are the most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the international strength of our colonies, and the cheapest and best military posts agreement can employ."(P.E.R.C., 58)

This argument is carried even further as Magubane quotes a third party, a certain Brownlee, supposedly a missionary himself. The following statement by

Brownlee provides hard-and-fast evidence, in Magubane's judgement, that the Church actually paved the way for the colonial economy:

"As the natives came under the influence of the teaching of missionaries, they at once abandoned red clay and sought to cover themselves with European clothing and thus, and in proportion to the spread of missionary influence the desire of articles of European manufacture grew and spread, and I think will well satisfy this meeting that to the missionary mainly we owe the great revenue now derived from native trade."(P.E.R.C., 59)

Finally, and as if by way of completing the picture, Magubane makes the following statement:

"The physical struggle against African societies was only the beginning of a process in which the initial act of conquest was buttressed and institutionalised by ideological activities."(P.E.R.C., 55)

This is all good and well. A limitless number of examples could be cited to corroborate Magubane's view that economic interests are directly and systematically responsible for the colonial enterprise. In his 'Speech to Manchester Conservative Club', 14 December 1906, Lord Milner asked:

"What is going to become of all your social well-being if the material prosperity which is essential to it, though not identical with it, is undermined? And you cannot have prosperity without power, you, of all people, dependent for your very life, not on the products of these islands alone, but on a world-wide enterprise and commerce."(The Concept of Empire, 1962, ed. George Bennett, 351)

And yet one could also cite examples where the logic is substantially

otherwise². It is apparent that Magubane has made tremendous efforts to put as much consistency as possible into the logic of his argument. However one is entitled to ask if consistency is sufficient in this context. We are dealing with a field highly charged with complexities, and the role played by civil society in the promotion of the colonial situation is much too complex and deep-rooted in European culture to be dismissed as only secondary as Magubane's analysis does seem to suggest. Apparently, the real danger of his approach is that it pays too much tribute to the logic and consistency of the argument per se; an effort that could have been far better invested in disentangling the knitted-togetherness of the relationship between colonialism and its culture and in shedding light on its inner mechanisms. Although Magubane's findings are steady and systematic, one might note a difference between the (Catholic) Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and churches at a later stage, mainly from Ireland and the United States, which were very anti-colonial.

The main criticism this approach invites, however, is maintaining that the sum of the history of colonisation mounts up to little more than a body of petty and grand policies made by an elite of cunning colonial officials who had enough skill to allow them sometimes to manipulate civil society and sometimes to conspire with it in order to achieve certain colonial objectives or to satisfy certain economic greeds. Magubane forms a particular image of the missionary as a totally passive, totally dependent functionary allowing others to put ideas into his head and words

²In his 'Report Of The Parliamentary Select Committee On Aborigines', Sir Fowell Buxton, for instance, states that "He who has made Great Britain what she is will inquire at our hands how we have employed the influence He has lent us... whether it has been engaged in seizing their lands, warring upon their people, and thus transplanting unknown diseases, and deeper degradation throughout the remote regions of the earth, or whether we have, as far as we have been able, informed their ignorance and invited and offered them the opportunity of becoming partakers in that civilisation, that innocent commerce, that knowledge and that faith with which it has pleased a gracious Providence to bless our own country." (*The Concept Of Empire*, ed. George Bennett, 1962, 106).

into his mouth...

Culture must not be treated as a colonial office that the central bureaucracy daily fed with charters of day-to-day colonial policy. As Philip D. Curtin emphasizes:

"any study of European attitudes must also bear in mind two other groups: that small, select body of opinion makers... the politicians, the senior civil servants, the businessmen, the journalists, the academics, the missionary statesmen... who had acquired an interest in Africa without having set foot on African soil, and who made frequent reference to the continent in their speeches and warnings; and beyond them the wide mass of the general public, in whose minds Africa tended to be reduced to a few crude disparate but powerful images"(The Image of Africa, 1964, 413)

It must be pointed out that Magubane's view of ideology as a consciously applied process whereby whatever rough surfaces have been left over by physical conquest are smoothed out is not totally adequate. For there is no clear-cut demarcation line between conquest as a physical act of aggression and ideology, be it as a form of justification, a motivating force or an act of containment.

In sum, Magubane gives little recognition to ideas as having a history of their own or as having the ability to influence the course of human history. When he tries to bring colonial ideology into perspective, he speaks either crude or half truths. The other half his approach fails to capture is that Europe's ideas of the "Other" and the ways it devised for dealing with him are not, as Edward Said points out in Orientalism, necessarily based on a body of lies or consciously misleading images. Colonial ideology, as I shall try to demonstrate, was a strongly motivated as well as motivating body of ideas, illusions, fantasies, theories and practices, which often acquired the status of scientific truth and which also eventually helped shape the colonial realm. One would have to think of how Darwinism, for example,

became an adjunct of the colonial structure. Equally, one would have to think with what complacency, tenacity, and zeal eugenists and craneologists³, for instance, took race into the laboratory and came out with what they thought was sound, conclusive evidence on the inferiority of the black man's mental processes. Finally, one would have to think of Apartheid itself and the way it appropriated scientific knowledge to consolidate its own position right from the start. As Manganyi wrote:

"We would be naive if we thought that the discourses of ethnopsychiatry, race science and African psychological research have not been appropriated by Apartheid ideologues for their own purposes." ("Making Strange : Race, Science and Ethnopsychiatric discourse" Europe and Its Others, 1984, 163)

³ See Saul Dubow's 'Race, Civilisation and Culture : The elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years' in The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism In Twentieth Century South Africa ed. Shula Marks & Stanley Trapido (Essex, Longman Group Ltd, 1987)

2.2.3. Synthesis:

An alternative view to Mannoni's class-based notion of society could be the Gramscian concept of "hegemonic culture"⁴. Frantz Fanon's ideas on this point are very interesting:

"A given society is racist or it is not. Until all the evidence is available, a great number of problems will have to be put aside. Statements for example that the north of France is more racist than the south, that racism is the work of underlings and hence... no way involves the ruling class, that France is one of the least racist countries in the world are the product of men incapable of straight thinking."(Black Skin, White Masks, Pluto Press, 1967)

Obviously, one has to be careful not to abrogate the relativity of racism. After all anybody would agree that France's racism and South Africa's are a matter for no subtle distinction. Although they are both aggressive phenomena, institutionalised racism has quite a different hide. But the fact remains that Mannoni could actually see the futility of trying to account for racism in terms of class..

Another point concerns the quality of 'dreaming' within certain norms set up by the collective and for the collective. That is precisely what is so appealing about culture as represented by such types of colonial discourse as Robinson Crusoe or even The Tempest. Having said this, three important principles I have to reiterate. It is all very well if " the content of a human being's dream depends also in the final analysis on the general conditions of the culture in which he lived" as Fanon submits(B.S.W.M., 106). It still remains that to undertake a project aiming at the disentanglement of what is individual from what is collective in a fantasy like

⁴ Selections From The Prison Notebooks ed. & trans. Quinton Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1976).

Robinson Crusoe or The Tempest is unfeasible. Secondly, it is equally important to mention that one cannot relegate a whole cultural drive to the field of psychoanalysis and deal with it as if all that matters in its dynamism is the element of neurosis. Last but not least, any culture has a present, in which collective dreams and fantasies are exercised; a past, that is both a residue for those dreams and fantasies and at the same time a base for their objectivisation; and a future, which is the coming together of past and present into new form. Cleopatra's retort to Antony "Then thou must find new heaven new earth" or Miranda's exclamation on Ferdinand being from a "brave new world" are echoed in John Buchan's Lodge In The Wilderness, "And in that hour I saw my work, and, I think, too, the ideal of our race. If we cannot create a new heaven, we can create a new earth"(Nelson, 1922, 123). This is to say that a work of the nature I am discussing can be dealt with as the individual expression of a collective dream in a "present" that drew on its "past" to formulate a vision of the "future" and a programme of action to deal with it. In the specific context of the colonial situation, the past was a temporal dimension where contact with the "Other" was made, the present, where the terms of that contact and its object were spelled out, the future, where ideas will find their way to physical reality, be it colonialism, racism or, ultimately, Apartheid... This continuous process whereby the three temporal dimensions are chained together, this thinking and re-thinking, perhaps forgetting and re-forgetting, of history is a key theme to the understanding of the subject I am about to treat here.

Having expressed such views, I shall make one further step ahead. In a previous part of this study, I asked to what extent the course of South African literature continues to be influenced by certain literary idioms pertaining to a special era of South African history. The next chapter will have as an objective the elucidation of those literary idioms, the cultural or ideological functions they served, and finally the demystification of the process whereby some of them came to gain historicity

or to contribute, in some way or other to it. By historicity I designate the process whereby ideas, images, visions and even prejudices are translated into (physical) socio-economic actuality. What method or procedure is one to adopt in order to have a clear view of the questions at hand?

2.2.4. Some notes on critical practice:

In the preface to Frederick Jameson's The Prison-House of Language (1972), structuralism is described as an attempt to "re-think everything through once again in terms of linguistics." (vii) This is to say that structuralism functions only by virtue of implementing Saussurean binary oppositions. In his book, Course In General Linguistics (1916), Ferdinand de Saussure expresses the view that language should be studied as a complete system of signs at a given point in time instead of being studied in its historical development. To use Saussure's own terminology, language is to be studied 'synchronically' not 'diachronically'. Although such a distinction would appear ahistorical and undialectical in that it is "based on a pure opposition, a set of absolute contraries" (P.H.O.L., 22), and in that it serves only as "the enabling act which permits Saussure's doctrine to come into being in the first place" (P.H.O.L., 22), things become more interesting once we have actually moved into the synchronic system. According to him, a sign is a combination of 'signifier' (acoustic or graphic equivalent), and 'signified' (meaning). The relation between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' is one of random or conventionality. Thus, [p] [e] [n] means what it does because we have agreed on that meaning. But it also means what it does because it is different from other signifiers as in [h] [e] [n]. The immediate implication of this is, of course, that things are what they are because of what they exclude. In other words, meaning is relational not substantial. Another distinction Saussure makes is between *langue* ("the ensemble of linguistic possibilities or potentialities at any given moment") and *parole* ("the individual and partial actualisation of some of those potentialities") (P.H.O.L., 22). He is however concerned with *langue*, that is with what people say or with "the objective structure of signs that [makes] their speech possible in the first place" (P.H.O.L., 22). What people talk about, the objects of their speech or *parole*, Saussure disregards.

On these grounds, the purport of Saussurean theory is that to examine language, we have to vacuum it from its social content.

Structuralism seems to follow closely in this pattern. Binary oppositions are so essential that principles are defined only by what they exclude. Meaning again is relational and not substantial. It is produced only as a result of the contrast and difference of internal systems. Otherwise the relation between the sign and its referent is only arbitrary. The concept of arbitrariness, Terry Eagleton observes, is actually so important that Roland Barthes defined the 'healthy sign' as one that "draws attention to its own arbitrariness" (Literary Theory, 1983). Thus, as in Saussure, absolute emphasis is laid on the structure of meaning rather than content. In fact, content (say of a story) is bracketed off altogether, and form is what is concentrated upon. The result is that "narrative becomes about itself, its subject is its internal relations" (L.T., 96). This attitude has led to a certain suspicion, indeed indictment, that structuralism has "a deep fear of the actual social world, a distaste for history itself" (L.T., 93). Another indictment directed at structuralism is its indifferent attitude towards the cultural value of the object under its scrutiny. And the truth is that structuralism has had no legitimate stances to counter such indictments except perhaps to hide behind certain claims to universality that are utterly unacceptable. For example, it has tried to transcend cultural boundaries on the (false) grounds that although sign-systems are not universal, the deep laws governing them and which pertain to a universal collective mind, are. Finally, its view of history is not only ideological and ahistorical, but also narrow-minded and one-sided. For if we are to look at history, is language the only telescope we dispose of? What about sexuality to name but one factor?

In my view, psychoanalysis is a much more useful and reliable critical tool for reasons I shall lay out here. Freudian theory assigns a decisive role to the division between the "pleasure principle" and the 'reality principle'. And because labour has always been essential to mankind, repressing the pleasure principle, to a certain

extent at least, has been equally essential as well. According to Freud, the child in its early years is wholly pleasure-seeking. The Oedipus complex that "signals the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle"(L.T., 93) has not taken place yet. In the pre-Oedipal world, breast-sucking for example suggests drives of sexuality within the child who is still ungendered, experiencing no boundaries between itself as a subject and the external world as an object. In other words, the transition from Nature to Culture has not obtained yet. The Oedipus complex is supposed to be "the beginning of morality, conscience, law and forms of social and religious authority"(L.T., 157) At this stage, the child has relinquished his incest instinct and begun to assume a position in the extra-familial or cultural world. Such relinquishment is signalled by the child's becoming aware of sexual difference as a result of the father's entry into his world. The father represents law or the social taboo. Once the child has experienced the feeling of guilt amounting from his incestuous desire and learned to repress that desire, it is a signal that it has developed what Freud calls the 'unconscious'.

But is it not a contradiction to acknowledge the usefulness of psychoanalysis after my critique of Mannoni above? It obviously is. However, one might note that there is a difference between Freudian and post-structuralist types of psychoanalysis. It would be absurd to apply the Freudian method to South African literature for the simple reason that a dream about a gun in a highly explosive power situation cannot be interpreted in terms of sexual symbolism, as is clearly the case in Mannoni, unless sexual language is being used as a radical surrogate for political discourse. I shall deal with this point in the course of my discussion of André Brink and, especially, Nadine Gordimer.

The importance of somebody like Jacques Lacan in the field of psychoanalysis is that he re-wrote the process I have been describing in terms of language, making use of Saussure's signifier and 'signified' which he relates to what he calls 'the

mirror stage'. According to him, the child has no sense of identity and cannot think of itself as a distinct unity. That is to say that so far no gap has opened up between the signifier and the signified. But while contemplating itself in the mirror, the child suddenly recognises itself but as a distinct unity this time. However, for Lacan, Catherine Belsey points out, this recognition is "an identification with an imaginary '(because imaged)' unitary and autonomous self" (Critical Practice, 60). I have already mentioned that in this theory, the father represents social taboo and from there threatens to castrate the child. In fact, according to Freud, the child perceives that the girls have been castrated as a punishment and therefore gives up its incestuous desire. For Lacan, this is the stage where the child has been banished from "the 'full', imaginary possession into the 'empty' world of language". (L.I., 167) Giving up incest, the child distances itself from the mother and establishes itself as a separate sexual subject. Such a process takes place in language; the child begins to distinguish between the 'I' and the 'you'. And as C. Belsey wrote, "the child not only recognises the difference between 'I' and 'you' but is compelled to use it if it wants to act within its social formation. However, the subject is constructed in language and in discourse and, since the symbolic order in its discursive use is closely related to ideology, in ideology." (C.P., 61)

Let us try to establish a firm perspective on the 'concept' of Ideology once and for all. The objective behind my discussion of Mannoni and Magubane was to carve up an adequate definition of ideology capable of responding to the theoretical demands of the job at hand. For example, that discussion tried to indicate the historically constructed nature of ideology and especially its sophisticated, dynamic performance. The "Other", we shall see, is conceptualised and dealt with according to ideas, images, idioms and so forth, that were permanently being permeated with the past-present-future dimension which rendered them not only into telescopes for bringing the "Other" home for consumption or scrutiny but also, and especially, translatable into historical, socio-economic actuality. It follows

that ideology abandons its orthodox superstructural or peripheral meaning and assumes a more pivotal status than being just a mysteriously originated concept ! This is to say that

"ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world _real in that it is the way people really live their conditions of existence but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted with them. It is not, therefore, to be thought of as a system of ideas in people's heads, nor as the expression at a higher level of real material relationships, but as the necessary condition of action within the social formation."(C. Belsey, C.P., 57)

Post-structuralism does seem to recognise these points and definitions. For if all that structuralism could hope for is to unearth the element of opposition between two meanings (man/woman) in a text, post-structuralism tries to reveal the hidden logic of that opposition element. As Terry Eagleton puts it, it tries to show in what ways "the binary oppositions can be partly undermined or shown to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning"(L.T., 132). Thus language is not treated as a stable or static structure where each signified seems to correspond to a signifier, but "a sprawling limitless web where there is a constant interchange and circulation of elements, where everything is caught up and traced through by everything else"(L.T., 129).

Instead of insisting that elements are defined by what they exclude, post-structuralism considers them as the products of particular systems of meaning. The implication in this is that no sign is pure, fully meaningful or original (the meaning of meanings!). For "out of the play of signifiers, certain meanings are elevated by social ideologies to a privileged position or made the center around which other meanings are forced to turn"(L.T., 131). A good example here is Allan Quatermain's mission in Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines where, as we shall

see in the next chapter, the protagonist foregrounds his male character to undermine the "feminised" nature of the landscape he describes.

2.2.5. Orientalism, alienation and South Africa Literature:

For all these reasons, I have been led to make use of Edward Said's book, Orientalism, which provides some valuable tools and guide-lines for the study of a subject like this. Said begins by noting that the distinction between pure and political knowledge is not valid. Images of the Orient as a place of laziness, deceit and irrationality have been created by generations of scholars in the West and go hand in hand with Western material and political involvement in the Orient. Departing from the premise that men make their own history and that what they can know is what they have made, Said is able to claim that the Orient is a Western invention made in discourse, what Said refers to as Orientalism, "a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment"(Orientalism, 1985, 6).

Said maintains that what gives British and French (as opposed to German) Orientalisms their strength is their material actuality, their "close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions"(Orientalism, 6). For Germany, during the first two thirds of the nineteenth century, no close "partnership [had] developed between Orientalists and a protracted, sustained national interest in the Orient"(Orientalism, 19). The result is that "the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient....it was never actual, the way Egypt and Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton..."(Orientalism, 19).

For Said, Orientalism serves as a grid for filtering images of the Orient into Western consciousness. This means that civil and political societies co-operate in the shaping of the Orient as one of the West's most recurrent images of the Other, in promulgating that image through cultural leadership or hegemony, and in determining the forms of material and political involvement in it.

Using Rider Haggard and John Buchan, I shall argue that in a way similar to the Orient, Africa has been subject to considerable power/knowledge investment and that certain images of the continent have been produced, promulgated and maintained through cultural hegemony. It is those images I would like to reveal. However, in dealing with the South African writers proper, I shall go one step further to investigate the real effects of political society on civil society.

This said, I am totally aware of the immediate difficulty that arises. Between the Orient and Africa there is a wide range of discrepancies in nature, implication and even degree of conceptualisation. One of them is history, another is geography, a third is the human value implied in each of these geographical dimensions. But one common denominator they did share beyond doubt or contest is that for Europe, both of them represented an image of the "Other"; may be not always interchangeable_ and sometimes they were⁵_ and may be they appealed to her imagination to varying degrees of intensity. The fact remains that both of them were the "Other" or the "Them" as different from the "Us". To use Said's words, both of them represented "a sort of surrogate and even underground self "(Orientalism, 3) for Europe. Now, in what major ways could Africa be said to have differed from the Orient, either intrinsically or in Europe's eyes, does not really fall within the scope of this study.

The second point I would like to raise relates to the borrowing of orientalism both as a term and as a concept and its implementation in the context of South African literature. For adding the suffix "ism" to "African" to produce the lexical equivalent of "orientalism" does not really take us far into the field. Semantically speaking, "Africanism" does not express or even remotely suggest the power-knowledge relationship_ that has bound two such geographical and cultural dimensions as the East/Orient and West/Occident over centuries of contact on different levels and of various natures and motivations_ immediately implicit in

⁵This point is discussed in the following chapter on Rider Haggard and John Buchan

"orientalism". It follows that I have sometimes taken the liberty to stretch the semantic boundary of the lexis/concept "orientalism" to describe a situation, a locution, even a power relationship occurring in the African context. As a consequence, the term inevitably loses its geographical specificity and acquires a much more abstract but also more flexible significance.

Also, it has to be pointed out that Edward Said never confines the concept of orientalism to one definition. His use of it varies from one discourse to another, one process to another or one relationship to another. It changes according to the discipline he is tackling. Thus, it is "an institution for dealing with the Orient", "a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient", "a system of knowledge about the Orient", "knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgement, discipline or governing"(*Orientalism*, 41), "the ideological suppositions, images and fantasies about a currently important and politically urgent region of the world called the Orient"('Orientalism Revisited', 1984, 14) etc. The way in which I have incorporated the concept in this study however, is primarily related to one specific cultural parameter, narrative discourse as different from, say, academic Orientalism. For what interests me in the first place is how certain ideas promulgated within colonial culture were translated into components of the physical and cultural edifice called Apartheid and how they have continued to exercise specific functions. The special appeal that King Solomon's Mines and Prester John have to me in this regard stems from the fact that they are rich in forms of fantasy and cultural hallucination. The principle from which I would like to take my departure is sketched in this small passage from Black Skin, White Masks(1956):

"in every society, in every collectivity, exists, must exist a channel, an outlet through which the focus accumulated in the form of aggression can be released"(99)

2.3.1. Romance and culture:

Any attempt to deal with the romance structure as a mode of cultural and geographical practice, would have to invoke the function it fulfils within the norms of a given culture vis-a-vis another. Both in general terms and in the particular case of the discourse I am about to examine, romance would seem to be linked to its overall cultural environment via an intimate and forceful bond. King Solomon's Mines, for example, has been described by David Rabkin as "a colonial reverie" ('Ways of Looking', 1978, 29). From this platform, I deal with romance as one of the most powerful and most efficient tools of European imaginative geography. Due to its unparalleled ability to draw on the fantastic, romance could take the liberty to entrench the "our-land, the barbarians-land variety" (Orientalism, 54) in European imagination almost beyond restraint. Such a way of demarcating the "Self" from the "Other" certainly helped the "mind intensify its sense of what is close and what is far away" (Orientalism, 55) But knowledge as promoted by imaginative geography has its own price⁶. The question I am turning attention to here is this : how can we deal with romance taking full account of the fact that it is not only a body of extraordinary images and symbols but also a satellite of imaginative geography?

⁶See 'Imaginative Geography and Its Representations' In Said's Orientalism. See also J. M. Coetzee's novel Waiting For The Barbarians (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980) where the idea of the 'barbarians' impending peril' leads to paranoia and to the collapse of reason, justice and civilisation.

2.3.2 Definition of romance:

First of all, what is romance? Patrick Bartlinger describes it as wish-fulfilment "bound up with dreams and illusions"('Romance, Novels and Psychoanalysis', Criticism, 1975, 15) as opposed to realism which suggests "the opposite of the ideas of wish-fulfilment, illusions, and dreams"('R.N.P.', 16). Romance lacks reason, one of the essential components of realism:

"Like rational control during dreams, the voice of reason in romances is portrayed as weak or dormant."('R.N.P.', 31)

The structure of romance "creates a kind of charmed circle within which the demonic, the outlawed, the infantile can be conjured up"('R.N.P.', 31). On the other hand, realism functions like psychoanalysis, "unmasking the infantile and irrational bases of illusion and its characters"('R.N.P.', 16). For this matter, realistic novels are "shaped by struggles for rational self-awareness in ways impossible in dreams, even though these struggles may be weak or frail"('R.N.P.', 17).

2.3.3. Romance and the Other in the colonial context:

Two deductions can be made after such a definition. Firstly, if the romance is characterised by wish-fulfilment, the irrational, the grossly fantastic and the infantile, applied to the "Other", would it not entail his victimisation? In a subsequent part of this chapter, I shall demonstrate that many of its own characteristics are actually cast on its subject. Secondly, since the romance holds a contradiction in logic to realism, is it really strange that realism was not applied to experiences occurring on alien territories and that it was the romance that lent itself to that task each time? Also, since the phenomenon of irrationality seems to sit on the periphery of realism, is there not scope for the supposition that the duo realism/romance came to correspond to core(Europe) and periphery(Europe's others)? It seems that the pattern followed by romance as a scheme of peripheralisation observed the logic of imperialist peripheralisation during that era. Here is an example of how the pattern functioned. The example is sketched by Stephen Gray:

"In the literature the pattern is of English boys being encouraged to become men (and the boys' literature of the time is their rite of passage, their initiation school), while 'black caffre' men are encouraged to become boys."(Southern African Literature, 1979, 111)

It might be argued that romance is not necessarily a trans-cultural phenomenon in the sense that plenty of romances have been produced about Europe itself and therefore the point about victimisation, as I used it above, is not a valid one. There are two possible ways in which this argument can be counteranaced. Firstly, the fact that we refer to Europe as one geographical, cultural, and historical mass, does not exclude the existence of power struggle and cultural

belligerence in it. Ancient Norse sagas, which are incidentally used by Rider Haggard, for example, do reflect Europe in a state of (material as well as) cultural belligerence. Images of wild savage men from Scandinavia threatening to destroy the existing English kingdoms of East Anglia, Northumbria and Mercia survive to this very day in Britain.

Secondly, romance does yield itself to a process of victimisation the moment it is applied to The Other in the same sense religion for example might do. What is compatible with the "Us" does not necessarily have to be compatible with the Other. In other words, even if we accepted the innocence of romance within the European context itself, once it is applied outside that context, the implications and consequences are of a different nature.

2.3.4 Rider Haggard/John Buchan and South Africa

Having already made the statement that romance was a satellite of imaginative geography, I would like to consider Paul Rich's view concerning the gestation of the genre in South African literature. He wrote:

"The significance of romance in the gestation of South African fictional tradition is that as a mode of fictional writing, it was readily given to a society lacking the stability of cohesive governmental structure" ('Romance and the Development of The South African Novel', Literature and Society In South Africa, 1984, 122)

Perhaps there is some truth in this view in so far as it tries to account for romance from within. However, it has already been made clear that this kind of narrative drew two partners into play, and this is what makes a view from without also essential. This means that in the case of Haggard and Buchan, for example, the genre was geared into a more comprehensive framework comprising not only the culture where the genre was being practised as some sort of collective catharsis but also the other culture, object of the catharsis. The gestation of romance in South African literature, or at least in the case of Haggard and Buchan, was governed by the fact that neither of them had any profound understanding of the society he was transposing into fiction, nor indeed any ambitions or aspirations to identify with it in the way Olive Schreiner, for example, had begun to do. For both of them, South Africa continued to be just another foreign territory, another exotic "Other" of great whimsical dimensions. As David Rabkin observes:

"In *King Solomon's Mines* the viewpoint is frankly that of an outsider." (Ways of Looking, 38)

That is because he

"saw South Africa essentially as an outpost of Empire, a place of quest for the metropolitan hero."(Ways of Locking, 37)

For Buchan, Tim Couzens argues, South Africa was a place to admire but not to adopt ('The Africa of A Boy's Dream', Africa Perspective, 1979, 41). The conclusion is that both culturally and structurally there was little scope for using realism instead of romance to handle their South African experiences.

C. Chapter Three

Rider Haggard And John Buchan As Examples Of Colonial Discourse

Part One

3.1. Introduction:

This chapter does not in any way pretend to be a detailed study of Rider Haggard and John Buchan's fiction. Its purpose is rather to demonstrate that there is no such thing as pure knowledge. No matter how innocuous their writing might seem, it can still be shown to be saturated with political and ideological import. This acquires special significance in the light of the two authors' intended purpose behind writing such fiction. It is meant either for idle pleasure or for a specific type of audience: children. On a different level, this chapter is also meant to provide a backdrop for my subsequent discussion of South African literature 'proper' and to give a general idea of what I shall be referring to as romance idiom, colonial discourse and the like.

Despite all that can be said about the discrepancies in their perceptions and representations of the "Other" within the imperial order, Haggard and Buchan's fictions have more in common than is usually acknowledged¹. What I propose to do here is try to unearth some of the major features of a complex residue of representational images of Africa, channelled according to the logic of the romance genre. This logic, I have already suggested, is governed by the principles of wish-fulfillment and hallucination.

¹For Stephen Gray for instance, the difference between the two authors is a quantitative one in that "in Haggard...we have a man who, Like Quatermain, raided but finally retreated; in Buchan the flag is there to stay" (*S. A. L.*, 128). However, as I try to demonstrate later, the difference between them is more qualitative in that both of them were there to stay, each in his own way.

3.1.2. Why Haggard and Buchan?

The emphasis on the romance genre could then be justified on two grounds. Firstly, it is due to all those elements inherent in the structure of romance such as dreams, illusions, hallucinations and above all wish-fulfillment. Secondly, as a form of trans-cultural colonial practice having exactly those components mentioned above, romance acquires a highly reductionist dimension with regard to the "Other". It often dresses him in its own fantasies. As a powerful tool of European imaginative geography, the images it brought home are regulated to a large extent by ready-made wishes and fantasies of an audience that is keen to receive the "Other" on rather sensationalist waves and to live the experience of Empire by proxy. Hence, the question of representation which I submit was not taken seriously by the genre. To corroborate this point, we might recall that King Solomon's Mines was written over a period of six weeks "as a result of a wager that [Haggard] could not outdo Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island in the excitement of a mystery adventure" (Stephen Gray, Southern African Literature An Introduction, 120). The inference in this statement is that romance is a response to a stimulus in operation in the society that produced it. In other words, it is more of a response to the demands of an audience that was willing to have its sense of the whimsical, the exotic and the adventurous titillated than a serious attempt to question either the "Other" or itself, a process that was incidentally initiated by such authors as Olive Schreiner in The Story of An African Farm.

One of the main reasons why my choice fell on King Solomon's Mines and Prester John to illustrate all these points is exactly that qualitative difference between Rider Haggard and John Buchan on the one hand and a novelist like Olive Schreiner on the other. In the case of Schreiner, there is a genuine and anxious drive to question the Self with regard to the new South African experience. The Story of

An African Farm deals with the concerns of protagonists facing the demands and challenges of a problematic situation: a new land which, as Stephen Gray points out, "disallows them from achieving man's most sacred desire, the desire to take root in the land and belong" (SAL, 120).

Conversely, where such authors as Haggard and Buchan are concerned, there was no such genuine interest in Africa, except when it is the scene for mystery and adventure, designed for consumption at home by readers who long to play at Robinson Crusoe in the exotic gardens of Empire without sacrificing the ease and comfort of their own homes.

It is exactly the lax and casual nature of romance which has enabled it to get away with a lot of the cultural 'nonsense' it deals in. As I mentioned above, my choice of those two romances and their authors is to show that a literary genre which is widely self-protected by a guise of innocence, is in fact, not so innocent. The romance genre substantially contributed to the shaping of an image of the Other (Africa) compatible with the imperial goals of expansion and control. Beneath the frivolity of style, there lies a whole residue of racial and political ideas.

Parenthetically, alienation in Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton and André Brink is not only the challenge certain characters for example have to contend with as their claim to the land is found constantly undermined. It is also the degree of success or failure in their efforts to break away from the grip of colonial modes of discourse established or confirmed by the romance genre at the time of European expansion. This chapter then will examine features of colonial discourse in King Solomon's Mines and Prester John.

3.2. King Solomon's Mines — Africa as a European Invention:

3.2.1. Malleable geography:

Three Englishmen, Allan Quartermain, Sir Henry Curtis and John Good, accompanied by Umbopa, a Zulu, undertake a journey in search of Sir Henry's brother who had set out to discover a mine of diamonds only to vanish forever. In fact, recovery of King Solomon's diamonds becomes the main driving force behind the expedition. Trekking through mountain and desert and using a map drawn by a previous explorer from Portugal, the four men are eventually led to wealth. However, a party of Kukuanas emerge on the scene and the explorers have to rely on their technological expertise to impress the Kukuanas and thus avoid apparently certain death. Allan Quartermain and his company are then invited to meet the Kukuana king and to attend a witchcraft party where they witness much injustice and bloodshed. This urges them to vow to depose the king and install Umbopa in his place.

The first striking feature of King Solomon's Mines is its blatant flirtation with geographical invention. Set on the South African terrain, it is extremely revealing how Haggard is actually intent on dislocating the Orient, as a human dimension, as suggested in 'King Solomon'; as a project of wealth, as suggested by 'mines'; and as a geographical space to be explored or conquered. This merging of things African and things Oriental is not so much perplexing as interesting. Haggard completely disregards the achievements of positive geography and geographical societies which had considerably prospered by the turn of the century². Stephen Gray deals with such flirtation as

² For the role and achievements of the geographical societies see "Curiosity, Scholarship, and Romance" in John Flint (ed), The Cambridge History of Africa especially page 468.

"a manifestation of a vast colonial network which interconnected all parts of the colonial and unknown world during one era of history"(SAL, 121).

Pursuing this logic, Haggard's geographical invention would stand to represent a more amorphous dream to tame the "Other" on a large geographical scale and perhaps even foreshadows a will to rule from Cairo to Cape Town which entered European imagination in the early phases of the twentieth century. This project, though still in embryonic adumbration here, might indeed have allowed the transcendence of all geographical delimitation governing the field, Oriental/African, into some sort of interwoven "Other" in European imagination. Consider the following passage from King Solomon's Mines:

"Here we noticed that the sides of the tunnel were covered with quaint sculpture, mostly of mailed figures driving in chariots. One, which was exceedingly beautiful, represented a whole battle scene with a convoy of captives being marched off in the distance.

'Well I' said Sir Henry, after inspecting this ancient work of art, 'it is very well to call this King Solomon's road, but my humble opinion is that the Egyptians have been here before King Solomon's people ever set foot on it. If that isn't Egyptian handiwork, all I have to say is that it is very like it.'(79-80)

The passage is somewhat lengthy but is worth quoting in full. Another possible interpretation could call on the long commonly held belief that Africa lacked any history of its own. For this reason, it would be imaginatively appealing to confer on it the marks of Egyptian civilisation, black Africa being a dark continent, of "untutored and defenceless savages"(Sir T. F. Buxton, The Concept of Empire, 106) and "monsters with which from classical times European imagination had delighted to populate " it (Robin Hallet, 'Changing European Attitudes to Africa' The

Cambridge History of Africa, 471).

There are two points here. Firstly, the double standards of romance. It thinks one thing but speaks another. In other words, Haggard speaks African but thinks Oriental. Representation is not taken seriously! Secondly, a parallel could be drawn between the role that Rome and Greece played for European painters of the Orient, described in Olivier Richon's article 'Representation, The Despot and The Harem' (Europe and Its Others, 1984), and that which Egypt in particular and the Orient at large played for writers like Haggard. The difference is that Rome and Greece evoked a feeling of nostalgia for antiquity whereas Egypt continued to represent images of exotica, best illustrated in William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and well perpetuated by nineteenth century authors like Haggard himself³.

There is a third interpretation relating to the ethos or inner structure of the genre per se. Given its egocentric nature and its high degree of narcissism⁴, whatever Haggard, or for this matter the romance-writer at large, sets his eyes upon, loses its intrinsic worth, its inner structure of independence, to become just a function of the author's "self". By way of analogy, when Arthur James Balfour (Parliamentary Debates(Commons), 5th ser., 17 (1910), 140)⁵ for example justifies British occupation of Egypt not on the grounds of her weakness, but, quite on the contrary, on the grounds of its past glories, her being the cradle of a great civilisation, the underlying implication of what he has to say is this: British victory on Egypt was no mean victory, something for which Britain should

³ Olivier Richon notes that "After having taken everything from Greek and Roman antiquity, painters found in the Orient a new myth of the origin, a new model in an older civilisation." He further explains that the Orient "is processed and recycled through a Greek and Roman mould in order to become a prehistorical antiquity, closer to the origins of civilisation, that is of the West." ('The Despot and The Harem', Europe and Its Others, 1984, 2)

⁴ See Carl Jung's Man In Search of Himself p. 18

⁵ For a more detailed analysis of Balfour's speeches to the House of Common (Great Britain), see 'The Scope of Orientalism' In E. Said's Orientalism, 31-49.

be all the more accredited. Again, this credit is won by bringing Egypt's past glory to the foreground. Haggard's logic, if logic there is of course, in the romance follows the same pattern. This cultural and historical vacuum called Africa had to be filled. In even if that meant conjuring up a culture and a history for it. From this viewpoint, if Edward Said could talk of a process of orientalising the Orient ('Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalising The Oriental', Orientalism, 49-73), there is certainly scope here for talking about a similar process consisting in orientalising (c.f. previous chapter for Africanisation) things African. Such a process is carried out not only by conjuring up a new history and a new geography, but also by going so far as to knit Africa into the texture of something that could be reckoned with—but which was contained, nonetheless. The result is most revealing. One gets the impression that Haggard was reiterating a Darwinist principle whereby the Black man is placed at the bottom of the creation-scale as a third best.

In any event, the last two Interpretations point to a considerable lack of consistency on the one hand, and to a schizophrenic tendency in the way Africa is construed in King Solomon's Mines on the other. Again, under tremendous pressure from the genre itself, Haggard is being pulled into two diametrically opposed directions. Does he see Africa as he thinks it seems or as he thinks it should be? He is torn between the desire to see the continent as having a history and a culture of its own and the nagging urge to strip it naked, and receive it wild, untamed, and grandiose. These are all epithets describing the elements upon which the romance genre scandal-mongers and thrives, so to speak. As Robin Hallet points out, the growth of detailed knowledge could not "strip Africa of its strangeness, its mystery." ('C.E.A.A', 471)

King Solomon's Mines itself provides further asseverations of such ideas. Consider the following passage:

"But just before you get to Durban there is a peculiar richness about it, there are deep kloofs cut in the hills by rushing rains of centuries, down which the rivers sparkle; there is the deepest green of bush, growing as God planted it, and the other greens of the mealie-gardens and the sugar-patches, while here and there a white house, smiling out at the placid sea, puts a finish and gives an air of homeliness to the scene. For to my mind, however beautiful a view may be, it requires the presence of man to make it complete but perhaps that is because I have lived so much in the wilderness and therefore know the value of civilisation; though to be sure it drives away the game. The Garden of Eden, no doubt was fair before man was, but I always think it must have been fairer when Eve was walking about."(KSM, 32)

I have quoted the passage at such length due to its multiple importance. First of all, history appears to be envisaged through two completely different though parallel channels. There is a 'fantasised' history captured in the story's King-Solomon-Egyptian-handiwork dimension. This dimension Africa seems to take on and to abrogate simultaneously. On the other hand, there is 'sanitised' history or the history that has not developed, as it had remained frozen since the very beginning. This type of history is evoked in the Garden-of-Eden dimension. With this double view of history goes hand in hand a dichotomy characteristic of the genre, namely that of civilization and wilderness. Emphasis is placed on their irreconcilable and diametrically opposed natures. And since the imagery deployed pertains to the religio-mythological register, the inference is that civilisation presents a challenge to the wilderness on moral grounds, thus admitting the other dichotomy of the sacred and the profane into play. Carried to its ultimate logical conclusion, this view reveals a most astounding trait of Haggard's system of values : the white, the civilised, the sacred versus the black, the wild, the profane. The paradisaic or idyllic is implicitly licentious and corrupt. Consequently, one of

Quatermain's missions in this regard, besides recovering the treasure, is to safeguard, perhaps redivinify, this paradise that insists on being regained⁶. The African setting, like the Orient:

"alternated in the mind's geography between being an old world to which one returned as to Eden or paradise, therefore to set up a new version of the old, and being a wholly new place to which one came as Columbus came to America, in order to set up a New World."(E. Said, Orientalism, 58)

As much as the wilderness is posited to civilisation morally and ontologically, its value is that it makes us recognise the real value of civilisation. It is as if civilisation has to pit itself up against the wilderness to know itself; as if it recognises itself only through a surrogate self. Also, the wilderness induces an element of tension between civilisation and its representative. To put it bluntly, Quatermain expresses reservation about civilisation, since it deprives him of the pleasure of game thus tempering the kill-instinct in him. Without such an instinct and the chance to apply it, the mission is void of meaning.

Although on the whole there is nothing particularly religious about his discourse, the overlapping of the concepts of the sacred/profane, the old/the new with the civilised/the wild indicates that at the crux of Haggard's imagination resides the duality of good and evil. To such a duality he succumbs in a manner bordering on schizophrenia : the landscape represents a type of *natura benigna* which, however, he finds hard to acclimatise to.

⁶ Having said this, I would like to express some doubt as to the truth of a statement like Alan Sandison's in The Wheel of Empire. Dealing with writers such as Buchan and Haggard, he writes, "With the altogether significant exception of Haggard, the basis for action in these writers' work is primarily not political but moral." (Introduction p. viii)

3.2.2. Geography and the human dimension:

What goes for geography goes for its concomitants. Character and landscape are so neatly knitted in each other's texture that Allan Quatermain's trip across the African interior is also a backspin into the history of its protagonists:

"...Umbopa was walking along immediately behind me, and had very evidently been listening with the greatest interest to my conversation with Infadoos. The expression on his face was most curious, and gave the idea of a man who was struggling with partial success to bring something long forgotten back into his mind."(K.S.M., 91)

It goes without saying that assessing the one is infiltrating the value of the other. A good example of this is the return to paradise dealt with above. To engage into an imaginative and moral enterprise of this nature indicates a wish to transcend both history and geography as if to appropriate them. Hence, what I shall name Quatermain's orientalist mission consists of a wish to attempt a re-classification, indeed re-definition, of things African so as to make them fit into his order of things and system of ethics. That is how the process of extricating the sacred from the profane is managed.

Let us shed some light on the nature of the paradise that Allan Quatermain is to regain. Consider the following passage:

"These mountains standing thus, like pillars of a gigantic gateway, are shaped exactly like a woman's breasts. Their bases swelled gently up from the plain, looking, at that distance, perfectly round and smooth; and on top of each was a vast round hillock covered with snow, exactly corresponding to the nipple on the female breasts."(K.S.M., 65)

In this type of fiction, landscape is not only feminised but also sexualised, sometimes to the verge of licentiousness, as the sole channel through which it could seek and gain recognition is submission to the adventurer's male libidinal force. As Paul Rich states in 'Romance and The Development of The South African Novel':

"In its strictest form, the romantic ideal can have no place for the autonomy of the feminine mind which has an ambiguous and ultimately threatening status."(Literature and Society, 124)

In this case, the "Other" is feminised because he cannot stand outside the glare of the "Self"'s scrutiny or sexual annexation. The "Other" has to be defined, redefined and made to serve as a function of the "Self".

The idea in all this is that the concepts of good and evil change face _the old, the new; the civilised, the wild; the masculine, the feminine_ within Quaternmain's imaginative framework. This framework is of predominantly biblical imagery put to effective use. For instance he notes:

"One insect, however, was abundant, and that was the common or house fly. There they came, not as single spies, but in battallions as I think the old testament says somewhere"(K.S.M., 60)

Note here how much plasticity geography acquires in the hands of Quaternmain. The African landscape is transposed from its physical actuality to an Old Testament image. The result is extraordinary. For if we accept that geography and its protagonists are strongly inter-linked, and if, for this reason, transposing the one entails transposing the other, the value of the African as seen by Quaternmain is more extrinsic than intrinsic. What is depicted is not the African but a pre-given

image of him. Therefore, the Africa that emerges is almost an invented creation, which seems to link up with Mannoni's formulation that Europeans of the Crusoe-type

"avaient loisir de repousser a coup de fusil des etres effrayants, mais qui sortaient egalement de leur propre inconscient." (Psychologie de la colonisation, 102)

It also seems to corroborate my point about the egocentric nature of romance.

In Orientalism, Edward Said emphasises the special position geography occupied with regard to knowledge of the Orient. He notes:

"Geography was essentially the material underpinning for knowledge about the Orient. All the latent and unchanging characteristics of the Orient stood upon, were rooted in its geography. Thus [...] the geographical Orient nourished its inhabitants and defined their specificity." (Orientalism, 216)

In a sense, one could speak of a possible alternation of the Orient with the "Other" at large without actually running the risk of doing harm to the author's original intentions. This opinion is valid particularly in the light of my previous argument that King Solomon's Mines testifies to the existing possibility of interchangeability between the Orient and Africa. But what I have tried to do so far is to show in much the same way, how the landscape is enacted in Quatermain's imagination and the human consequences which can follow from such an enactment or transposition. In all major instances, geography in this type of discourse is the backdrop against which either the black-peril or black-whimsicality ideas are presented. At the same time, it constitutes a source of paranoia. Such a reaction is to be found parodied by J.M. Coetzee in his novel Waiting For The Barbarians (Penguin, 1980)

Now, especially significant about King Solomon's Mines is its clearly set ideas on society and race. This is nothing new to the genre. The moment the "Other" was recognised, he had to be dealt with within a specific topography. But what is important here is that whether we are talking about the representation of the "Other" in imaginative discourse— The Tempest, Antony and Cleopatra, Robinson Crusoe, or King Solomon's Mines— or in other disciplines of knowledge⁷, we are actually talking about ideas of race and racial difference on an epistemological level designating the coming together of two different cultures at opposite ends of the power spectrum.

What interests me here is King Solomon's Mines' dormant scheme or vision for a future racial society. Such a vision provides the first adumbration of a regimented, ethnically buttressed society. What Quatermain tells us, and this is where he differs from other less maturely constructed protagonists of the genre, is not just how white encounters black. We are to attach special importance to how he tries to transgress existential boundaries so as to penetrate the structure of black society and dissect it in a way that reflects along what lines he wants that society re-organised. Transgression, penetration and containment are key elements in this respect. As an example, one could mention his effort to catalogue the various ethnic groups his South African experience involves and the cultural or aesthetic epithets he attaches to each one of them. Thus, the Kukuanas are "brave" but practise "devilish arts, to which end many priests should be brought."(KSM,26)⁸. The Griquas have skill and organisation, "[Jack] can potter about and garden, being a Griqua by birth"(KSM,35) As to the Zulus, they are a rough race, "[y]ou can never get your Zulu to take much interest in gardening. It is a peaceful art and peaceful arts are not his line"(KSM,35). Yet "the strange bursts of

⁷ Marx, Hegel, Freud and ideas of the savage : see Chabani Manganyi's 'Race, Science and Ethnopsychiatry' (Europe And Its Others, 1984, 153)

⁸ This is a good example of how the idea of difference suggested the anti-Christ and came to solicit exorcism.

rhetorical eloquence", dear to the Zulus' hearts, prove that "the race is by no means devoid of poetic instinct and intellectual power"(KSM,53).

3.2.3. King Solomon Mines social vision:

One would have to look at this ethnographically oriented discourse and at Quatermain's strategic position with regard to it. What comes out of his mouth is not a mere statement of certain qualities or defects of each ethnic group. The significant message that flows in between the lines is the degree of complacency with which he speaks of Kukuana, Griqua, and Zulu. The attitude is such as to say that "whatever there is to be said about this or that group, I will say it, for it is I that knows them better. And no matter how highly I speak of them, I cannot feel help my feelings of condescension. They might be superior or inferior to one another, the fact that they are unarguably inferior to me is established. Hence, nothing that I say about them is liable to jeopardize or undermine my position or worth. Quite on the contrary, they can only be consolidated". Finally, the attitude is also such as to convey that "if they are so categorically set apart, and I know they are, the only way I could survey their differences is to distance myself from them while at the same time maintaining my power to judge and differentiate as the pivot around which they can only revolve, and which would keep them together, for it is I who knows where their good and well-being lie". And it is this last point that I would like to elaborate upon for a while.

On the surface level, King Solomon's Mines is about a journey undertaken to recover a treasure of diamonds. At bottom, it is a colonial reverie. Between Durban, Natal, or the point where the journey is launched, and the location of King Solomon's treasure, its ultimate destination, a whole history is spun and a definite stand towards it is firmly established. In chapters 7&8, a prime example of fantastic imagination in its fullest flower, the Zulu race is demarcated into two prominently distinct historical entities: the new Zulus, as represented by Umbopa, and the old Zulus or Kukuanas:

"Indeed, as we afterwards found out, the language spoken by these people was an old fashioned form of the Zulu tongue, bearing about the same relationship to it that the English of Chaucer does to the English of the 19th century(K.S.M., 82)

From this platform, the role that Quatermain comes to perform with regard to his 'native's' history is one of intrinsic mediation. Umbopa's relationship to the Kukuana's seems to have hung in the air, unknown until Quatermain emerges on the scene to re-activate it. He actualises it to make it a by-product of his journey. The moment of spiritual retrieval of Zulu identity, Quatermain is pre-ordained to bring about:

"There we stood and shrieked with laughter over the gems that were ours, which had been found for us thousands of years ago by the patient delvers in the great hole yonder, and stored for us by Solomon's long-dead overseer whose name perchance, was written in the characters stamped on the faded wax that yet adhered to the lids of the chest."(K.S.M., 193)

The idea here is not very dissimilar to that found in Mannoni's treatment of the Malagasy's psychology, namely that the native's history is the history of expected, even longed-for colonisation. For Quatermain's mission is more ambitious than just to confine itself to the language of abstracta, ideas of cultural superiority or exclusiveness. He has a project that is based on the capacity to move from the principle of racial difference and ethics as they are defined above to their activation in a concrete programme of action.

Once the past has been contained or appropriated, the future will be dealt with in appropriate measure. Quatermain's disgust at Kukuana death ritual, for example, will set up the scene for his seeking ways to depose their King and to replace him

by Umbopa, now Ignosi, who is made to lay a claim for royalty. This is very significant because at the heart of the Ignosi episode rests Quaternmain who from now on will become a source that native history draws upon for legitimacy. And for the first time in the story, skin-colour is established, once and for all, as an ethical reference, a new way of looking at life, that exists by itself, for itself and is taken for granted:

"If I were not the King, would these white men be on my side, with all their magic."(K.S.M., 135)

This logic is quite fascinating. They are right and powerful because they are white, they are white because they are right and powerful. By logical extension, what Umbopa is made to say is that virtue resides with "Us", vice resides with "them". In the ethical spectrum of King Solomon's Mines black and white or vice and virtue are hard to reconcile. Foulata too is made to reiterate this 'verity':

"Can the sun mate with darkness, or the white with the black."(K.S.M., 207)

Such omnipresent duality, reflecting an exclusive way of discerning good from evil, is significantly reiterated by Nadine Gordimer many decades later:

"The greatest single factor into the making of our mores in South Africa was is and will be the colour question... We have built a morality on it. We have gone even deeper. We have created our own sense of sin and our own form of tragedy"('The Novel and The Nation', 120).

C. Chapter Three

Rider Haggard And John Buchan As Examples Of Colonial Discourse

Part Two

3.3.1. Introduction.

It has been suggested that Rider Haggard's handling of the adventure-hero genre is more mature than Buchan's⁹. This is certainly true in the case of Prester John where much of what David Crawford thinks, says or does is inspired, if not dictated, by a sensationalist tendency that tightly hinges on jingoism. Notwithstanding, one has say that Buchan's representation of the "Other"—how he seems and possible formulas for handling him—enjoys a great deal more substance and is less equivocal. Such statements as "You'll exploit the pockets of the black men and I'll see what I can do with their minds"(Prester John, 23), while hitting the reader as too banal and blatantly racist, simultaneously suggest a crystal-clear transparency marking events and how they are perceived by Buchan's protagonists.

⁹ John Buchan is sometimes referred to as the Peter Pan of Milner's kindergarten. Lord Milner was Governor of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. After the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), he set up legislative councils, such as the Inter-Colonial Council (June 1903), to take over from the military administration. Such councils took under their charge key agencies such as the Central South African Railways, Baden-Powell's South African Constabulary and others. For efficiency and administrative skill, Lord Milner employed in his service a group of Oxford bachelors whose expertise in handling such affairs proved controversial. They became known as his 'kindergarten'.

3.3.2. Prester John — Africa as a political discourse:

On his father's death, David Crawfurd leaves Scotland to come to South Africa where he intends to earn a living as a storekeeper. Arriving in South Africa, Crawfurd learns of Captain Arcoll's preparations to move in with his army and crush a black uprising led by the Reverend John Laputa. Crawfurd offers his services and engages the black priest and his followers. Using a formula of courage and political manoeuvre, Crawfurd eventually manages to end the uprising and to clinch the diamond collar of Prester John, hitherto symbol of black power.

Twisted inside out, Buchan's representation of the Other reveals a most significant feature. His fiction bears the symptoms of a deep-rooted anxiety, indeed sometimes paranoia¹⁰, resulting from contact with the South African landscape and its concomitants. One could claim that he remains forcefully faithful to the tradition of experiencing the "Other" as a lurking peril (Tim Couzens, 'The Africa of A Boy's Dream', 41). The mechanism guaranteeing the continuum of action in Prester John is somewhat like this: the "Other" is drastically different, therefore he inspires fear; the "Other" inspires fear therefore he must be suppressed.

Such discrepancies between Haggard and Buchan in the foregrounding of ideas of the "Other", reflect how much potential politicisation the literary discourse of each of the two authors contains. John Buchan's higher sense of practicality or pragmatism, not to say anything about his extremism, indicate that his literary discourse is more prone to translation into physical reality than Haggard's who is more given to flights of fantasy operating in less rigid codification. This point has been treated by Tim Couzens. Commenting on a passage from Buchan's The African Colony, he writes:

¹⁰ Once again, the idiom reiterated here is set out in earlier works like Robinson Crusoe or even The Tempest. It is useful to recall that Crusoe is less frightened at the idea of being alone on the island than of native presence.

"If we look at a modern map we can get some idea of the true significance of what Buchan is getting at. If we stand on the mountain site of Buchan's never-built house(the mountain-man of the high plateau) and look down the thousands of feet, to the east, to the steaming, fever-ridden area of the bushveld, what do we find? We find a good deal of that area makes up a good deal of what are now called the independent homelands of Lebowa and Gazankulu !"(A.B.D., 51)

Such representations of landscape and what might be called geographical prejudice abound in Prester John,

"On the very edge of the plateau where the road dipped for the descent stood the shanties of Blaawildebeestfontein. The fresh hill air had exhilarated my mind, and the aromatic scent of the evening gave the last touch of intoxication. Whatever serpent might lurk in it, it was a veritable Eden I had come to."(P.J., 33)

Or as in elsewhere:

"if I could, I would fain make an epic of it, and show how the plains had found at all points the plateau guarded, how wits overcame numbers, and at every pass which the natives tried the great guns spoke and the tied rolled back"(P.J., 182)

Tim Couzens translates these representations of landscape and prejudice with extreme agility. He observes:

"Plateau and plains, white and black_ if you try to trespass or mix them up, you get bad vibrations."(A.B.D., 51)

Let us notice in passing that the same features of landscape-representation I unearthed in King Solomon's Mines operate in Prester John, namely treachery,

biblical transposition and licentious corruption¹¹. What we have to keep in mind and hold as a target for further exploration is not the intrinsic pictorial value of landscape-representation in its own right. It is rather John Buchan's potential ability to interweave geography and human beings on the one hand, and the human consequences that result from the occurrence of such a process, how geography determined knowledge of the "Other".

¹¹ Here is an example of the treachery of the landscape in Buchan, "The crack was only a few inches wide, large enough to let in an arm and a foot, and it ran slantwise up a perpendicular rock. I do not think I realised how bad it was till I had gone too far to return. Then my foot jammed, and I paused for breath with my legs and arms cramping rapidly." (P. J., 47-48)

3.3.3. The Other as a function of imperial legitimacy:

The validity of this point has already been checked in King Solomon's Mines and can be effectively corroborated in Prester John. Let us begin by pointing out that the ambivalence of David Crawfurd's attitude towards the "Other" as a geographic dimension corresponds in the final analysis to an ambivalent attitude regarding the "Other" as a human one. The human in this case is, incidentally, that and not quite! Tam tells David Crawfurd:

"It's all nonsense, Davie, the Bible says that the children of Ham were to be our servants. If I were the minister I wouldn't let a nigger into the pulpit. I wouldn't let him further than the Sabbath school."(P.J., 11)

The potential religious and social separation-principle contained in this formula by Tam aside, it is a generality that seems to set the scene for more to come. From this point onwards, narration zooms into something more specific though paradoxically more subtle. I would like to focus the analysis on the way the Reverend John Laputa is represented. Crawfurd recounts:

"A man's figure stood near [the fire], and as we looked it moved round and round the fire in circles which first of all widened and then contracted[...] What could this strange being want with a fire at half-past eight of an April Sabbath night on the Dyve Burn sands."(P.J., 13)

What is striking in the passage is not so much the principle of familiarity and strangeness—what is "Us" is familiar, what is not is peculiar. It is rather the fact that the difference-idea is immediately connected with a sense of evil, annihilated by it. Laputa's ritual is at first described as "magic" and then qualified as an

attempt "to raise Satan" (P.J., 15). As to what inspires this sense of evil, the narrator presents no hard evidence, as if the reader is expected to grant the narrator's intuition immediate total credibility. Crawford says:

"There was something desperately uncanny about this great Negro who had shed his clerical garments and was now practising some strange magic alone by the sea. I had no doubt it was the black art, for there was that in the air and the scene which spelled the uncanny" (P.J., 15)

Setting aside this sense of conspiracy the author places on the narrator-reader relationship, what interests me in the first instance is the double telescopic view we get of Laputa. He is simultaneously a "gentleman", "an educated man", and "minister", but, and as if by an act of abrogation, he is a black-art "magician", "a villain", and above all, "a nigger". True, "nigger" is how Tern refers to Laputa. The former is set up as an ignoramus. Crawford, on the other hand, is twisted by suspicion of the other but nonetheless sees him as a serious person, not as a cardboard stereotype. But even so, one can again see how the romance genre makes of the "Other" what I have previously referred to as a function of the self. Laputa has to be represented as a serious and even great person. But in the final analysis, it is the greatness of Crawford that matters the most. The greater and more formidable the opponent, the more prestigious victory over him.

Two things come into play here. The fact that Laputa is a minister does in no way assure him redemption or mitigation. If he makes claims to Christianity, then he must be an imposter. For that is exactly what being black is all about: heathen and savage:

"He [Laputa] pled with God to forget the sins of his people. To recall the bondage of Zion. It was amazing to see these blood-thirsty savages consecrated by their leader to the meek service of Christ [...] I knew his heart, black with all

the lust of paganism. I knew that his purpose is to deluge the land with blood."(P.J., 106)

And yet it does seem that what Crawford objects to all the more strongly is the kind of Christianity that has not been handed to Laputa by the usual channels of religious officialdom. For Laputa represents Christianity under its Ethiopianist form. The latter's fate is contempt. The black priest is described as "one of those American Ethiopian rascals"(P.J., 27). It is evident that what comes under attack is black Ethiopianism which is treated as a form of anti-Christ practice.

The anti-Christ idea will find its socio-political translation in the social organisation scheme that the novel reveals towards the end. Crawford's fruitful adventure has achieved two major goals: the crushing of the black uprising, and the attainment of a practical formula to contain or even eradicate the possibility of any peril that post-Laputa society might pose. Here is how Aitken intends his scheme for a future African society:

"He laid down a big fund for the amelioration of the native races, and the first fruit of it was the establishment at Blaawildebeestfontein itself of a great training college. It was no factory for making missionaries and black teachers, but an institution for giving the kaffirs the kind of training which fits them to be good citizens of the state."(P.J., 202)

Finally, it is very significant that chapter Fourteen is entitled "I Carry The Collar of Prester John". Acquiring the collar, Laputa's symbol of power, not only signals the latter's end, but also highlights Crawford's wish to see African society frozen. Laputa is to confide into Crawford:

"But I am dying and there will be no more kings in Africa"(P.J., 178)

However, Laputa's death is not to pass unrewarded. A monument is erected in his honour, " so that the last of the kings of Africa does not lack his monument." (P.J., 202) To Crawford, this is certainly the last nail in the coffin of African society. History stops there. And Blaawildebeestfontein has been converted into a liberal model for making good citizens of the state. Geography and its concomitants have been once again irreversibly connected and interwoven.

3.3.4 Recapitulation:

Finally, the gist of this discussion of the Haggard-Buchan case is to show how a form of innocent entertainment which seems more like cultural hallucinatory nonsense is actually more than just that. King Solomon's Mines and Prester John are political romances which endorsed all the themes of Empire and sought to justify British imperialism. They provide a good example of a perfectly harmonious relationship between the power political of colonialism and its culture.

My case on alienation will start in the next chapter on Alan Paton where I demonstrate that many of the idioms and representations posited in Haggard and Buchan are still dominant despite the change on the political scene and in the author's perception of them.

D. Chapter Four

The Political Allegory Of Good And Evil

Part One

4.1. Introduction:

The subject of the present discussion is Alan Paton's fiction as a mode of colonial discourse. I propose to look at two of his novels, Cry, The Beloved Country (1948) and Too Late The Phalarope (1955), and to investigate certain aspects of alienation, not as a thematic structure but rather as a cultural practice. What will be considered is the author's strategic location with regard to his subject matter. Such undertaking relies on a special criterion to determine alienation and will be laid forth in the form of three questions.

Firstly, how far does Paton's fiction propose to go towards an essential abandonment of the colonial spirit, the phenomenon of foreignness which Rider Haggard's and John Buchan's fictions epitomised and sought to entrench? Secondly, how far does it go towards a more legitimate subscription to a new spirit that is more compatible with its own ontological and geographical aspirations, a notion I shall refer to as Africanness? Thirdly, and this is a question of a general order, writing in a social set-up such as Alan Paton's, is it at all possible to discuss literature, or culture for that matter, in complete isolation from the political setting which, whether directly or indirectly, informs it?

Although the last question has already received some treatment, it provides a good start here. Two striking features characterise Paton's style in Cry, The Beloved Country. Lyricism and biblical imagery. Operating hand in hand, they seem to smoke-screen the novel's timeliness and, consequently, place a rather complacent claim to apoliticality. Right at the outset, and in somewhat patronising manner, Alan Paton tries to dictate the frequency on which his novel should be read and critically examined. It is highly significant that the title of the novel should need a descriptive statement to qualify it: 'A Story of Comfort In Desolation', after which the author proceeds to outlay what on the surface-level appears as a

timeless allegory of good and evil...

4.2. Cry, The Beloved Country— humanism, universalist complacency and colonial discourse:

4.2.1. Neutral concepts/political urgency:

Stephen Kumalo, a black priest in the village of Ndotcheni, comes to Johannesburg on the invitation of the Rev. Theophilus Msimangu of the Anglican Church. Seizing on the chance of being in Johannesburg, Stephen Kumalo attempts to rebuild his tribe shattered by the effects of migrant labour. Thus he begins the search for his sister Gertrude, brother Stephen and son Absalom. This proves a difficult and heart-breaking task. They have all succumbed to the evil impact of urban decadence. Gertrude has become a prostitute, Stephen a corrupt politician and Absalom a dangerous criminal who is eventually tried and sentenced to death after the murder of a white engineer who, ironically, is a champion of social justice and multi-racialism. A coincidental encounter between Kumalo and the father of the murdered man, James Jarvis, becomes a source of reconciliation, forgiveness and hope for the restoration of the village of Ndotcheni. James Jarvis invests money in this project and a new Church is donated to Kumalo as the ultimate symbol of the Christian message of compassion.

Cry, The Beloved Country was the first novel in South Africa to tackle the racial question on a grand scale and to pursue the attempt at black-character-creation to any significant degree. Even those black South African authors who took a hostile stand on the novel acknowledge this fact. Ezekiel Mphahlele, for instance, concedes that it was:

"the first work in the history of South African fiction in which the black man looms so large.(The African Image, 1962, 131)

However, this formulation of the black man looming so large is not to be interpreted as a defence of Paton's black character. Mphahlele's reply to the question whether Paton's black character is adequately represented is unequivocally clear: he or she is 'flat' because:

"The story means everything to Alan Paton and character is of secondary importance"(A.I.,131)

I subscribe to Mphahlele's view of Paton's Stephen Kumalo as a flat character, though not without reservations over the terms of his assessment. On the other hand, I totally reject Charles R. Larson's defence of the same character's complexity on the grounds that he quarrels with his brother and deliberately lies to him, that he tricks his son's pregnant woman into believing that he desires her, and that he went up to the mountain alone so as not to commit adultery with a young school teacher('Alan Paton's Cry, The Beloved Country After Twenty Five Years', Africa Today, 1973). It is rather a weak point to see Stephen Kumalo's flatness or complexity against the background of such limited and sporadic detail. In order to be adequately assessed, he has to be placed within the comprehensive cultural framework which the novel offers. And it is for the same reason that I reject Mphahlele's formulation of why Stephen Kumalo is a flat character. I argue that the answer for Paton's failure to produce adequately articulate representations of his black characters is to be found not in the aesthetic but largely in the political.

In the specific context of Cry, The Beloved Country, the political idea enjoys a great deal more urgency than one is led to think. R. C. Sharma, for instance, argues that the novel's secret to international acclaim is that "it has something to offer beyond the immediate and the topical"('Alan Paton's Cry The Beloved Country: the Parable of Compassion', Literary Half Yearly, 1978, 68)¹. Instead of searching for

¹In the same article mentioned above, Charles Larson points out that the success of Cry,

the eternal in the novel, my approach will follow the reverse pattern. I will investigate precisely its 'immediate' and 'topical' aspects and relate them to the author's alienation. After all, the eternality of a novel does not necessarily have to reside in its ability "to stir our moral being and make us cry", as R.C. Sharma maintains ('AP.C.B.C.: P.C., 68). This is of course unless one sets the appreciation of sentimentality as the task of literary criticism.

Beyond any discussion of such vague and ambiguous notions as universality and eternality, Paton's sense of political urgency prevented him from confronting the cultural implications of the literary idiom handed down to him by his colonial predecessors and which had hitherto been used to construct the black character. We shall see that there are striking similarities between Paton's John Kumalo and Buchan's John Laputa, to mention but one example.

On a different level, the dilemma in which Cry, The Beloved Country has landed is its attempt to dress political discourse in religious garb as if the latter were free of ideological import. One can find here an example of the stark contrast between what the novel presents as 'timeless' and what is actually strictly historical. Paton's attempt to highlight certain eternal human values such as suffering and compassion backfires as those values are overtaken by the political set-up in which they find themselves absorbed. Such an attempt to write a novel that stands outside history is demonstrably unsuccessful. The novel emerges riddled with just that it is trying to escape. Religious discourse and imagery, Paton's major fictive medium, are over-ridden by specific secular historical reality (as opposed to eternality and universalism)

Paton's warnings to us in the Author's Note should be perceived within the context of this contrast between the historical and the fictive. 1st warning:

The Beloved Country In the United States, where it was originally published, can be explained by the fact it presented a mirror picture of the racial tensions in the American South.

"Nor in any related event is reference intended to any actual event; except that the accounts of the boycott of the buses, the erection of Shanty Town, the finding of gold at Odendaalrust and the miner's strike are a compound of truth and fiction. In these respects therefore the story is not true, but considered as a social record it is the plain and simple truth."(CBC)

For R. W. Holland the question is "how exactly can a 'story that is not true' be considered as 'a social record' that is true?"('Fiction and History, Fact and Invention In Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country*', *Zambesia*, 1977, 129). It is almost ironic that as much as it is the right question to ask, it nonetheless indicates that Holland missed the subtle but crucial difference in meaning between 'true', the first 'truth' and the second 'truth'. For Paton, the events of his novel are not accurate or even real. At best, they are an amalgam of truth and authorial design. Otherwise, it is admitted, they lack in actuality. From a strictly historical point of view, they are not always verifiable. 'Untrue' here signifies that a process of narrative or fictive manipulation has been carried out in order to freeze historical validity.

The third 'truth' is of a different material altogether. It has a moral dimension. The two epithets 'plain' and 'simple' draw our attention to the fact that an important announcement, resembling a testimony, is about to be made. It invites us to hear Paton's as the ultimate truth, as opposed to somebody else's testimony which is suspected of being false, fabricated and misleading. In a sense, he is promising to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Truth here is the antonym of lying. Moreover, it is a function of the novel's viewpoint which tightly hinges on a specific type of morality. We shall see that the Anglican tone is a decisive element throughout the novel.

4.2.2. Narrative truth/secular history:

It could be claimed that Cry, the Beloved Country seeks to derive validity not from the historicity of its subject-matter itself but from religious discourse. Religion is used to capture history, form a view of it and, especially, legitimise it. The contrast between these two sources, history and religion, is very revealing and gives us an early insight into Alan Paton's original intentions as well as dilemma.

One can almost read a sense of apprehension and apology in the above quotation. It is as though Paton is saying: "my intention is to keep clear of historical actuality. However, if I inadvertently did touch on it, as I am bound to do occasionally in matters of the boycott, the erection of Shanty Town, the finding of gold and the miners' strike, then I ask forgiveness and promise to do my utmost in order temper my use of it within the limits of my ability."

The Author's Note then sums up an essential liberal formula which insists on re-writing political issues in terms of morality². What is more, the gist of this note goes towards saying that 'the truth will prevail'. Such an attitude reflects the naivety and relative political lethargy of South African liberalism (as opposed to the more active character of Afrikaner Nationalism especially in the 1940's and 1950's). Equally, it could be seen as virtually typical of its behaviour and is responsible in great measure for the political defeats it had sustained and which culminated in the Liberal Party's ultimate demise in 1968³. As Paul Rich observes, "one of the central weaknesses of South African Liberalism is its failure to adopt a more coherent and politically oriented ideology of struggle" (The Dilemmas of South African Liberalism, 1980, 13).

What truth and whose then? First of all, the fact that most criticism of Cry,

² See John Bowen, 'The Dialogue Of Logic: Foucault and Intellectual Practice' Journal Of Literature Teaching Politics No5 1985.

³ This issue is treated in more elaborate detail in my conclusion to this thesis.

The Beloved Country has stopped short of exploring its politicality. Is a thing to be deplored. Focusing on the novel's aesthetic structure and relying to a great extent on Forsterian criteria is liable to produce only superficial analyses and to deliver very limited results. Discussions aiming to disentangle narrative time from historical time do not tell us much about the text's relationship to its society. Nor are they capable of relating the text to its historical fabric.

In his investigation of the relation between the fictional and the historical in Cry, The Beloved Country, Holland concludes that fictional specificity could become actual as in the case of the murder of Arthur Jarvis. In other words, reality and fiction do not conflict:

"We are made to realize that the general points to the particular; all is tending towards the focal point of this particular night [the night of Arthur Jarvis's murder]. Although earlier the reader was persuaded to accept the situations as timeless, and the comments as those made by the author on an eternal human predicament, he is now made to accept it as an immediately urgent dilemma of one particular night, 7 October, 1946" ('F.H.', 129)

The pattern that Holland describes above can also be shown to function by reverse. We might choose to move from the particular to the timeless. As I mentioned above, although it makes a claim to a timeless and unspecifiable status of the 'truth', Cry, The Beloved Country can be shown as contributing to the political debate of one particular period of South African history. The tight convergence of religiosity and realism may be prised open in order to challenge its ambiguous mystique.

Let us reiterate the following principle, banal as it may seem. Truth is not absolute. It is the truth of a particular type of discourse, at a particular time of history. Nor is it empty of ideological import. Even the present tense used in the novel is not without implications. Holland's argument is that it acts as a generator

of a sense of continuity, timelessness and drama. But that is not all it does. It also serves to confer a sense of finality on the novel's visions and messages as we shall see them below. Without straining the text, it could be claimed that the present tense is meant to intensify our belief in the author's version of the truth.

The discrepancy between fictional and historical times could in fact be said to be irrelevant. The most important date is not that of Arthur Jarvis's murder but that of the novel's publication. Other dates can be relevant only in so far as they are geared towards identifying Paton's relation to the special date of 1948 and what it meant to him as a member of the liberal intelligentsia. It is the reader's responsibility to discover the particular within the timeless. And if the author's strategy is to see politics through religion, the idea in this discussion is to counter that strategy by reversing it.

What applies to the notion of truth, applies to compassion and justice. They are also presented from a special point of view and within a certain framework. The various descriptions of the harrowing misery in Shanty Town obviously help "to convince the general reader of the dispiriting extent of Kumalo's search and to impress the South African reader with the extent of social injustice in his own land", Holland argues (F.H., 139). However, the following must be taken into account.

Firstly, racial justice is provided for in the alternative society that Paton envisages in the novel. As a consequence, it is subject to the limitations of that very society, a point I shall pursue later. Secondly, it seems obvious that Cry, The Beloved Country is not a cultural project. It must be underlined that it does not question the premises of segregation. Nor does it try to deconstruct or challenge the current idioms of perceiving the South African situation as a colonial experience. The change in the reader's political and social attitudes which the novel rather too ambitiously sought to effect was not perceived as a cultural process based on analytical examination, as is the case in Nadine Gordimer and

Andre Brink, but rather as a political target with a sentimental essence: feelings of guilt as embodied in the manuscript left by Arthur Jarvis about what is 'permissible' and what is not. At best, the manuscript purports to say that the principles of Christian theology have been corrupted by years of segregationist practice.

Holland's observation above makes a hint to Paton's conception of the function he wants his writing to perform. In an interview with Harvey Breit, Paton declares that his writing aims "to stab people in the conscience" ('A Visit and Talk with Alan Paton', The New York Book Review, 1949, 42). This could be interpreted as setting a definite political target for such writing. It also provides leeway for arguing that Cry, The Beloved Country was primarily conceived of as a political idea with immediate objectives.

This is to say that Paton was not writing in a political vacuum. 1948, the novel's date of publication, provides an adequate enough clue for placing it in a more authentic framework. The particular significance of this date derives from the fact it saw the accession of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party to political power in South Africa and the consolidation of the Apartheid system. These developments on the political scene seemed to have spelled out the end of the English-speaking intelligentsia's dream for a multi-racial society modelled on the liberal values that Alan Paton advocates in Cry, The Beloved Country.

This makes it possible to perceive the novel as the contribution of an essential figure among the liberal intelligentsia to the ongoing political debate on who should rule South Africa, how and why. These are all questions to be found more or less answered in the novel. They are its real issues and, it is possible to argue, Alan Paton had his eyes set on them more than on an original attempt at representation. He does not seem concerned with the erection of new premises for dealing with the cultural "Other". Nor does he seem interested in bringing the colonial legacy which informs his writing into perspective. Besides the various

glimpses of the society he envisages for post-1948 South Africa, the novel contains a few highly significant examples of the disguised scorn but apparent complacency with which he treats Afrikanerdom and things Afrikaner. On such considerations, Cry, The Beloved Country emerges as a culturised version of the ongoing political contest for power.

4.2.3. Character, expediency and the Anglican message:

On a different level, the author's attempt at black-character creation and representation, though serious enough to partially go beyond the boundaries drawn by the romance genre, is, however, more expedient than serious. It is expedient in the sense it is extremely compatible with the role he envisages for the blacks in his post-1948 society.

Let us proceed to illustrate the claims so far made. The major black character in the novel is the Reverend Stephen Kumalo of Ndotcheni. Stephen gets a letter from Theophilus Msimangu, another black priest, inviting him to come to Johannesburg to save his sister from the grip of moral corruption. The letter reads:

"My dear brother in Christ: I have had the experience of meeting a young woman here in Johannesburg. Her name is Gertrude Kumalo and I understand that she is the sister of the Rev. Stephen Kumalo...This woman is very sick, and I ask you to come quickly to Johannesburg."(C.B.C., 10)

Msimangu's letter acts as a snapshot tearing through the fabric of economically poor but morally upright and peaceful Ndotcheni. It is a first evocation of the evil forces of the city and migrant labour that incessantly prey on this rural area.

Let us notice the big behavioural discrepancies between the Stephen Kumalo of Ndotcheni and that of Johannesburg. The picture we get of him while he is still in his native village is of one who is totally in control and might even have a cutting edge to his personality. When his wife remarks, "How we desire such a letter, and when it comes, we fear to open it"(C.B.C., 9), his immediate instinct is to cut in commandingly, "Who is afraid, open it"(C.B.C., 9). A little later, reacting "harshly" to his wife's other remark that when people go to Johannesburg, they go for keeps, he says:

"We had a son. Zulus have many children, but we have only one son. He went To Johannesburg, and as you said_ when people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back. They do not even write any more. They do not go to St. Chad's to learn that knowledge without which no black man can live..."(C.B.C.,11).

And as he goes on with the angry reproach, he gets even more worked up as "his voice rose in loud and angry words":

"Go up and ask the white man. Perhaps there are letters. Perhaps they have fallen under the counter, or been hidden amongst the food. Look there in the trees, perhaps they have been blown there by the wind."(C.B.C., 12)

On closer examination, however, it appears that the overall characteristic of Stephen Kumalo is that he is almost always a man of great propriety and humility_ so that once the pattern is broken, as in above, he would apologise and say, "I shall go and pray in the Church"(C.B.C., 12). Piety and humility become an obsession and a scourge compromising his very credibility as a character.

With the start of the journey to Johannesburg, a different picture of Kumalo starts to emerge. Its essential feature is a certain caricaturability. At the first sign of urban technology, Kumalo's confidence gives way to feelings of fear and panic. Listening to a description of the processes of gold extraction "he is silent, and his heart beats a little faster, with excitement and fear"(C.B.C., 17). His new behaviour inspires laughter in his fellow black passengers on the train. Failing to form a mental picture of Johannesburg with its high buildings, its " great wheels, and streets without number, and cars and lorries"(C.B.C., 17), he keeps asking if they have reached Johannesburg at the sight of every high building, "But they laugh again. They are growing a little tired. This is nothing, they say"(C.B.C., 17).

Most significant about this journey from the country to the city is a concomitant regression in Kumalo's reactional patterns. The wisdom and maturity of the old priest fade away as the child in him erupts. Johannesburg, with its size, sophistication and bustling activity has almost a castrating effect on him, which amplifies his caricatural dimensions:

"He is silent, his head aches, he is afraid. There is this railway station to come to, this great place with all its tunnels under the ground...Black people, white people, some going, some coming, so many that the tunnel is full. He goes carefully that he may not bump anybody, holding tightly on to his bag... The stream goes over the street, but remembering Mpanza's son, he is afraid to follow...There is some law of it that he does not understand, and he retreats...His heart beats like that of a child, there is nothing that he can do or think to stop it"(C.B.C., 18).

This patronising, paternalistic representation of Kumalo on the part of the narrator acquires ludicrous dimensions at times:

"When you were finished, you pressed a little rod, and the water rushed in as though something was broken. It would have frightened you if you had not heard of such things before."(21)

The reference here is to a new discovery Kumalo makes : a modern lavatory!

One of the factors seriously undermining Stephen Kumalo's credibility as a character is that he can be either totally arrogant, in a religious, esoteric sense, or totally without personal pride, hence evincing a certain irritating obsequiousness. The irreconcilability of these two features produces a most undesirable effect. Kumalo, supposed to stir up feeling of sympathy and compassion, succeeds only in drawing attention to his own personal apathy, becoming an easy target for the

reader's contempt. His high moral standards and spirituality, the wise, compassionate and virtuous black priest, play for as well as against him. It is a great source of strength which helps him face up to his tragic lot and to the pervasive moral and human desolation besetting him with almost unshakable faith. Suffering for him is evenly counter-balanced by its acceptance as a legitimate component of experience and life at large. And as I mentioned above, prayer is always there to punctuate the suffering and the acceptance. However, it seems that both faith and its adjunct of moral strength are overstretched: I have so much faith and spiritual power to look suffering square in the face and acknowledge its intrinsicity to life that I can sit down, meditative and servile, and let destiny carry me into whichever direction it well wishes.

This picture of a black 'underdog' pumped out with something of the superhuman strips him of a great deal of credibility and almost produces the reverse effect : we laugh at him when the narrator means him to be taken seriously. For example, it is hard to accept that the same character who takes suffering in his stride, also weeps easily at every gesture of good will he encounters along the way. We are told that he "he wept easily these days."(C.B.C., 111)

How does Kumalo face up to the corrupt city of Johannesburg ? Apart from being continuously fear or panic-stricken, Kumalo is a highly contemplative figure. While the world is crumbling around him under the pressure of industrialisation and racial tension, he can still afford to sit back, contemplate the murder his son has committed and reminisce on the innocence of Ndotcheni:

"With a shudder he turned away from contemplation of so terrible a thing. Yet the contemplation of it reassured him. For there was nothing, nothing in all the years at Ndotcheni, nothing in all the years of the boyhood of his son that could make it possible for him to do so terrible a deed."(C.B.C., 78)

The idea here is that Kumalo does accept the argument into which he is woven: Ndotcheni is poor and desolate but stands for good, Johannesburg is rich but stands for evil. The implications of this argument are discussed below. As an Anglican priest and as an old black man, Kumalo possesses the required qualities that Paton would like to see in the man he accepts to open dialogue with, so to speak. Paton envisages a future society in which Kumalo will act as ballast. The latter, it could be argued, lacks the aggressiveness of character that living in an urbanised society like Johannesburg's requires. Paton however tells us that there is hardly any need for such aggressiveness, Johannesburg is evil and destructive, so much so it becomes almost unreal. What the old priest needs to add to his collection of qualities then is humility which, according to Paton, is the essential equipment he needs on his pilgrimage through Johannesburg and through life:

"The humble man reached in his pocket for his sacred book and began to read. It was this world alone that was certain."(C.B.C., 16)

That and the rural world of Ndotcheni ! If we are looking for a reason for his Christ-like patience and his passivity, there we have it : what is the use of living in the city, it is corrupt, what is the use of changing this world, it is uncertain.

But Kumalo is not all lethargy. After all, his pilgrimage to Johannesburg is a task not to be under-rated. It is aimed at reconstructing the tribal edifice and at restoring order and a sense of purpose to the lives of those who have been corrupted by Johannesburg. However, it is significant that the main generating force behind his mission is either Msimangu or, at least indirectly, chance. Msimangu acts not only as his mental guru, thus putting the lessons of Johannesburg in the right perspective for him, but also as his right hand. For

example, although the search for Absalom is carried out by both protagonists, Msimangu is the one to play the active part in it. Kumalo is constantly standing on the periphery of things, too overcome by old age or a sense of tragedy to intervene, until they have been arranged for him.

As to the encounter that will change the entire course of the novel, thus bringing Kumalo's pilgrimage to fruition, it was arranged entirely by chance. As a last task before he goes back to Ndotcheni, Kumalo, doing his friend Sibeko a favour, has to make enquiries about his friend's daughter. Arriving at the home of USmith, where the girl is known to have worked, James Jarvis happens to be there. Here, it might be useful to see how Kumalo reacts to the unexpected encounter:

"The parson answered in a trembling voice, Umnumzana, which means Sir, and to Jarvis's surprise, he sat down on the lowest step, as though he were ill or starving. Jarvis knew this was not rudeness, for the old man was humble and well-mannered, so he came down the steps, saying, Are you ill, Umfundisi? But the old man did not answer. He continued to tremble, and he looked down on the ground, so that Jarvis could not see his face, and could not have seen it unless he had lifted the chin with his hand, which he did not do, for such a thing is not lightly done"(C.B.C., 153)

It is clearly understandable that coming up unexpectedly against the father of the man his own son had killed, Kumalo is deeply shocked. But Kumalo is shocked into no less than fear, the kind that a child would display before an adult authority who might take some sort of punitive action. Kumalo 'trembles'. All the wisdom that priesthood, old age and the tribulations of such a grand experience as the pilgrimage to Johannesburg would confer upon a man are stripped off as they give way to the picture of a child intimidated by his own politeness and sense of propriety. Kumalo emerges as a child who is trying very hard to learn to stand up. Jarvis on the other hand is towering above, the teacher of manners who detects no

rudeness in Kumalo but humility and good, enough of them to solicit his sympathy and compassion. But note how far Jarvis might have gone in construing his subject. Even Kumalo is so embarrassed at the measure of his own fear that he tries to hide away his face, which might have enticed Jarvis to put out his hand and lift up the face of this broken, fearful child...Stephen Kumalo's relationship to James Jarvis, its consequences and implications will be dealt with a little later.

On the other hand, the importance of a character like the Rev. Theophilus Msimangu stems from his role as a guide to Kumalo on his trip through the "great bewildering city"(C.B.C., 205) of Johannesburg. Imparting some grand messages directed simultaneously at Kumalo and at the reader, Msimangu represents both an overall consciousness of the novel and the author's mouthpiece. The ultimate message he delivers is:

"But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love. Because when a man loves, he seeks no power, and therefore he has power."(C.B.C.,37)

The passage expresses the humane, 'universalist' message of a man who has so much sanctity as to be assigned the mission of the guardian angel who comes down to watch over the Christ-like and virtuous priest and to see him through a city run by the devil to the shore of redemption. For indeed all the nice, righteous deeds of a man so thoroughly devoted to love, good and God are here. At the end of the novel, Msimangu announces his intention to retire "into a community [where he] would forswear the world and its possessions"(C.B.C.,183). Overwhelmed by his guru's kindness and generosity on receipt of a thirty-three-pound-gift, Kumalo simply says, "In all my days I have known no one as you are"(C.B.C., 184), before he breaks into bitter weeping, while his friend virtuously steps out of history into the only world that is certain.

And yet one is entitled to question the meaning of all this virtuous nobility and

religious devotion with which Alan Paton submerges us? What are the implications of Msimangu's seemingly sublime message and how does it bear on Stephen Kumalo's case?

James Jarvis also believes in the Christian message. He transcends all feelings of hate or resentment for the father of the man who has caused the tragic loss of his son, and helps translate that Christian message into reality as he helps Stephen Kumalo restore his valley. This is the whole point. Paton does not realize that while Christianity makes of James Jarvis a great man to be admired, it turns Kumalo into a meek and servile figure. This might not necessarily be a consequence of Christianity as such. In fact, it is rather because Paton does not question the historical value of his own religion for a black character. Instead, he takes it for granted that religion, and Anglicanism more specifically, is a human common denominator, and thus projects his own ideals into Kumalo, as if religion has not helped shape the history of South Africa, and as if it can function outside history itself. In , 'Alan Paton : The Honour of Meditation', Tony Morphet sketches Kumalo's historical problematic in these terms:

"The meditation begins and ends in the consciousness of the most vulnerable of men. Not the hard, unexpectant, unillusioned man at the very base of a bitter and unfulfilling world, but a priest who intellectually, socially and in faith has come to expect some fulfilment of the Christian message in history. On him falls the weight of the destructive force of society. He can perceive and value the grace of ameliorative and reconstructive efforts but the facts of ruin occupy his mind."(7)

Metaphorically speaking, the ruins and the Christian message, are the earth and sky of the void in which Paton makes his character operate. The historical moment when the two dimensions, the ruins and the Christian message intersect, never

takes place without sacrificing the character's credibility. One of the reasons for this is because Paton never questions the implications of the projection of his own religious principles into a (black) man who represents the other part of the power spectrum. Little wonder then that most black critics have targeted Kumalo's religious side with hostile scorn. The scathing critique Mphahlele, for instance, makes of him in the African Image(p.131) is significantly entitled 'Man with a Halo'. Besides, Paton's time to present a character in this fashion was ill-chosen as contemporary black writers had suspiciously begun to reassess the historical relevance of all religions foreign to South Africa(C.f. my Chapter on Mphahlele).

In the light of all this, and by way of a parenthetical comment, John Kumalo might have been a better investment as a pivotal protagonist. He represents aspects that are diametrically opposed to Paton's beliefs and aspirations, and this is an area of conflict that, if explored, might have yielded better results as he is a potentially complex character. However, the fact that he is rejected out of hand on moral grounds proved very counter-productive.

On a different level, Msimangu's universalist message has also a solid local repository in which it gets bogged down. For the advocacy of the power of love, its apparent facade, is forfeited by that of political power, a dangerous pursuit, it is understood, which the blacks are supposed to renounce. In somewhat crude terms, what Paton is really saying is "I certainly am humane, considerate and all along compassionate but power, just like the city, is a white house. Let a black foot trespass, and I shall, for the sake of its own good, cry foul."

Let us examine another character from Paton's world of black characters to substantiate these metaphors. On close examination of this world, it would appear that it is defined within a certain hierarchical order. There are the saintly sages, like Stephen Kumalo and Theophilus Msimangu with whom dialogue can be opened or established. We stand at the opposite ends of the power spectrum but we speak the same language of the Anglican Church. Kumalo, Msimangu, and Jarvis are all

Anglicans. Then there is the world of the irresponsible sinners, the morally sick like Gertrude and Absalom. These can be forgiven for they know not what they do and have inadvertently let the devil lord over their lives. Finally, there is the world of the irredeemable sinners, like John Kumalo, who have knowingly sold their souls to the devil and through conspiracy with it have become absolutely corrupt. The novel repeatedly reminds us that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Significantly, it takes the wise authority of Msimangu to drive the point home and to explain to us what kind of society Alan Paton envisages in this novel. With what is conveyed as brilliant insight, Msimangu explains to his black colleague:

"Because the white man has power, we too want power... But when a black man gets power, when he gets money, he is a great man if he is not corrupted. I have seen it often. He seeks power and money to put right what is wrong, and when he gets them, why, he enjoys the power and the money. Now he can gratify his lusts, now he can arrange ways to get white man's liquor, he can speak to thousands and hear them clap their hands...But most white people do not know this truth about power, and they are afraid lest we get it."(C.B.C. 37)

Of all the black characters inhabiting Paton's black world, John Kumalo is singled out for contempt and condemnation. Like John Laputa in Prester John, he is the devil incarnate, a modern version of the Africa that resides deep into the recesses of Paton's Beloved Country, "the Africa awakening...Africa resurgent...Africa dark and savage"(C.B.C. 158). Long after John Laputa's death, the notion of the "black peril" was still in operation in stark contrast to the 'good citizen of the state' which Stephen Kumalo, for example, represents. But John Laputa and John Kumalo have more than just one thing in common. When Laputa is talking, his black audiences are caught up in the incantatory spell of his words. John Kumalo also has

a great oratory gift which draws on the magical. His voice has "the magic in it, and it has threatening in it, and it is as though Africa itself were in it"(C.B.C.,158).

While John is making a public speech, the narrator sneaks in with his fears:

"What if this voice should say words that it already speaks in private, should rise and not fall again, should rise and rise and rise, and people rise with it, should, madden them with thoughts of rebellion and dominion, with thoughts of power and possession?"(C.B.C. : p.158).

Notwithstanding, there is one special feature of John Kumalo which makes him part company with Laputa. Despite the fact that he has something about him that spells the uncanny, Laputa enjoys a measure of greatness of character. This savage, Buchan tells us, is also noble: the uprising he leads is aimed at preserving his ancestors' heritage as symbolised by the diamond collar. By contrast, John Kumalo represents the cunning, manipulative and dishonest kind. Again the condemnation is passed out by Msimangu:

"Perhaps we should thank God he is corrupt... For if he were not, he could plunge the country into bloodshed. He is corrupted by his possessions, and he fears their loss, and the loss of power he already has."(C.B.C.,161)

Damned if you do and damned if you do not. Paton draws his conclusion and Stephen Kumalo learns the lesson well. Towards the end of the novel, he imparts it parrot-fashion to the young agricultural demonstrator, Napoleon Letsitsi. The latter makes it clear that the kind of self-sufficiency Kumalo would like to see achieved as a result of reconstructing the tribe is undermined from the start by the size and nature of the land the blacks have been allocated:

"I cannot stop you from thinking your thoughts. It is a good

thing that a young man has such deep thoughts. But hate no man, and desire power over no man. For I have a friend who taught me that power corrupts."(C.B.C., 229)

John Kumalo seems to incur Paton's wrath because he does not see power as being so divine. To him it is as earthly a matter as any. Nor does he see it residing in Ndotcheni or in a process of retribalisation. Power is where those who are concerned with it are, "It is here in Johannesburg," he tells his brother " that the new society is being built"(C.B.C. : p.34).

In a major sense then, John Kumalo disagrees with the narrator on every key point. While the narrator waves the banner of Anglicanism as a pre-requisite for dialogue, John Kumalo replies:

"But the Church too is like the chief. You must do so and so and so. You are not free to have an experience. A man must be faithful and meek and obedient, and he must obey the laws; whatever the laws may be."(C.B.C., 34)

The narrator is for an agrarian-based economy which upholds the values of compassion and mutual co-operation. Having exposed the cases of Gertrude, Absalom, Stephen and John Kumalo himself, the narrator seems to be saying: 'you see, I told you, urban life is not good for you yet, it destroys your humanity and sense of purpose, thus turning you into prostitutes, criminals and corrupt politicians, especially if you do not go to St. Chad's "to learn that Knowledge without which no black man can live"; even your sages succumb to its powerful influence as it dwarfs their adulthood. Go back home where you really belong,"there is not much there, but it is better than here. There is not much food, but it is shared by all together. If all are poor, it is not so bad to be poor" '(C.B.C., 52), although the agrarian question remains unresolved at the end of the novel. As Napoleon suggests to Stephen Kumalo:

"We can restore this valley for those who are here, but when the children grow up, there will again be too many. Some will have to go still."(CBC, 228)

John Kumalo is for an urban society where the blacks can support themselves with trade-unionism for example. His argument is that if they extract the South African gold and have their share of it, they can give themselves a sense of purpose even here in the city:

"We live in the compounds, we must leave our wives and families behind. And when the new gold is found, it is not we who will get more for our labour. It is the white man's shares that will rise"(CBC, 34-35)

One can clearly see that describing John Kumalo as a corrupt figure is a matter of utility. It suits the author's intentions for a future black society operating on the periphery of an urban-based type of economy. Otherwise, the novel does not convince us in any significant way as to why corruption should be an adjunct of black power or black politics. The author has nothing but contempt for this character. We are told that the reason why "[John Kumalo] goes so far and no further"(CBC, 161) is because he fears the loss of his own possessions and because there is no applause in prison. Which is a fair point. However, the novel also makes it unequivocally clear that the contempt is the result of fear that John Kumalo's voice should rise and never fall again. It is the fear of chaos and bloodshed although Kumalo makes it clear that he is asking only for justice, higher wages. He is not asking for "equality and the franchise and the removal of the colour bar"(CBC, 159). Paton seems to be saying: that is exactly why you are corrupt. You are a black politician therefore you are corrupt, you are corrupt because you are a black politician. John Kumalo is like King Lear's Fool who is whipped for lying, for speaking true and sometimes for holding his peace. It is clear that Paton is not

making a general saying that politicians as a species are corrupt for he posits the figure of Arthur Jarvis as the paragon of conscientious sincerity and political devotion.

Tony Morphet argues that the most pervasive emotion in the novel is fear. It covers the full spectrum of human experience. He states:

"The emotion most pervasively present in the story is unquestionably fear. All forms of experience from the most basic and simple to the most harrowing are shadowed by the sense of fear. It is a powerful unifying force in the novel, acting almost as a kind of connective tissue within which the shapes and patterns of experience are lodged."('Alan Paton: The Honour of Meditation' English In Africa, 1983, 4)

The scourge a literature (and therefore its criticism) produced in a situation like South Africa's is that it engages a world of political chaos out of which it has to make sense or extract a meaning. The result is that even what seems like purely human emotions such as fear are in fact subject to certain ideological considerations. My whole argument is that Paton's alienation stems from the fact he gets bogged down in his belief, whether intended or inadvertent, in the neutrality of certain concepts he deploys to tackle a subject that has historically been imbued with subtle nuances. Such concepts seem to reject neutrality of meaning.

This is to say that the emotional quality Morphet describes in such generalised and idealistic terms presupposes the existence of an equally shared human heritage from which the emotions that vibrate through Paton's characters are tapped and which would accordingly have the same implications for those (various) characters. Whereas we know that such a heritage does not exist, otherwise the novel would have no relevance. If it does exist, however, say in the form of the racial legacy, for instance, then it forfeits its chances of keeping the same

meaning for all involved. One might argue that Christianity is another common denominator binding Paton's characters together. True, although we have seen that religion in Cry, The Beloved Country is subject to the same ideological considerations.

All this is to say that fear is not an ideal or neutral emotion in the novel. It follows the pulse of Paton's envisaged society as described above and conforms to the historical and ideological implications of that vision. If fear is what is tormenting us, let us put an end to it. Let us help Stephen Kumalo rebuild up his tribe so as to stop the peripheral flow into Johannesburg, even though that may be only a temporary solution, as Napoleon Letsitsi discerns...

4.2.4 The city-country division_ A transposed idiom:

Whether structurally or with regard to the novel's ideas on race and society, Johannesburg occupies a unique position in the narrative. Moral corruption, crime and its ensuing consequences such as fear and the pervasive sense of insecurity, especially amongst the white sector of its population, are the most outstanding features of this city. As a matter of fact, for both black and white, the city stands as the ultimate symbol of suffering, an idea most strongly captured in the statement "No second Johannesburg is needed upon the earth. One is enough"(C.B.C., 149). Again, this point could be used to show how Paton's discourse strongly links up with white settler ideology and how it emulates certain cultural idioms established by the romance genre as represented by Haggard and Buchan.

In 'Tradition and Revolt In South African Fiction: The Novels of Nadine Gordimer, André Brink and JM Coetzee'(Journal Of Southern African Studies, 1982), Paul Rich notes that this is a Victorian idiom that was internationalised as colonies came to be seen as "rural areas to Metropolitan Britain"(58). In another useful article, 'Apartheid and The Decline of The Civilisation Idea: An Essay On Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* and JM. Coetzee's *Waiting For The Barbarians*'(Research In African Literature, 1984), Paul Rich explains the ideological implications of such a division in the South African context. For example, he points out that white settler ideology reflects "the essentially urban nature of white South African society and thus reinforces the Apartheid notion of territorial separation between the white urban race in the city areas and the abodes of the African majority in the('precivilised') tribal 'homelands'"(365). This is a very useful observation although there are a number of deviations that must be taken into account.

First of all, as Paul Rich himself later explains in 'Tradition and Revolt', although Britain was the first country in the world to go ahead with an industrial

revolution, what represented 'civilisation' for the British ruling class was, interestingly enough, the country and not the city. In a perceptive study of English culture, Martin J. Wiener notes that:

"It is a historic irony that the nation that gave birth to the industrial revolution, and exported it throughout the world, should have become embarrassed at the measure of its own success, the English nation even became ill-at ease enough with its prodigal progeny to deny its legitimacy by adopting a conception of Englishness that virtually excluded industrialism"(English Culture and the Decline of The Industrial Spirit, 1981, 5).

According to Wiener, this anti-Industrial spirit in late 19th and early 20th century Britain harks back to the impact of the industrial revolution which was never strong enough to "tear the social fabric"(E.C.D.I.S., 7). As the revolution came from within, the conflict between the industrialised class and the agrarian aristocracy was never decisively resolved. It was only "contained" and "internalised". The result is

"a new, dominant bourgeois culture bearing the imprint of the old aristocracy... A variety of modern British practices that has served to humanise urban industrial society... new towns and green belts, the love of gardening, even a wariness of most modern architecture... owes a debt to this compromise"(E.C.D.I.S., 10).

Secondly, the transposition of the city-country idiom from Britain to South Africa had a major implication which gave it further complexity. For Alan Paton, for example, apart from being a form of socio-economic organisation (the city/white, the country/black), nostalgia for the country or for an agrarian golden age not only implied a return to pre-capitalist society but also to pre-colonial status. This is a significant conception since it was later to constitute a major

platform for Alan Paton's Liberal Party as it waved the banner of what Tony Morphet refers to as "The politics of innocence" in his article 'Alan Paton : The Honour of Meditation' (English In Africa, 1983, 8).

Since it is hard to dissociate Southern African history from colonial history, pre-colonial here also means pre-historic. As Tony Morphet observes, The Liberal party was asking its members "to reconstitute their personal identity within a form which might be considered to precede the fall of South Africa into racist history"('A.P. : HM', 8). Thus, Alan Paton's notion of history conjures up images of pristine and paradisaic innocence. In this context, it could be said that, whether for the conqueror or for the conquered, the city has remained undisputably the symbol of white power and civilisation.

Does there not seem to be a state of confusion as to what represents a bastion of civilisation in Cry, The Beloved Country? The answer depends on how far one is ready to go in interpreting Paton's intentions when he subjects the city to heavy attack. I would argue that his condemnation of Johannesburg as a symbol of urban settlement is not as indiscriminate as it may appear. Nor should it be taken at face value, therefore. The message put across may be rather ambiguous, hence a certain tendency to generalise, but it is not hard to extract. For example, the murder of Arthur Jarvis is the greatest irony of all. Here is a man, one of the best brains in the country, a bright engineer, a man so thoroughly devoted to justice, and a staunch supporter of the blacks' cause, who has been so absurdly murdered by one of those whose cause he has put before his best family and economic interests. This is a solid example Paton gives to illustrate the tragic vibrations produced by the coming together of the country and the city. One would be hard put to it not to read in here the inevitable message: the city is a white monopoly. In the light of this, if Paton's black characters succumb so tragically to the evil influence of Johannesburg, it can only mean that in his conception they have not achieved ample

cultural maturity to make urban life a viable experience existentially, and especially morally, since that is Paton's parameter. The patronising tone of such a statement is only too consistent with that of the novel as a whole. The civilisation idea, itself and adjunct of racial superiority, goes hand in hand with the city idiom. Thus it becomes clear that Paton's ideas in the novel conform to the patterns of that best of colonial literature as represented in the romance genre.

The deployment of the city-country idiom is a variation on the theme of geographical divisions acquiring racial dimensions. In Prester John, for instance, an adumbration of territorial separation is provided in the form of plain and plateau which stand for black and white respectively. There is something similar to this in Cry, The Beloved Country. The opening scene of the novel sets out the geographic setting in which Paton enacts his story: the hill and the valley:

"The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams in every kloof. It is well-tended and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many fires burn it, laying bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed."(C.B.C., 7)

As opposed to this idyllic setting, the valley is a desolate terrain, almost a biblical image of a poverty and famine-stricken land:

"But the green rich hills fall to the valley below, and falling, change their nature. For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and the mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon the grass, and too many fires have burned it. Stand shod upon it, for it is coarse and sharp, and the stones cut under the feet. It is not kept or guarded or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men. The titihoya does not cry here any more."(C.B.C., 7)

Hence the threat it poses to the white farmers of the hill who are worried that the desolation "would eat back, year by year, mile by mile, until they too were overtaken."(C.B.C.,113)

One difference between a Buchan and a Paton is that while the former saturates his plain-plateau division with racial and cultural import, as the plain becomes the symbol of the peril of the defeated barbarians, the latter, besides the racial and cultural implications, adds a socio-economic dimension to the picture. But what is of the greatest significance is that the hill is home to the man who will become Ndotcheni's benefactor. This, in addition to the religious tone of both passages, helps confer on Jarvis a spiritual quality. He becomes a saviour... He saves dying children by sending them milk, he gets an agricultural demonstrator to work for the restoration of the valley, and as a final gesture of good will, builds Stephen Kumalo a new church... Most significant of all, it is his letter that saved Kumalo from a transfer to another village. The Bishop, much to Kumalo's sorrow, had decided that on account of all the things that had happened in Johannesburg, it would be better if Kumalo were to be sent away to some place where people would not know so much about him. And just when the decision was being finalised, a letter arrives from Jarvis informing Kumalo that one of Mrs. Jarvis's last wishes was that a new Church be built in Ndotcheni. Kumalo's immediate response is "This is from God"(C.B.C., 223). This is not the only occasion when Jarvis is associated with God. When the agricultural demonstrator informs Kumalo that it was the white man who hired him, Kumalo exclaims " You are an angel from God"(C.B.C., 214). The point here is that the Christian ideals of forgiveness and compassion have conquered all feelings of racial hatred and the parties involved have found reward in each other's blessing.

Now I have made my case about the expediency of black character in Cry, The Beloved Country and demonstrated how the colonial legacy remains largely

unconfronted, I shall turn to the other claim that Aian Paton was not writing in a political vacuum and that his energies are primarily invested in his concern with the contest for power.

D. Chapter Four

The Political Allegory Of Good And Evil

Part Two

4.3. Too Late The Phalarope – An expression of political rivalry–

English-speaking liberalism versus Afrikaner nationalism:

4.3.1. Afrikaner representation:

First of all, one is forced to proceed with the uneasy awareness that there is a major ideological gulf between what Cry, The Beloved Country promises to be and what it actually is. We are promised a certain measure of comfort heavily stressed by the advocacy of love as the real power but gradually made to realize that the power of love is somewhat a liberal fallacy. How do we justify this claim, especially if the other party, the Afrikaner, is hardly represented in the novel?

It might be noticed that Paton treats his rival in the contest for power with great complacency, a certain measure of superiority grounded on the notion of civilisation. Of course, religion is part and parcel of that notion. Such complacency takes many different forms, the most significant of which is precisely the narrative neglect to which the Afrikaner is relegated.

This is nothing new to the genre. In Prester John, David Crawford seems to roam the length and breadth of the African interior as if the Afrikaner occupies no position in the power spectrum there at all, as if he does not exist. The only glimpse we get of him is towards the end in a passing reference that expresses the same contempt for his uncivilised nature. The reference is to Blaawildebeestfontein which has been changed from 'an unpronounceable name' into a place for 'making good citizens of the state'.

Paton must have found it extremely tempting to express his contempt for the Afrikaner in explicit and definitive terms. Out of the scarce references to the Afrikaner, the following one unequivocally captures the mood of his contempt. The passage is worth quoting in full:

"Odendaalsrust, what a name of magic. Yet some of them are already saying at the Stock Exchange, for their Afrikaans is nothing to wonder at, that there must be a simpler name. What could be easier than Smuts or Smutsville? What could be easier than Hofmeyr? _no_ but there is a place called Hofmeyr already and apart from that _well_ perhaps it is not quite the name after all. That is the worst of these mines, their names are unpronounceable, what a pity that a great industry, controlled by such brains, advanced by such enterprise should be hampered by such names: Blyvooruitsicht, and Welgedacht, and Langlaagte, and now this Odendaalsrust. But let us say these things into our beards, let us say them in our clubs, let us say them in private, for most of us are members of the United Party, that stands for co-operation and fellowship and brotherly love and mutual understanding. But it would save a devil of a lot of money, if the Afrikaners could only see that bilingualism was a devil of a waste of it."(C.B.C., 146)

The linguistic issue apart, co-operation, fellowship, brotherly love and mutual understanding form a gulf that separates Paton's anglophone characters from the Afrikaner and simultaneously the bridge tended for him to join the ranks of 'civilised society'. In order to get a better picture of what has been said so far, in other words of how Paton was actually more concerned with immediate and concrete political issues, we must turn to his second novel, Too Late The Phalarope.

By the time of Too Late The Phalarope's publication (1955), the power contest between Liberal and Nationalist had been decisively resolved in favour of the latter and Apartheid was vigorously entrenched. The impact of the 1948-political outcome strongly dominates in the narrative of this second novel. If Cry, The Beloved Country represented Alan Paton's culturised contribution to the debate on who should rule South Africa and expounded his liberal values as the real alternative, Too Late The Phalarope came to express the English-speaking

intelligentsia's deep sense of disappointment at the outcome of the political contest. As Paul Rich pointed out, the strong reaction of the English-speaking liberals against Afrikaner ascendancy produced an "underlying cultural pessimism" ('AD.C.I.', 365) and a feeling of despair which is strongly reflected in this novel. However, the term despair must not be given a tone of finality for Paton still sees the values advocated in Cry, The Beloved Country as the best way out of what he has by now come to see as the South African impasse.

Again, this point is relevant to us only in so far as it helps highlight Paton's real motives for producing the novel and his main concern in it which is above anything else a political one. Even a superficial reading of Too Late The Phalarope would reveal that black character representation or the colonial cultural legacy are left intact. Whereas the black man looms large in Cry, The Beloved Country, he is only peripherally incorporated in the second novel's narrative. This is so partly because Stephanie is the only black character to emerge on the surface, and even this she does somewhat negatively as we shall see, and partly because of the great symbolic value in which the author wraps her up. By contrast, the Afrikaner, who had historically emerged as the dominant force in the South African political landscape, is forcefully brought into the foreground for analysis as well as for attack.

Too Late The Phalarope is about Pieter van Vlaaderen, Police lieutenant and national rugby hero, who is tempted by black girl Stephanie into committing an offence against the the Immorality Act. Pieter's destruction is the culmination of several factors the most important of which is this:

"He was always two men. The one was the soldier of the war, with all the English ribbons that his father hated; the lieutenant in the police, second only to the captain; the great rugby player hero of thousands of boys and men. The other was the dark and silent man, hiding from all men his secret knowledge of himself, with that hardness and coldness that

made men afraid of him, afraid even to speak to him... the secret knowledge came to me, and could have been used for his salvation, before it came to that other who used it for his destruction."(T.L.P., 8)

The passage gives us some crucial clues towards an adequate interpretation of the novel: the fervent nationalism of Pieter's father, Jacob, and the animosity he bears for things English is by far the most significant element in the passage and in the making of the narrative as a whole. The consuming paradox of Pieter's offence against the Immorality Act and its implications could be best grasped in the light of his father's rigid nationalist feelings. As a rugby sportsman and a lieutenant in the Police force, Pieter represents the core of Afrikanerdom. As John Cooke observes, he is a "national cultural hero" and "the guardian of the status quo" ('Too Late The Phalarope: A Hunger of The Soul' English Studies In Africa, 1979, 39) This is the part of his personality that Jacob not only understands but likes and identifies with. For Jacob:

"The point of living is to serve the Lord your God, and to uphold the honour of your Church and language and people."(T.L.P., 72)

Being a national cultural hero and a guardian of the status quo then, Pieter's divine mission is to do just that, to defend his Church, language and people. But the other side of him that his father hates is his Englishness as symbolised by the English ribbons. As far as I am aware, the political symbolism of this division has not received any investigation from critics of Paton's fiction. I shall therefore try and shed some light on it.

In a useful article entitled 'The Meaning of Apartheid Before 1948', 1987, Deborah Posel expresses her support for the view that monolithic Afrikanerdom is a myth. She argues that "while Afrikaner nationalists shared a single (albeit

rudimentary) ideological discourse on apartheid as a basic commitment to white supremacy, they had conflicting ideas about how white supremacy was best preserved"(Journal Of Southern African Studies, 123). "Consensus was not reached over the meaning of Apartheid" she goes on, "precisely because the Afrikaner nationalist alliance comprised an alliance of class groupings"(126) such as farmers, specific categories of white labour, the Afrikaner petty-bourgeoisie, Afrikaner industrialists and financiers. This is to say that Afrikaner capital exercised a hegemony over "the formulation of Apartheid"(125) and that consequently, "the notion of apartheid as a total segregation was never taken seriously, since such a system would have disrupted the process of capitalist accumulation by prescribing the withdrawal of African labour from the white areas"(125).

Paton might not show any awareness of the precise manner in which such divisions structurally functioned within Afrikanerdom, but he surely was alert to the sociological irony that renders the preservation of white supremacy and the notion of total separation incompatible. In Hope For South Africa, 1958, he expresses the view that

"The Nationalists proceed on the assumption that it is totally and forever unthinkable that white and non-white people should live on equal terms within the same society. They therefore waver between two policies. The first is called Separate Development, i.e. granting equality by means of total territorial separation; this policy commends itself to idealists and intellectuals. The second is called basskap, and means plainly White Supremacy; its supporters regard total territorial separation as impossible and consider that 'white civilisation' will survive only if one is prepared to fight for it."(3)

In this study, it is argued that Too Late The Phalarope is a symbolic exploration

of the divisions "inherent" in Afrikanerdom and which Pieter also symbolically embodies. Once again this shows that Paton targets Afrikaner behaviour primarily and that he is not concerned with the notion of white civilisation as a whole. This of course presupposes that Paton delivers his critique from a specific standpoint, that of an English-speaking liberal. Much as in Cry, The Beloved Country, he does assert his liberal values to further compound the impact of Afrikaner division. Thus for him, the Second World War was a decisive moment in the history of Afrikaner Nationalism. The War further split it onto itself and unveiled the true face of hard core Afrikanerdom, which Jacob clearly represents, and its evil, destructive consequences. The 1939 war sliced Afrikaner loyalties into two camps. In the one camp, there were those who remained fervently nationalist like Jacob van Vlanderen and Sergeant Steyn and who refused to fight against the Germans as they saw it as an English war. It is significant to mention here that Jacob is depicted as a hard, authoritarian figure totally consistent with his own fascist sympathies. For him the wearer of the red oath is a

"Smuts man, a traitor to the language and struggle of the Afrikaner people, and a lickspittle of the British Empire and the English King, fighting in an English war that no true Afrikaner would take part in."(T.L.P., 29-30)

It is also significant that Pieter's downfall was plotted for by Sergeant Steyn. In the other camp, there were those who chose to fight for the British Empire like Pieter himself, or those who sympathised with it like his aunt Sophie and his mother, "[Jacob's] wife and I were for the English, as we have always been in our hearts, since Louis Botha and Jan Smuts made us so"(T.L.P., 30). Sophie and her sister-in-law are depicted as forgiving compassionate figures. And here is the great paradox that Pieter constitutes. The source of his destruction is that in him irreconcilable forces meet. He is rigid and sensitive:

"For the truth was that he had fathered a strange son, who had all his father's will and strength...yet had all the gentleness of a girl!...Had he been one or the other, I think his father would have understood him better, but he was both. And when you despised the one, the other would shoot three tins from a stump; and when you approved the one, the other would sit like a girl with a flower."(TLP, 8)

One can see here that the division runs all the way down the fabric of Afrikanerdom from the state and its institutions such as the Police force right down to the individual passing through the family. The question now is where do the two types of division laid forth above meet? Where do we locate a convincing link or overlap between the division of Afrikanerdom as an alliance of class groupings, as a hegemony of capital on apartheid, and its conflictual allegiances with regard to 1939 war in the novel? A more important question is where does Paton's alienation come into this?

Sergeant Steyn and more so Jacob represent a special type of evil which could be termed as the blind faith in the purity and supremacy of the race. Such blind faith finds its practical translation in the laws of the land with very special emphasis on the Immorality Act. For them:

"there can be no mercy... and a word can be written that will destroy a man and his house and his kindred and his friends, and there is no power, of God or Man or State, nor any angel, nor anything present or to come, that can save them."(TLP, 124)

But this does not mean that Paton condemns inter-racial sex or condones the transgression of the Immorality Act. As John Cooke argues, "the novel does not question the tenets of Apartheid society, only the means of responding should they be transgressed"('A Hunger of The Soul', 39). For all their understanding and forgiveness, Sophie, who acts as the author's mouth-piece, and her sister-in-law,

find Pieter's transgression just as abominable. In fact, and this we shall see later, even Pieter himself has hatred and fear for inter-racial sexual relations.

Having mentioned John Cooke, I would like to point to a major contradiction in his article. Dealing with the character Stephanie, Cooke argues that she represents the other self that Paton's white characters have to integrate in order to achieve their psychic liberation:

"Most centrally, the Africans they confront are double figures representing...the individuals most unacceptable social impulses. *Too Late The Phalarope*...is based on the belief that it is necessary to grapple with and finally integrate this double into one's psyche." ('AHS', 38)

To paraphrase, what Cooke is really saying is that Paton does consent to inter-racial sexual relations. But if so, how is it that he is accused of not questioning the tenets of Apartheid? Clearly, the two statements are diametrically opposed, especially in the light of Stephanie's described impact on Pieter. Besides, accepting the political framework in which I have placed Paton's writing earlier, one would be hard put to it to see any real scope for the suggestion that he posits black against white especially in *Too Late The Phalarope*. To entertain that suggestion is to give his writing a very positive cultural and deconstructive dimension it actually lacks. As an example, when he deals with the landscape, he does so either in keeping with the romantic spirit or, alternatively, polemically. In the next passage, the narrator is looking at the landscape from the point of view of an English-speaking liberal levelling a serious critique at the Afrikaner seclusive and exclusivist psychic impulses. The undercurrent of irony and sarcasm is not hard to detect:

"The mist had gone down, and the stars shone down on the grass country, on the farms of his nation and people...on the

whole countryside that they had bought with years of blood and sacrifice; for they had trekked from the British Government with its officials and missionaries and its laws that made a black man as good as his master, and had trekked into a continent, dangerous and trackless, where wild beasts and savage men, grim and waterless plains, had given way before their fierce will to be separate and survive... They had built their houses and their churches, and as God had chosen them for a people, so did they choose him for their God, cherishing their separateness that was now His Will. They set their conquered enemies apart, ruling them with unerring justice, declaring 'no equality in Church or State' and making the iron law that no white man might touch a black woman... And to go against the iron law, of a people of rock and stone in a land of rock and stone, was to be broken and destroyed."(TLP, 18)

I described this passage as polemical because it seems intended to counter-balance Jacob's arrogant claim to the land to which he considers the English as new comers and therefore foreigners. The scene from which the novel derives its title illustrates this idea. Pieter has presented his father with a book of the birds of South Africa, compiled by an Englishman, featuring a picture of the phalarope. The father insists that the bird is the ruitertjie and concludes, "I'll teach an Englishman to write about our birds"(TLP, 102). Paton's argument is: if this is the land you arrogantly make a claim to, look what it has made you into, a people of rock and stone.

But Paton achieves even a greater purpose in the passage. Put into historical perspective, the Afrikaner seems to have maintained unity not through any common human denominator but through the sheer struggle against a totally unsympathetic landscape. The Afrikaner thinks he has conquered the continent when, in fact, it is the other way round. The landscape has victimised him and sharpened his sense of seclusion. Somewhat paradoxically, it has revitalised his death instincts turning him into rock and stone.

It is against such a backdrop that Paton sees the Afrikaner's rigid morality and tyrannical temperament. For the Afrikaner, seclusion is an essential part of his life. Rigidity, tyranny, seclusion and death forfeit all chances of freedom, whether individual, spiritual or political. This state of affairs then squares up with the stance he took on the 1959 war, sympathising with the forces of fascism.

On these grounds, what appears to be the novel's basic theme is not how the white man can achieve a fully integrated self but that to be Nationalist, Jacob-fashion, is to intimate death. This argument is consistent with the final outcome of the novel. Pieter is ultimately redeemed despite what core Afrikanerdom thinks of as an offence against the Lord, the language and the race. And the voices that prevail are those of his mother and Sophie who uphold the values of love and forgiveness. In fact, even Nella, his wife, does reject the accusation of betrayal levelled at her husband by the judge as she goes back to him at the end:

"they will go to some other country, far from us all. I trust they will find some peace there, even if he is to be for ever so silent and so grave"(TLP., 199-200)

we are told. Finally, I deem it highly significant that the novel's ultimate message is delivered by none other than the captain, an Englishman, and comes as a reiteration of Msimangus "The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again"(CBC, 25). For the captain also who (as a policeman) knows an offence against the law, and (as a Christian) knows an offence against religion, but does not know an offence against the race, as he tells Nella's father, the greatest tragedy is "to punish and not to restore"(TLP., 195). One can see here that the division between Afrikaner and English-speaking is bridged through the assertion of Paton's liberal values. A legitimate question would be to enquire into the actual form that this bridging takes in the narrative and what it

really means. Let us say that Pieter's family and Pieter himself are mirror-pictures, one collective and one individual, of the same malaise. Both of them have one rigid side and another sensitive. Let us also say that Pieter's destruction is only partial because he is redeemed through forgiveness and compassion which he himself partly represents any way. His family's destruction is comparatively partial also. Jacob is sacrificed away as he dies of grief and hatred. The fact that Sophie and her sister-in-law are retained indicate that for Paton, detente between Afrikaner and English-speaking can be achieved through the substitution of Afrikaner rigidity with liberal values.

43.2. Black-character representation... Political implications:

Although somewhat crudely presented, my argument makes sense historically. In Liberalism In South Africa 1948-1963, 1971, Janet Robertson notes that it was Liberal Party strategy to project tolerance as a means of maintaining their hope to act as a mediators between white and non-white although

"The white liberals did not realize that, as Congress opinion hardened in response to apartheid measures in the fifties, the whites were to develop a nationalism of their own, a new solidarity to supersede the old division of Boer and Briton."(15)

This claim can be double-checked from an entirely different perspective although at the expense of dragging my argument against Cooke's point about the integration of the other self into some difficulty. Paton, for example, does associate Stephanie with the landscape. But one has to understand the real nature of such an association and the implications it involves. Cooke argues that:

"The Africans with whom they have sexual relations are identified with the South African landscape, an association used to emphasise that the whites are confronting the essential features of the country."('AHS', 38)

I take issue with that except that Cooke gives his argument a strong turn. For him the identification of Stephanie in the novel as "the girl Stephanie" "calls forth the feminine side of Pieter."('AHS', 38) Once again, the real implication here is that Paton gives an implicit nod of consent to inter-racial sexual relations especially if one accepted with Cooke that the juxtaposition of Stephanie and the landscape in particular scenes evokes paradisaical images for Pieter. Here is an

example:

"Here was what lay in the store of memory, the water running over the stones and sharp-tasting waterplants and the mosses and ferns. Then suddenly ahead of him, under a little fall of water, he saw the girl Stephanie."(TLP, 44)

Seen in isolation from the overall import of the novel, this scene does seem to square up with Cooke's argument. But seen in the light of what we know about Stephanie and her functions in the narrative, the case is very much otherwise. The fact is that Stephanie is of an abstract substance that seems to elude the narrator himself or herself (the narration voices are very diversified in the novel). The first impression we get of her leaves us unable to fit her into any definite or concrete mould:

"She is a strange creature this girl Stephanie, with a secret embarrassed smile that was the sign of her strangeness."(TLP, 13)

But the nature of the functions she performs in the narrative is consistent with her strangeness as "she has a queer look of innocence also, though she is no stranger to those things which are supposed to put an end to innocence."(TLP, 13)

Standing on the kloof where he has come to look for her, Pieter reminisces on his days as a child. The memories, we are told, could be brought back "by some sound, long remembered from the days of innocence before the world's corruption, [some sound] which could open the door of the soul, flooding it with a sudden knowledge of the sadness and terror and beauty of man's home and earth."(TLP, 40) Such is the extent of Paton's nostalgia for a pre-colonialist, pre-capitalist agrarian world, itself an essential feature of Liberal Party politics. But that aside, the passage also expresses Pieter's yearning for the innocence of childhood days.

In the light of all this, the scene of sharp-tasting waterplants and mosses and

ferns is strongly reminiscent of Haggard's licentious and corrupt Eden. Stephanie is the devil in the guise of Eve—she puts an end to Pieter's innocence by tempting him into breaking the Immorality Act thus destroying him. Other descriptions of her are totally consistent with this view. Receiving the magistrate's decision that due to her immoral behaviour (prostitution and illicit liquor making), she must give away her child, "She looked around the court with wary eyes, as an animal might look around when it is hunted" (TLP, 53). The kind of sexual relation she symbolises is referred to as the "mad sickness" throughout the novel:

"And the mad sickness came over me, that God knows I do not want, that God I fear and hate" (TLP, 91)

It is within this sphere of mad sickness that Stephanie takes her fullest meaning in the novel. In a major sense, Paton finds Pieter's loss of faith and reason just as lamentable as the ensuing consequences of his breach of the Immorality Act. Pieter has succumbed to the evil attraction of Stephanie in the worst possible way. In the midst of his desperate struggle against the mad sickness, he is shown as hoping for any kind of miracle, regardless of how disastrous it might be, in order to wipe out the memory of his 'sin':

"And the thought came to him that even now the watcher might be dying, that even now he might be dead. On that very day the great planes from Russia might darken the sky like locusts and rain down death upon the earth...or that the rain and the great black storms might return even the world was turning to winter, and pour down on the earth day after day... Thus in his misery he would have filled the earth with death, if only he could be saved." (TLP, 124-125)

The point here is that in order to achieve a certain reconciliation between moderate Afrikanerdom and English-speaking liberalism, under the umbrella of the

latter's values, Paton was unconsciously forced to entrench the notion of the cultural "Other" in almost Milnerite fashion. In order to achieve unity between Afrikaner and English, Sir Alfred Milner wrote, "You have only to sacrifice the 'nigger' absolutely and the game is easy..."⁴ Once again, this shows the heavy impact of 1948 on the narrative. Not only did *Too Late The Phalarope* move towards a more vigorous symbolism in which, however, it was overwhelmed. It also registered an increasing concern with the Afrikaner and a stronger anguish to bridge the gap with him. The consequence of this state of affairs is a regression in Paton's stance on the cultural "Other". Whatever criticisms might be levelled at his first novel, the fact remains that he projects himself in Stephen Kumalo. The latter might be meek, servile and expediently compatible with the picture Paton had of a post-1948 society but he remains an intimation of good, so to speak. Stephanie on the other hand, innocent as she may appear, is associated with things that put an end to innocence.

Stephanie is strongly reminiscent of both Gertrude and Absalom. Like Gertrude, she is an immoral character. Like Absalom who murders a white man sympathetic to the blacks' cause, she has criminal tendencies which culminate in the destruction of a highly sensitive character. But where she definitively strays away from the earlier patterns of Cry, The Beloved Country is where the author does not go to the same lengths in providing an explanation for her criminal tendencies within the social context as he does for both Gertrude and Kumalo. Stephanie remains much of an unredeemed character because both socially and ontologically, she represents a strange entity with features the author fails to grapple with.

⁴ The quotation is from a passage in Le May's British Supremacy In South Africa (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1965, 11) which in turn claims it is from Cecil Headlam's 1963 edition of The Milner Papers. This edition, however, seems to have omitted the larger part of the passage quoted by Le May !

4.4 Recapitulation:

Finally, it seems that Paton's alienation is the result of a faulty perspective. His fictional world evolves too closely around his political vision as an English-speaking liberal. In all major instances, he remains inwardly oriented, more interested in the liberal tradition which envelops his writing and which he would like to see shape life within his society. In other words, he fails to achieve the transition from the view-point of party politics and Anglicanism into a wider view which would investigate the cultural implications of his own perspective but which finds itself sacrificed instead. Such a failure, I argued, is responsible in great measure for what seems at times as faithful emulation of the colonial perception of the cultural "Other" such as represented in the romance genre whether the "Other" is black or Afrikaner. Stephen Kumalo in Cry, The Beloved Country and Pieter van Vlaanderen in Too Late The Phalarope are subjected to the same degree of condescension but to two different types of English-speaking Liberal perception. In the case of Kumalo, condescension derives from the kind of pity befitting a defenceless subject who, politically, it is assumed, will be carried in whichever direction the wind blows. In fact, even in the case of John Kumalo_ who appears far less malleable to Paton's perception of how a black man should behave and think than his brother_ where the scorn is clearly more fully-fledged, the attitude is: "God forgive them for they know not what they do."

By comparison, Paton's condescension for the Afrikaner as represented by Pieter derives from a sneaking sense of political rivalry. Paton deals with the Afrikaner on the grounds that neither politically nor culturally is he defenceless. Quite on the contrary, he is capable and contentious enough to undermine the English-speaking intelligentsia's dream of a multi-racial society where the Afrikaner would be a participant not a master, a dream that came to a

disappointing crash in 1948. Paton represents Afrikaner power as containing the seeds of its own destruction. And as he retaliates for the political defeat, he flashes the themes of civilisation, Anglicanism and both political and cultural moderation, English-speaking values, as the true values. However, Paton's call the to Afrikaner to come back to his senses from the wilderness of cultural dissension, thus the emphasis on their common denominator, sounds a bit like a voice from the attic.

All in all, Too Late The Phalarope must be given credit for one achievement. Paton's choice of a character like Pieter van Vlaanderen who is a pillar of apartheid to monitor the internal conflicts of Afrikaner society is quite precursory. He thus gave the first signal of a trend that will be pursued much later by other white novelists like Nadine Gordimer and André Brink.

L. Chapter Five

Alienation Between Socio-politics And Meta-culture

Part One

5.1 Social delimitation and the limits of social criticism:

The main objective behind the next few pages is to define the field where my discussion of alienation will be carried further. Emphasis will be laid on cultural difference rather than on social fragmentation. The purpose here is to justify such an emphasis and to help further clarify what alienation stands to represent in the context of this study.

An article by Stephen Clingman, 'Writing In A Fractured Society: The Case Of Nadine Gordimer' (Literature and Society In South Africa, 1984), concentrates on social delimitation in Nadine Gordimer. Clingman argues that there are externally constructed social limits which the writer's imagination cannot pierce or transcend. Thus, Gordimer's fiction faces a double delimitation on account of its social and historical engagement. She writes from a particular social situation of alienation from other social groups in a particular historical moment. But it would be wrong, Clingman goes on, to assume that Nadine Gordimer's position is one of stasis. Even within the narrow space allocated by artificial fragmentation, there is still scope for historical and ideological change. Besides, "the limits implicit in a structure of social fracture actually set up the conditions of their own transgression in fiction" ('Writing In A Fractured Society', 162).

To begin with, a major reservation could be expressed over the perspective social criticism takes on South African literature. The problem with a view such as Stephen Clingman's is that it is of a narrow range and even contains a specific type of fallacy. It tries to confine the element of fragmentation to a strictly socio-political nature and thus omits any relevance of the cultural sphere which, as demonstrated below, is an important arena for alienation. I deliberately avoid using the term civilisation on account of its ideological import which makes it open to controversy. This will in fact be another ground for the discussion of alienation as

the civilisation idea comes under sharp attack in the fiction I am concerned with. Having said this, I should express my awareness that even within the major cultural divisions in South Africa there obviously exist further subdivisions. When we say white culture, we refer to at least two specific segments: English and Afrikaans-speaking. These can be further divided into subclasses. Similarly, black culture would stand to refer to different socio-economic categories such as peasantry and urban working class. The division among blacks has become more and more pertinent since the fifties and forms a major means for sustaining the Apartheid system. However, if one were to draw a decisive demarcation-line it would clearly have to be drawn between black and white. In the context of this study, I give prominence to culture over class.

In a sense, social criticism as represented in Clingman's article does seem to recognise that crucial division. For instance, Clingman would acknowledge that the division affecting Nadine Gordimer the most is that between black and white. Only in theory, however. The following extract is a good case in point:

"It is not just a question of the writer being moulded by his social situation, but it seems there are definite, externally constructed social limits beyond which the writer's imaginative range cannot extend." (W.L.A.F. S., 162)

In other words, social fragmentation taxes the writer's imagination so heavily that he/she would over-strain his imaginative capacities trying to project his/her vision into, say, the black world. Even where projection there is, penetration of the black world and the experience it enfolds is not always successful or perceptive enough. The issue here is one of representation: to what extent can the white writer, English or Afrikaans-speaking, convincingly write of the black situation?

In an interview with Robert Boyers et al, 1984, Nadine Gordimer herself expresses a similar view. Such a view, while it conforms to Clingman's argument

that the writer's Imagination is delimited by socio-political factors, simultaneously dismisses André Brink's proposition that the white writer cannot write of the black world convincingly. She declares:

"There are areas of white life, a kind of ivory tower white life, that are so remote from black experience that I doubt if any black writer could write very convincingly of them. I have had several black characters in my novels and occasionally in a short story and have dared to do it from a black point of view... But I know there are some areas where I wouldn't succeed. Take the Soweto Riots of 1976, the uprising of small blacks... I'd never attempt such omniscience."(Salmagundi, 28)

On the other hand, she also expresses the view that

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

This line of argument is quite acceptable. The fact that Mehring and Jacobus in The Conservationist are locked in a master-slave relationship does not necessarily exclude all possibilities of communication (which is not always verbal). And yet such communication is conditioned by its own environment and status of coloniser and colonised. As we shall see, it seems particularly significant that Mehring's relationship to Jacobus is permeated with crucial referential misunderstandings. Such misunderstandings are intimately linked to the eventual termination of that relationship. For instance, the two characters have different orders of priority from which they proceed. This, in the final analysis, determines the basic divergences in their respective ways of looking at the world. It also determines

how such divergences reflect the nature and extent of their claim to the farm.

There are a number of other points to be registered with regard to Nadine Gordimer's views. First of all, she unequivocally submits that black or white, the author faces a situation of inevitable alienation as a result of the inability of imaginative processes to penetrate certain areas of experience which are significantly seen by her as situations. But there exists a crucial difference between black and white. Such a difference relates to the power position of each one of them. In The Conservationist, for example, Mehring is white. He is also the coloniser and the one to retain power, economic, social and political. His problem is that he holds a legal claim to the land where he has existed for decades, perhaps centuries, as a white man but which he had conquered nonetheless. At the same time, he is so desperate to legitimise that claim. This sums up the impossible problematic of the interplay between a legal claim and legitimacy in which he is so tragically caught. He is the coloniser but also the victim of what Stephen Gray refers to as "man's most sacred duty": the desire to strike root and to belong. My argument is that where the coloniser(Mehring) is concerned, the way in which he perceives and represents the black world acquires greater urgency and importance as it forms part and parcel of his desperate struggle to belong. In a manner of speaking, his modes of perception and representation could make or break that struggle. To win his Africanness, he has to change his attitudes to, and ways of looking at, Africa. This is no new theme to Gordimer. Long before she treated it in fiction, she had written about it in essay form as early as 1958 in her article 'Where Do Whites Fit In?' (Twentieth Century), a title revealing in itself.

5.2 Imagination, colour— types of alienation

Where the black author is concerned however, the matter is different and so are his ways of dealing with alienation. He may be alienated from the land economically and politically but on the ontological level, that is hardly his problem: the land is taken for granted. This obviously accounts for the massive presence of the landscape in white fiction and its almost total absence in black fiction. Where the theme of the landscape is pursued to any significant degree by a black author, it could be regarded as an abnormality, a point I treat in my discussion of Ezekiel Mphahlele. The problem the black writer does have to contend with is the issue of self-representation and the challenging of the colonial discourses through which he has been perceived. This idea forms one of the premises of The Conservationist where the landscape is the major protagonist. Nadine Gordimer comments:

"I think that whites are always having to assert their claim to the land because it is based, as Flehring's mistress points out, on a piece of paper, a deed of sale. And what is a deed of sale when people have first of all taken a country by conquest? Tenure is a very interesting concept, morally speaking. When you come to think of it, what is tenure? What is legal tenure? Blacks take the land for granted. It's simply there." (Salmagundi, 6)

Now, to go back to the original subject of this discussion, are not Gordimer's words above a clear indication that what also taxes the white author's imagination is cultural difference as it was bred by colonial discourses? And is that not in turn an indication to the fact that socio-political fragmentation is but an extension of cultural difference, an extension which also serves to entrench that difference? One would have to question the very situation of the colonial fact and how it came to be legitimised. To focus on socio-political fragmentation as the main cause of

alienation is historically incomplete.

It is true that the white author could not attempt the omniscience of a black author like Sipho Sepamla in his novel A Ride On The Whirwind (1981), for example, which deals with the events of the Soweto Riots of 1976. Sepamla's insight into the situation, his ability to explore the tensions and turbulences of Soweto, his ability to dive into the fear and doubt-ridden psychologies of his characters, derives from the fact that he could afford to be where no white author could. He was simply part of the situation. But note that what we are talking about here is a situation. What happens when the issue involves describing a human experience as embodied by a black character for instance?

It is interesting to see how a pattern runs through the fictions of both Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer. In Cry, The Beloved Country, there is such a desperate attempt to create a successful black character, the priest, Stephen Kumalo. And yet such an attempt, as we have seen, failed tragically. Alan Paton did manage to create a black character but also managed to make him seem meek, servile and pathetic. Validation of this point rests on my using colonial discourse as a backdrop for the discussion. In his second novel, Too Late The Phalarope, the attempt is almost completely abandoned. The only significant black character in this novel is Stephanie. She is depicted as a wild creature with virtually animal protection-instincts towards her child. Once the latter has been taken from her by the state as a result of her socially aberrant behaviour, she launches a wave of hate and destruction in which Lieutenant Pieter Van Vlaanderen gets caught after his offence against the Immorality Act of 1927. In Paton's third novel Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful, the whole narrative is so sketchy that representation does not find any significant place—despite the fact that the author uses a wide range of viewpoints, white, black as well as Indian—as the novel is more concerned to express an attitude of compassionate liberalism, which by that time, 1981, had

become anachronistic anyway.

In a sense, and perhaps not so surprisingly, fictional history was repeating itself with Nadine Gordimer. One of Gordimer's major achievements is Steve Sitole in A World Of Strangers. Clearly, there is no scope for putting the seriousness and complexity of this character in doubt. But nonetheless there comes a stage where Nadine Gordimer loses control over him in the sense she no longer knows where to proceed with him. Such an obstacle proves abortive. Steve Sitole has to die in a car crash leaving us shocked, bemused and extremely unfulfilled. After Steve Sitole, Nadine Gordimer seems never to have returned to the same theme of black character creation in quite the same way and certainly not to the same extent. Jacobus of The Conservationist and July of July's People are important characters. But one basic difference between these two more recent characters and Steve Sitole is that he acquires importance as an organic character. He is there to be explored and monitored. Jacobus and July on the other hand are more functional in this regard. They serve to reveal and highlight the tensions and moral contradictions undermining their masters' worlds. This is not necessarily a negative aspect in itself. It could be that Nadine Gordimer has felt tempted to deviate from the Steve Sitole experience as exploration of the white world from what promises to be an African standpoint proves more urgent and could perhaps be more productive than facing an African world head-on. This is mere conjecture. But what is a fact is that the focus on white characters that her writing displays and their eventual destruction points to her intention to break away from the genre as it had been established by the romance; it symbolises the fall of the romantic hero. This is an original and extremely imaginative way of deconstructing one of the major colonial idioms. But it is also a true admission on the novelist's part that the limits that Clingman's article is concerned with are constructed externally as well as internally. The limits are the product of such external political phenomena as censorship¹ as well as internal ones governed by the genre itself.

¹ In this regard, I find Rose Moss's point about censorship extremely useful. She argues that censorship is not only a law imposed phenomenon but also a culturally defined field,

"Even where writers recognise that they are censored and struggle against the constraints of the law that hobbles their imaginations, they can rarely rise out of the whole complex of rules, gestures, nuances and jokes by which their society defines itself, replicates itself, and excludes what is alien." ('Hand in Glove Nadine Gordimer: South African Writer: A case Study in Censorship', Pacific Quarterly (Honolulu), 1981, 106)

5.3. Political hegemony, narrative strategies:

The argument that the white author's gradual abandonment of black character construction-attempts reflects the power of repressive legislation is not entirely true and can be easily countered by another argument. The fact that A World of Strangers for instance was the product of a decade that many critics agree was a sort of golden age for inter-racial mixing, especially in Johannesburg society², and still failed in its Steve Sitole project is an irony that must be noted.

Besides, in very general terms, it is not a mere historical coincidence that power in South Africa is erected on socio-political fragmentation. To recapitulate, social Apartheid has been greatly informed by ideas of a cultural order; race superiority, for instance, has been legitimised as an adjunct of civilisation. Hence what I referred to, for lack of a better word delivering all the nuances of the situation, as orientalism which justified and dictated how the principle of difference should be interpreted and placed into context. The earlier discussion on Haggard and Buchan goes towards demonstrating the close bond existing between ideas(culture) and power.

I strongly reject the idea that Apartheid as a means of socio-economic control is a purely political idea. I equally strongly reject the common assumption that Apartheid was the inventive construction of the Afrikaner political society (as opposed to civil society) or central bureaucracy at a time when Afrikaner Nationalism was riding on a high tide. Such an assumption would have it that Apartheid was the product of the best Afrikaner brains such as Dr. Hendrick Verwoerd... An act which has solicited so much attention in fiction as representing

² N.W. Visser for instance describes the flourishing of inter-racial mixing especially in Johannesburg during the late '50's and early '60's as a renaissance in his article 'South Africa : The Renaissance that Failed'(Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 1976. Lewis Nkosi too refers to the fifties as the 'fabulous decade'.

the best example of how races can be kept separate was not made after the ascension of the Nationalist Party in 1948 but in 1923 and was amended in 1927. I am obviously referring to the Immorality Act. On a different level, Paul B. Rich's study in The Dilemmas of South African Liberalism: White Liberals Racial Ideology And The Politics Of Social Control In The Era Of South African Industrialisation, 1883-1948, 1980, demonstrates how Apartheid was undeniably a concomitant to South African industrialisation. However, as he mentions elsewhere, Apartheid was not erected in a cultural vacuum. It was informed by the experience of the American South, for example. Besides (and this is a point I dealt with in my theoretical chapter) Apartheid ideology appropriated various types of discourse such as ethnopsychiatry and race science for its own purposes. I have further demonstrated how a story like Prester John, which seems trivial, deriving its themes from some common assumptions of popular memory and intended as light, innocent reading, is in fact saturated with social and ideological meaning. Here already, one can find some adumbrations of Apartheid as a topographical landscape: the themes of valley and plain and its serious social implications. This is what I referred to as the interplay between power and knowledge or political and civil societies. All this is to say that Apartheid is a political reality_ a power phenomenon_ as well as a cultural idea. To submit otherwise can lead to some absurd intellectual aberrations like those found in some of the writing of Breyten Breytenbach.

5.4 Breyten Breytenbach_ Political commitment, metaphysical divorce:

We now turn to this famous Afrikaner writer and poet. Being Afrikaner and poet, Breytenbach is extremely sensitive to the issue of the Afrikaans language. He expresses his deep concern about the intricate inter-connection it has developed with Apartheid. In A Season In Paradise, 1985, he quotes Roman Jakobson as saying:

"In language there is no private property. Upon contact with the public, each work of art becomes social".(160)

Language is saturated with social reality, therefore with Apartheid. Hence Breytenbach's coinage of the word Apartaans. For him the prospect of Afrikaans within this intimate inter-connection is glum indeed in the sense that the destruction of Apartheid will entail the destruction of its language. The duality of his stance is telling: I want Apartheid to be destroyed. I do not want Afrikaans to be destroyed. Therefore, I do not really want Apartheid to be destroyed if that is what it costs to save Afrikaans. Now we come to the most relevant part. Despite all the pessimism, Breytenbach does actually see a glimmer of hope. To preserve Afrikaans, one has to preserve the true values of Afrikanerdom, those aspects that have not been corrupted and perverted by Apartheid. Roaming the length and breadth of his Paradise, Breytenbach comes into contact with Afrikaner farmers and, in my perceptions, with some very strange intellectual abstractions as well. He writes:

"Then we walked back in the eerie moonlight. Only among nations where the deceased are never really absent one is afraid of ghosts. At the root of our way of life in this country lie many of the relics of ancient Khoisan people: their words, their remedies, their customs. Though we may

not bury our ancestors near the fireplaces, though our graves may collapse, something of their blood keeps haunting us, and in us"(ASLP, 132)

This is an extremely useful passage. Breytenbach is actually saying that the Afrikaner farmers of the Karoo have been so solidly interwoven into the texture of Africanness: way of life, history, language and especially soil, that belonging to the continent has been assured beyond any doubt. In another passage he notes:

"What else can we do?" Mr. Conradie asks in reply. 'You are born a farmer. And you retain your contact with nature. Today a lamb is born, tomorrow an old ewe dies. It's nature.' And he tells us how his daughter, on her return after being discharged from hospital, had simply sat down on the side of the road and had thrown stones and gravel up over her head for sheer joy"(ASLP, 120)

This is all fine. After all, what else can you feel for a soil upon which you have existed for four hundred years? But note the geographical exclusivity from which both passages emerge: a rural area which is, apart from anything else, remote from the South African political society. It is in an area like this that Breytenbach finds the real Afrikaner values he wants to preserve against the distorting effects of Apartheid. Breytenbach seems to be saying two things here. Firstly, Apartheid must have remained an abstraction to the Afrikaner farmer in the same way government and law have:

"Throughout the years government and law have been abstractions"(ASLP, 130)

Secondly, Apartheid slides down from the top, the further away you are located from it, the less it reaches you... This is distinctly bizarre reasoning.

The idea to be retained from all this is that the two types of fragmentation,

socio-political and cultural—harking back to a colonial legacy in fiction—go hand in hand, although transgression of the former does not necessarily entail transgression of the latter.

To return to Nadine Gordimer, how does she transgress social delimitation in the first instance? This is the real subject of S. Clingman's article. His thesis is that the process of transgression is carried out on two different flanks. On the first one, the novelist is able to make certain ideological adjustments or a "series of shifts", dictated by socio-historical conditions. Thus Nadine Gordimer moves from

"an easy humanism in the *Lying Days*, to a more full-blooded liberalism in *A World of Strangers*, to a particular kind of socialist vision by the time of *A Guest of Honour*, to something approaching revolutionary alignment at the stage of *Burger's Daughter*." (W.I.A.F.S., 171)

Of course, how much ground Nadine Gordimer covers with such ideological shifts remains to be checked.

The reading public constitutes the second flank. Clingman adopts Jean Paul Sartre's distinction between the writer's actual and virtual reading publics—rather too indiscriminately! Thus the latter is identified as

"not the potential reading public but rather a kind of listening public, waiting in implicit, silent judgement on everything the writer wrote. It was a hitherto oppressed world against whose significance, cause and values of all writing now had to be measured. Thus the virtual public can make silent historic demands on the writer, becoming a presence he cannot ignore" (W.I.A.F.S. 170)

Here, Clingman presents his case in analogy with the French situation around 1789,

the time of the French Revolution. Up to that point in history, the writer's work was commissioned by royalty or noble patrons. Parallel to this relationship, there was the other one of the writer to the rising middle-classes with whom he was implicitly communicating. The invalidity of such an analogy stems from the fact that the French situation involved a class conflict. This is one crucial difference with contemporary South Africa. There, the conflict has a double platform; it could be seen as the struggle of the working classes (urban as well as rural) for power, but could also be seen as a Prospero-Caliban type of relationship. What I am saying here is that adopting the notion of the virtual reader, which necessarily allows in a future-perspective on the issue, Clingman's analogy would stand to represent a serious misconception. For whatever happened at the time of the French Revolution has been looked at ever since as part of French history. Whatever has happened in South Africa, will be essentially looked at as part of the history common to both South Africa and colonisation. And whether we choose to look at the South African situation as a class conflict or as a Caliban-Prospero relationship, the colour issue is unavoidable. Clingman, as if suddenly recognising the flaw in his argument, adds in that Nadine Gordimer "stands with both feet firmly planted in the domain of an oppressed black world" (*W.I.A.F.S.*, 170). The question here is: does she really?

We have to distinguish between politics, as practised within, say, a political party or as an embraced cause and the politics of culture. From the purely political point of view, Nadine Gordimer could indeed be said to have chosen to stand with both feet firmly planted in the blacks' world. Their cause is clearly one she embraces herself. That is a political and moral principle. From the point of view of the politics of culture however, the choice is a lot more elaborate as it is not governed strictly by personal decision. The writer has a whole historico-cultural edifice behind him. Breytenbach defines this cultural edifice as:

"People of my tribe, people of my history, people of my language, people who are at the core of my unconscious safety."(A.S.I.P., 204)

To choose to hold this ground in fiction which Clingman describes depends on how far the writer can go in deconstructing that edifice. Does not Nadine Gordimer herself declare that her conscience has the same tint as her face? Fiction in this case becomes a cultural practice of gigantic epistemological ambitions_ may be achievable but certainly laborious_ and not just a medium for ideological propaganda for this or that political forum. To best illustrate this idea I shall refer again to Breytenbach's special case.

As a white writer embracing the blacks' cause I think that Breytenbach has attained great heights. Not only did he work for the ANC but he actually paid a high price for his revolutionary alignments with the blacks. He was sentenced to eleven years in jail under the Terrorism Act³. And yet, Breytenbach's A Season In Paradise contains some of the most preposterous and laughable cultural nonsense about Africa that a white anti-Apartheid writer has ever written. A Season In Paradise celebrates his return to South Africa after years of voluntary exile in France and after he was informed by the South African authorities that being married to a Vietnamese girl who was considered non-white in the eyes of South African legislation, he stood to contravene the laws of the country and therefore could not be allowed entry to it. After fifteen years of exile and struggle against Apartheid, Breytenbach, much like a wise frontier hero having his hallucinations stirred up by visions of the untamed landscape of an untamed continent, could still write:

³ For more detail on the Breytenbach case : motivations, trial and subsequent trial, see Jack Cope's 'Notes' in *Contrast* Vol. 10 No 2 1976. See also Claude Audran's 'Un poète Afrikaner au secret' in *Jeune Afrique* No 767 19 Sept. 1975. Finally, Andre Brink's introduction to *A Season In Paradise* is quite useful in this regard.

"Africa has an extra dimension. There is something about it which takes no account of man and his trivial futilities, something which is totally detached and unassailable. Europe is a submissive and somewhat feeble-minded creature, like a cow with pimples or a cat with decayed teeth. But Africa is eternal. In Africa man is a wanderer, an occupier, a transitory phenomenon. The European has polluted his soil according to his needs: the African was forced to adapt himself to Africa. Not to take place but to be tolerated... or to be able to be part of... Man has always been in Africa. The African has no need to know because he has never laboured under the misapprehension that he does not know. To know, to discover, to conquer and to tame and rule... these are European illnesses. How can one speak, then, in the African context of 'progress'?... In Africa metamorphosis is the order of the day." (*A.S.I.P.*, 42-3)

Everything is remarkable about this passage. The imagery, the logic, the romanticism and especially the sense of ahistoricism are great instances of absurdity. If Europe is a submissive and feeble-minded creature, I do not know what is not! If the African has never needed to know, to discover, to conquer and to tame and rule, then I wonder with what heavenly power he has survived to the 20th century A.D.? And if one cannot speak of progress in the African context, what can one speak of, an anguish to be colonised and civilised such as have some of Octave Mannoni's Africans?

The point here is that we have the same relation between geography and its concomitants that we saw in the romance genre. Functioning on a completely different level politically, Breytenbach still faces Africa as an epistemological problematic. How do I deal with Africa? On what wavelength should I receive it? What is all the more interesting is that the political alignment is out of tune with the epistemological response to Africa. In the final analysis, Breytenbach's response and Haggard's are not that different in essence. Their experience of Africa as a landscape is still overwhelmingly gripping to such an extent it becomes a

subject of fantasy. This is not a continent that knows and develops. It is a continent that feels and drifts. Africa is a continent that dwarfs human achievement, "In Europe the land with everything on it grows smaller as you fly upward; in Africa the airplane is a fly" (ASLP, 43). And what applies to the landscape applies to its inhabitants. The African is not the product of history, he is essentially what he is. He does not think to exist. He exists because he is. His essential nature is to relate to the world intuitively. In short, the sheer emphasis on the landscape and its overwhelming dimensions, tells us a great deal about Breytenbach's alienated position from it. One gets the impression he is consummately fighting to internalise an experience that remains arrogantly and threateningly external, alien. Alienation in this case is only indirectly compounded by the factor of socio-political fragmentation. It functions within the larger perimeter of cultural difference. I do not think it is an aberration to advance the argument that the principle of separation per se is governed as much by the will to power as by reaction to a menacingly alien landscape and its inhabitants.

Finally, the passage may be taken as a gigantic intellectual joke, but it is a revealing one. To see the question of alienation as a purely socio-political outcome, in total oblivion of the epistemological question implicit in the notion of cultural difference, could lead to some ahistorical and hallucinatory treatments of the theme of Africa. What follows now is a discussion of alienation in a few works of fiction by Gordimer and Brink. Alienation will be dealt with on two different levels. Firstly, how each of the authors sees it. Secondly, it will be measured according to how far each one of them has actually steered away from those patterns established by the romance genre for perceiving the "Other".

E. Chapter Five

Alienation Between Socio-politics And Meta-culture

Part Two

5.5. Towards a new common identity

5.5.1. Background to deconstruction_ Some notes on Knowledge, Power, Reason and Civilisation:

In Prester John, David Crawford's imperial efforts are geared towards the crushing of the 'Black Peril', the uprising led by John Laputa. This taming of the (cultural) "Other" on the African terrain, I indicated, represents the ascension to fulfilment status of the civilisation idea and implies the attainment of 'the absolute truth' which is tinged with the pride of personal wisdom. Thus David Crawford is able to reflect:

"Yet it was an experience for which I shall ever be grateful, for it turned me from a rash boy into a serious man. I knew then the meaning of the white man's duty. He has to take all risks, recking nothing of his life or his fortunes, and well content to find reward in fulfilment of his task. That is the difference between white and black. The gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a king; and so long as we know this and practise it, we will rule not only in Africa but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and for their own bellies."(Prester John, 198)

In the following chapter, I propose to make a case about alienation. In two of Nadine Gordimer's novels, The Conservationist and July's People, and two of Andre Brink's, An Instant In The Wind and Rumours of Rain. Again, the case consists in investigating aspects of representation of the cultural "Other" and in measuring how far the two authors concerned can go towards an interpretation of the colonial legacy and its discourse such as figure in the passage above. Of course, in this context interpretation also means thematic and ideological deconstruction.

There are a few things to be said about Buchan's passage above. First of all, Buchan lays down the requisites of dominion. Note the use of the Baconian themes of knowledge and power. Knowledge has a specific context. Crawford is apparently not interested in having knowledge of the peoples over whom he seeks to extend imperial dominion. Not in their own right anyway. Priority is more invested in knowing how to grasp the principle of difference and use it to the advantage of Empire. For him, "black" stops being physically threatening the moment we know how to manipulate the principle of his difference. Accordingly, "black" becomes annexed to the Self, an essential element in its reconstitution. The concept of blackness and whatever goes with it, becomes a constant reminder of the real worth of whiteness and what goes with it also, namely duty, gift and responsibility. Experience and maturity can only be acquired by setting the Self off against the "Other". Only then can the meaning of the white man's duty be fully grasped. Such a duty was not set by Crawford himself. It had been prescribed (it remains unclear by whom but God would not be a bad guess) and was there, hanging, waiting to be perceived and assumed. And if he is willing to risk nothing of his life or fortunes, it is not because he is foolhardy or lucratively-minded, despite the fact that the whole story evolves about his painful endeavours to recover John Laputa's diamonds. His main concern is to find fulfilment of the Self, to make the discovery that he is a king legitimately predestined to rule those who lack the divine knowledge of a grand purpose in life and whose vision cannot extend beyond their own bellies.

Secondly, the Baconian themes of knowledge and power are accompanied by two more themes: empiricism and reason. Whatever conclusions Crawford attains concerning the "Other" are the direct fruition of his own actual or physical contact with him. Crawford can therefore afford to take himself for granted, and hence his judgement for authoritative and definitive since the truth is not an invention but a fact to be attained and verified. The 'absolute truth' he departs from is the

inferiority of the "Other":

"The Bible says that the children of Ham were to be our servants."(P.J., 11)

In the novel, however, David Crawford does not accept this truth on trust. He has to put it to the test. But any doubt he may initially have cast it into is eventually over-ridden as he achieves certitude: the "Other" is different, therefore inferior. Empiricism rationalises hypotheses or half-accepted truths by transforming them in such a way they become facts of knowledge. Reason here is a parameter and an ultimate justification: those who live by reason are contrasted to those who only live for their own bellies. Because reason is the worthiest of all human activities, it must then annex and rule.

But there is a contradiction here. We are talking of reason in a field I have previously described as highly irrational. What one has to bear in mind is that romance, being a form of cultural hallucination, enjoys, much like oneiric activity or madness¹, a great deal of internal consistency. Centred on itself, and using the "Other" as a thoroughfare to the Self, romance heeds only its own logic. Any external elements it attracts to its own game, so to speak, are pigmented not according to their own logic but according to that of the genre itself. Captain Arcoll tells David:

"Only a madman could have done it... Indeed, Davie, I think that for about four days you were as mad as they make. It was a fortunate thing, for your madness saved the country."(P.J., 199)

Finally, David Crawford's sense of purpose derives from his understanding of

¹ See Michel Foucault's Madness and Civilisation A History of Insanity In The Age of Reason Trans. Richard Howard (London, Tavistock Publications, 1967)

the white man's duty and from putting his life and fortunes at the service of Empire. Also, there is a sense of pride that can be read between the lines in being able to invest one's knowledge in that service. And as there is pride there is also reward. To know is to rule. Civil and political societies, to use Gramsci's terminology, co-operate in perfect harmony and mutual recognition. This is why David Crawford is anxiety-free. I shall argue that the tension that consumes Gordimer's and Brink's characters is a reflection of the divorce between these two societies. Their questioning of the tenets of white supremacy not only leads them to subvert certain cultural idioms like knowledge and reason, power and civilisation but also to present highly alienated characters whose perception of Africa is undermined by chaos and death.

5.2. Nadine Gordimer and André Brink: Towards a new critical categorisation:

On a different level, I have to express my awareness of the fact that putting Nadine Gordimer and André Brink together against the background of John Buchan's colonial discourse poses a special difficulty, technical as well as ideological. For it could well be argued that Nadine Gordimer fits in more legitimately with Alan Paton. They are both double inheritors of a socio-political legacy that is at the same time colonial and imperial and of an English tradition in writing (which had given colonial discourse its shape). By contrast, André Brink, while free of the burden of Empire, nonetheless bears the colonial imprint but within a different linguistic environment, that of Afrikaans. It might therefore seem either inappropriate or extremely contrived to want to assess his fiction against the background of Buchan's imperial (jingoist) tradition, especially since afrikanerdom has a claim of approximately three hundred and fifty years to the African continent. How then can this categorizing of Brink with Gordimer be justified?

It seems that Gordimer/Brink makes more sense than Gordimer/Paton. It is almost an irony that it has taken a Brink to produce the historical novel and not a Gordimer. The events of An Instant In the Wind are set in 1749. Even Rumours of Rain, story of the modern, jet-age mining magnate, stretches back over a time-span of two hundred and fifty years in its attempt to put the Mynhards' history into perspective. For Brink such an undertaking is

"essentially an experience of existentialist agony; of being forced to re-examine everything previously taken for granted, including one's own identity, one's history."
(Mapmakers, 1983, 105)

This essentially and existentially-minded attempt to see through the dark of

white settlerdom's past is matched by Gordimer's concern with the dark of its future. The means differ but the outcome is the same: a bleak and even apocalyptic vision of the white man's existence on the African 'farm' characteristic of both novelists' writing. In fact, the notion of apocalypse provides new ground for tackling the issue at hand. Whether in Cry, The Beloved Country or in Too Late The Phalarope, Paton almost painstakingly avoids the notion of apocalypse and imports that the future can still be secured if one only cared to compromise. Reconciliation is his ultimate goal. This, I argued, is attributable in great measure to his Liberalism which either sought to emulate British ideas imported through the Cape's mercantile exchange with metropolitan Britain or simply operated outside history altogether. In both cases the fate to be met is anachronism.

But the problem with this view is that it seems to put precocious and highly taxing demands on Paton's fiction. It could well be argued that such fiction was not only relevantly challenging in its own time but also precursory. It has to be acknowledged that Paton's was the first significant white fiction to recognise the fact of race and to deal with it as a 'fact of life'. It could also further be argued that, after all, the notion of apocalypse was only historically instigated as events such as the Sharpeville Massacre, the collapse of white rule in both Angola and Mozambique and the Soweto Riots seemed impending, long after the publication of either Cry, The Beloved Country or Too Late The Phalarope.

The point here is that the passage from political to civil society was never seriously, let alone effectively, disrupted in Paton as his writing remained largely and in essence faithful to the colonial experience and its discourse, Buchanan-fashion. I would allow room for the proposition that apocalypse was not just simply a form of response to historical violence, as represented in the events mentioned above, but also the consequence of effecting, if not a draconian then at least, decisive rift with white settler ideology, assumptions and aspirations. Both

Gordimer and Brink seem to reject such aspirations out of hand, thus establishing the notion of demise as an all-embracing prospect for Apartheid and its civilisation. I am already making the statement that both novelists display an urge to assume a new common identity beyond the division of Afrikaner and English-speaking, best illustrated in Brink's use of the English language as a writing medium. Both his novels were originally composed in Afrikaans but later translated into English by the author himself.

But this still does not tell us everything. Brink's switching from one linguistic environment to another could be governed by factors outside the common identity area. Access to a wider audience and therefore to more lucrative markets in Britain and the United States is one such factor. More significant still, the translation provides a means of dodging the processes of censorship and repressive legislation, especially since a ban had already been imposed on his earlier novel, Looking On Darkness. These are all undeniably legitimate motivations. But the fact remains that Brink had switched over to the language of those whom Afrikanerdom had traditionally looked at as the 'oppressors' and who, for the past century or so, had lived within disturbing proximity, physically, politically and culturally². It is useful to mention that Brink did not conceive of himself as translating those novels, in the usual sense of translation, as much as re-thinking and re-feeling them within an entirely different linguistic environment:

"not translating the work, but re-thinking it in the framework of a new language; even more important perhaps re-feeling it." (Mapmakers, 113)

The collocation of Gordimer and Brink then rests on three grounds: metaphysical, ideological, and linguistic

² For further discussion of the history of the English language among Afrikaner poets, novelists and playwrights, refer to André Brink's 'English and The Afrikaans writers' in Mapmakers: Writing In A State Of Siege (London, Faber & Faber, 1983)

F. Chapter Six

The Prospects And Limits Of Deconstruction In Nadine Gordimer And André Brink

Part One

6.1 Two types of discourse_ Two ways of dealing with political society:

6.1.1. Rider Haggard/John Buchan:

In linking Paton, Gordimer and Brink, we are separating the three from Rider Haggard and John Buchan. For a start, let us note two aspects of difference between Rider Haggard and John Buchan on the one hand, and Paton, Gordimer and Brink on the other. The first aspect is a rudimentary one and has to do with the way each set of writers' relation to South Africa is perceived. Obviously, for Haggard and Buchan, South Africa could not have been more than the land of transit which hosting their temporary sojourn as visitors. Paton, Gordimer and Brink's relation to South Africa is perceived on a more permanent basis.

But perhaps a writer of the type Haggard and Buchan represent cannot really afford to be a mere visitor. Nor can the idea of "mere visitor" afford to be an innocent one. It carries within it some fundamental implications which draw on the circumstantial principle(s), explicit as well as implicit, governing their visit. In a specific context, their sojourn could not help being informed by the fact of Empire. It took them to South Africa within the framework of British territorial expansion. Their writing, as I have shown, subscribes to the interplay between the power political and the hegemonic culture of Empire whose ambitions and concerns they intimately, though sometimes unconsciously, reflected. The implication in this is that their colonial discourse followed the Empire's physical orientation. The territorial expansion gave them ground, even in their capacities as mere temporary sojourners, for extending their cultural practice to Africa and for sending new shipments of ideas, images and representations of the continent. The whole point of this study is to show what that cultural practice did and is still doing to the

contemporary novel in South Africa. But what interests me here in the first instance is that intimate relationship between civil and political society, what the two writers contributed to it and how it in turn affected them, a point I would like simply to reiterate as I have already discussed it.

This is where the second aspect of difference comes in. A quick glance at King Solomon's Mines or Prester John would reveal the ambivalence with which the imaginative in colonial discourse handled Africa. First of all, the feeling of confidence and pride (as opposed to the pessimism and unhappy conscience of the contemporary novel) with which Davie Crawford handles his sojourn in Africa is as self-centred as it is selfless. Using a somewhat peculiar formula, one could say that he aspires to selflessness by being extremely self-centred.

I have shown how in his speech to the Commons, Balfour presented a double-telescopic view of Egypt: at the same time elevated to the level of an extraordinary civilisation, and shown as logically submitting to British dominion (C.f. my chapter on Haggard). Hence she is so simultaneously grand and inferior. But her inferiority is strictly a measure of British supremacy. The implication here is very simple: since Britain has managed to lay dominion over Egypt, Britain has got to be even a greater civilisation. Buchan follows the same pattern. He highlights what he sees as the negative aspects of Africa in such a way that John Laputa emerges as a rascal dealing in black magic, which epitomizes the savage dimensions of the dark continent. At the same time, Laputa is elevated to the status of a great leader. In simpler terms, victory over him is no mean achievement... Crawford emerges as a braver and more magnanimous warrior since he spares nothing of his life or fortune in order to defeat Laputa. Victory is consequently a glamorous and selfless sacrifice laid on the threshold of Empire.

The argument in all this is that the emergence of a new balance of power with South Africa's independence and the subsequent ascension of Afrikaner nationalism to political power pulverised the intimate bond of civil and political societies and

gave rise to a state of increasing cultural orphanhood in which the white South African writer has been increasingly dumped. I submitted that the political outcome of 1948 resulted in what Paul Rich identifies as a state of cultural pessimism which pervaded the English-speaking intelligentsia and was later to catch up with Afrikaner writers as well. Such pessimism was the first adumbration of the large-scale divorce between civil and political societies in South Africa. The impact of this situation is that a vision of death or apocalypse has found its way into contemporary white writing, articulated through a heavy attack on the tenets of colonial discourse: civilisation, reason, knowledge and power. The result has been highly alienated characters obsessed with the prospect of demise and extinction.

F. Chapter Six

The Prospects And Limits Of Deconstruction In Nadine Gordimer And André Brink

Part Two

6.1.2. Nadine Gordimer's The Conservationist – Tragic hunter, re-drawn frontiers:

6.1.2.1 The double narrative_ An expression of metaphysical polarity:

Nadine Gordimer's The Conservationist could be described as an unconventional novel on account of the highly unusual set of heroes it makes use of. The author seems to have strayed away from the township-man or intellectual type of hero as in A World of Strangers (Steve Sitole and Toby Hood) for instance to explore a new sphere of the South African experience : the mining magnate. But this is not exactly where the element of unconventionalism resides. It rather does in her choice of the landscape and a (black) corpse to act out as underlying or surrogate major protagonists. It is within this area of interaction between the landscape and the corpse that the chords of Mehring's internal tensions are sounded. The landscape becomes the subject of fierce contention between the "living", Mehring who holds a deed of sale on the farm, and the "dead", the corpse who, in many ways, represents the natural claim to ownership.

One can discern two levels of consciousness at odds with each other in The Conservationist, the text and the sub-text. (a)The Text: this is a composition of what Mehring does or thinks; a complex set of relationships to, and representations of, the farm he owns. It is mainly a network of exchanges between either Mehring and his mistress Antonia or himself and his son Terry. Such exchanges are laid out in the form of scattered, sometimes incohesive soliloquies, hard to follow or relate to the precise moment where they occur in the text. They are reported by Mehring himself as if in retrospect. Besides exposing Mehring's acute internal crises, an immediate effect of such a technique is to highlight the

isolation to which this character has been reduced Stephen Clingman suggests the novel should have been entitled "The Conversationalist" (*Writing In A Fractured Society: Literature and Society In South Africa*, 1984) The significance of this seemingly aberrant self-conversing will be treated later.

(b) The Sub-text, running parallel to the text is a black world that functions as a counterpart or surrogate to Mehring's fantastic (as in fantasy) mode of existence. Here again, a whole set of relationships are knit together. Firstly, the community life of the farm black labourers, centered around Mehring's chief herdsman, Jacobus. Secondly, their relationship to the farm in its explosive peripheralness to the city of Johannesburg and its proximity to a neighbouring township. Most important of all is their relationship to the black corpse buried on the farm and who remains an intruder in Mehring's eyes. This set of relationships is buttressed by quotations from the Religious System of The Amazulu introduced at the start of certain sections of the book. The forces implicit in them are those of nature, fertility, tradition and continuity encompassed in the notion of the ancestor.

It has previously been argued that the white author's imaginative processes can well prove unable to penetrate (epistemologically and not in terms of individual situations) certain areas of black experience. Nadine Gordimer's special technique of the double narrative could be perceived as symptomatic of a sense of failure to organically weave two modes of metaphysics into the one text. To my mind, this is no aberrant reservation. To construct two narrative entities that are structurally divorced does seem to reflect the author's awkwardness at finding an appropriate meeting ground on which they can be joined together, and consequently lays bare her not so thorough knowledge of the black world she sets out to represent.

This kind of argument may seem contradictory to Gordimer's belief that she does not have to contend with this type of alienation which is only imposed in the first place. It can still legitimately be asked: what if a meeting ground does not

actually exist? Do not the two narrative entities represent two diverging ways of relating to the farm, one should say of looking at the world? Let us say at this stage that the two narratives' divorce is in the final analysis over-ridden by their complementarity on the level of general meaning. We are presented with a colonial duo where one partner can only be explored through the other. Nadine Gordimer's handling of the Religious System of the Amazulu in this regard is so effective it allows her to ward off any ethnographic pitfalls, which alternatively enables her to tow it more towards the area of the symbolic. Mehring and the spirit of the Amantongo, two fundamentally different antagonists, do overlap in the colonial situation into which they are locked. This is a specially significant meeting ground in itself, a clear indication that the structural divorce is an intentional statement of fact and no mere accidental failure. I also submit that the technique of the double-narrative serves the important purpose of laying the stress on Mehring's intractable alienation from the very setting where he has come to nurture and cherish what is depicted as an artificial, illegitimate feeling of belonging to a continent where his experience remains largely and threateningly colonial.

Nadine Gordimer's intent could well be to highlight Mehring's never-crossing level of experience with that of his human and geographic African environment. In addition to the reflection of the all-consuming tension generated by the coming together of two modes of metaphysical being, historically locked into a subversive juxtaposition where strife and divorce are the order of the day, the double-narrative technique helps bring to the foreground two types of reality perception which remain hopelessly parallel: the reality of the dead body buried beneath the surface of the earth, just as the sub-text functions beneath the surface of the text, and what I described above as Mehring's fantastic mode of existence. The question of Metaphysics is compounded by a crisis in reality perception...

6.1.2.2. Metaphysical difference:

Arriving at the farm on one of his week-end visits, Mehning is infuriated at the sight of a group of black children toying with a clutch of guinea-fowl eggs. As he sets out to find Jacobus and tell him off for neglecting his farm duties, the latter also seems anxious to meet his master. It appears that he has something urgent on his mind. When they eventually come face to face, the initial impression is one of talking at cross-purposes:

"But it is he who is looking for Jacobus, there is a mistake somewhere_ how could the man already know that he is wanted?" (The Conservationist, 13)

This area of 'interchange and error' as Michael Wade calls it, begins to unfold as each of the two protagonists further expresses his mind. Taking his right of priority for granted as "of course the right of way is the farmer's" (The Cons., 11) and allowing no room for the possibility that Jacobus might be on a more urgent business, Mehning takes the initiative and proceeds:

"_ Look, Jacobus, I've just been at the third pasture, there:" (The Cons., 12)

But motivated by a greater sense of urgency, Jacobus cuts in:

"_ I 'm try to phone last night, master:" (The Cons., 12)

Obviously, while Mehning is deeply concerned about the eggs, Jacobus has news to deliver of the dead body that had been discovered at the third pasture.

Michael Wade perceptively argues that the confusion of this initial encounter points to the position the farm occupies in each of the two protagonist's order of

priorities. He notes that:

"The extreme by which the area of interchange and error is bound is represented by the farmer's concern with the guinea fowl eggs. The other is the matter of life and death which concerns Jacobus. Of course, this constitutes a precise expression of what the farm means to each of the protagonists."(Nadine Gordimer, 1978, 193)

In a major sense this is true. However, it would be wrong to dismiss Mehring's concern with the guinea fowl eggs as trivial or secondary. On the contrary, the eggs reveal an essential feature of his character, the validity of which is pertinent to the case I am making about alienation. His concern finds its justification in his belief that "a farm is not beautiful unless it is productive."(The Cons., 23). This kind of pragmatist attitude, bred in industry, will be discussed later on.

The significance of the eggs finds its broadest amplitude in the symbolic value attached to them. I would argue that for Mehring too there is a question of life and death at stake. Let us remember that the novel's title for instance is not the industrialist but the conservationist, a farm performance. For although the farm is peripheral to both Johannesburg and Mehring's mainstream activity, it is central to his life, and hence to an understanding of the problems at hand. This is to say that it acts as the physical setting for his obsession with continuity epitomised in the process of conservation. Conservation of the species and his own self-preservation become synonymous:

"A whole clutch of guinea fowl eggs. Eleven. Soon there will be nothing left. In the country. The continent. The ocean. The sky."(The Cons., 11)

Such an obsession with continuity represents white settlerdom's instincts to exercise a certain principle of intrusion and identification with the landscape in

the face of the pending nightmare of apocalypse and death immanent in that very landscape. Floods and fire, for example, seem to take turns on the farm. Conservation here has virtually sublime dimensions as the farmer sees his own continuation and that of the species as identical and as having interchangeable symbolic values. The obsession with nothingness or extinction thus explains his dismissal of the black corpse on the farm as an intruder, a "sight that has no claim on him."(The Cons.,13) Proceeding from here, the eggs represent a surrogate self into which he can project his own being and epitomize the closed world of safety and containment to which he aspires; a deep desire to arrest the passage of history and to see it frozen and complete. This view provides him with ample scope for dodging the real nature of his attachment to the landscape(the farm) and what it is doing to him:

"Ten o'clock as warm as midday will be, and midday will be hotter than three in the afternoon; days as complete and perfectly contained as an egg"(The Cons., 13)

Such manifestations of ahistoricity and wishful-thinking give rise to a peculiar paradox. Mehring remains unaware that the notion of conservation as such is highly problematic. While he lays claim to the African continent through possession of the farm, thus identifying with guinea fowl eggs, he simultaneously disclaims himself by resorting to what Gordimer depicts as a Eurocentric life proposition, conservation. What does conservation mean in this context? If The Conservationist celebrates the blacks' natural closeness to the landscape, the organic bond between man and nature symbolised by, among other things, the dead body lying beneath the surface, conservation can only mean a deliberate interference with the natural processes of the continent; nature becomes man-handled or so does Mehring wish to see it. Continuity is achieved but only at the expense of that organic bond, which gives it an artificial and fake character.

In Mehring's conception, I have already pointed out, conservation also acts as a counterpart to death, a kind of preventive. Thus life and death become the two antiposed flanks of the battleground for survival and self-preservation, the beginning and the disastrous end. Within this harrowing enclosure, the time dimension that matters to him the most is obviously the 'future'; the eggs will become birds that will lay more eggs...etc; The past however is out of range, in part at least because Mehring is a pragmatist. The past brings back into perspective the entire colonial paraphernalia he stands for and perpetuates.

The sub-text offers an entirely different metaphysical approach to life. The dominant figure in *The Religious System of The Amazulu*, for instance, is the Amantongo, "they who are beneath. Some natives say, so called, because they have been buried beneath the earth." (*The Cons.*, 163) The Amantongo occupy the central position in the life of the blacks and thus constitute a major source of vitality. The more dynamic relationship the blacks enjoy with nature is articulated through the motif of the ancestor who is buried beneath the earth. In this context, the interplay between the past/the ancestor who informs the lives of his children and the future renders death into a return to the source and therefore a new beginning and throws into doubt Mehring's notion of linear time which becomes symptomatic of his illegitimacy and alienation. The opposition of the two metaphysical approaches finds its clearest expression in the following quote from *The Religious System of The Amazulu*.

"Thus it is with black men; they did not come into being when it was said, 'there are no Amantongo'. They came into being when it was said 'There are Amantongo'. But we do not know why the man who came first into being said 'There are Amantongo' ... since the white men came and the missionaries we have heard it said that there is God" (*The Cons.* 193)

A fatal contradiction in Mehring's life is that he is materially rich and powerful

but devastatingly poor in terms of human relationships. Apparently, his feeling of isolation is translated into an irrational and self-deluding conception of complete freedom and independence. His fractured and hyper-emphasised statement "I-ly-possessions-are-enough-for-me" (*The Cons*, 110) reflects the firm but consolatory nature of his desperate attempt at self-preservation. Such isolation functions in space as well as in time. As opposed to the blacks whose life is regulated by the spirit of the Amantongo, the natural extension into time in both directions, Mehring emerges strictly as the product of the present, cut off from either the past or the future. What we know about his past is limited to his origin from the South West. Similarly, there are clear indications that he aspires neither to Afrikanerdom nor to Englishness. While he resents the Afrikaner farmers' use of English in addressing him as if "that demarcates the limits of his acceptance, out here, outside the city where he comes and goes" (*The Cons*, 49), he at the same time displays a certain measure of condescension towards Afrikanerdom, "I can sit on the stoep and pick their Boer brains" (*The Cons*, 23). Obviously, being from the South West he might be of German origin. But this still does not alter the fact that he is alienated from both Afrikanerdom and Englishness. What matters in this context is that the circle of complacent certitude and arrogant power within which he operates sustains itself by wearing a mask of ambiguity and by emulating a state of doubt, thus protecting itself against the light of discernment or scrutiny. We shall see that Antonia threatens to infiltrate this circle.

At any rate, the scope of his human relationships is very narrow. His wife had deserted him and is currently living in the United States. His mistress Antonia, although he likes to think that she is sexually 'annexed' to him, compounds his internal crises by persistently challenging his claim to the farm and by engaging in subversive political activity, which finally compels her to opt out of South Africa. Last but not least, is his son Terry who is stifled by the general political setting

and is looking to evade military service by joining his mother in New York. But what is of special significance is that Terry stands to exemplify the glum prospect of Mehring's continuity. In this regard, Antonia's taunting reminders that Mehring's relation to the farm is strictly a deed of sale and nothing else "[y]ou don't own a country by signing a bit of paper the way you bought yourself the little deed to that farm"(The Cons., 101) finds amplitude in Terry's homosexual tendencies:

"I'll bet you'll end up wanting to be buried there...O Mehring...her laugh...You are a hundred years too late for that end. That four hundred acres isn't going to be handed down to your kids, and your children's children."(The Cons., 177)

If anything, Terry's homosexuality symbolically spells out the end of Mehring's name. There might not be any children's children. This characteristic of Terry's links up with his father's colonial masculinity and ultimate castration as they will be discussed below.

Against this backdrop, and significantly enough, the religious System of The Amazulu calls for prayer "for corn that many people may come to this village of yours and make a noise, and glorify you."(The Cons., 39) Immediately succeeding the section on Terry, the quotation continues:

"...I also ask for children that this may have a large population, and that your name may never come to an end."(The Cons., 59)

Such a dense interplay between the text and the subtext brings into sharp focus the contrast between the feminine, fertile basis of the Religious System of The Amazulu and the masculinity, stillness and sterility of Mehring's fantasy world represented by such symbols as the sword of dazzle on his car bonnet and the marble "semi-precious stone in the shape of an egg"(The Cons., 153), designating the egg that will never hatch and which Terry has bought as a present for his mother. The contrast also throws into serious doubt Mehring's entire enterprise of

inheritance and continuity.

6.1.23. The text... a displaced perception of reality:

Let me make a useful digression On the perception of reality in Gordimer's A World of Strangers, the Nigerian critic kolawole Ogunbesan expresses the view that:

"Because of its rigid separation, life in each group is a relentless unreality: for it is practically impossible for one racial group to believe in the existence of the other." ("Reality in Nadine Gordimer's A World of Strangers, English Studies, 1980, 143)

One needs to recall that one of the major issues of this study as a whole is to establish that the seeming unreality pervading racial intergroup relationships does not rest solely on the ground of socio-political fragmentation. I have been hammering this point out of belief that the principle of cultural difference within the sphere of the power political also plays a major role in accounting for a great deal of the tension I continuously refer to and therefore for the element of *unreality*. The next chapter on Ezekiel Mphahlele, will demonstrate, among other things, that once outside South Africa, Timi suddenly realizes that what he has tried to flee is not just political oppression but also and at the same time, the Western practice of power as opposed to the African humanism of pre-urban South Africa. Accordingly, his disappointment with African independence is on the ground of its narrow scope as well as the result of the failure to secure the emergence of an African Personality proper. Africa, he realises, is still white. Comparatively, my two chapters on North African francophone literature will illustrate the same idea. Even in societies that are neither as racially fragmented nor as politically closed as South Africa's, that quality of unreality Ogunbesan refers to is still as valid and as functional. It is an undeniable concomitant to the North African's migration

to a) the *European* city on his native soil b) to what I refer to as the *city par excellence* or France.

The point to be retained from this digression is that there is a fundamental difference between A World of Strangers and the Conservationist at the level of reality perception. The latter displays a positively progressive development towards a more encompassing perspective on reality. The disjointed reality perception is represented as a manifestation of conflict on the metaphysical level. It is true that in A World Of Strangers, Toby Hood's urge to experience Township-reality on location is strangled at birth on three different flanks: he is a foreigner, a white man, and a tourist. On the first and third flanks, he succumbs to that powerful ingredient on which cultural difference insatiably feeds, exoticism. This places him in a most peculiar position. Where he clearly admits that the harsher the life of the township, the more unreal the High House, he simultaneously romanticises poverty and squalor. Applying a measure of quixotism, he comes to underplay the effect of human suffering in favour of what he sees as a more energetic, vibrant and humanly genuine environment as contrasted to the more orderly and monotonous style of life either at the High House or in England. But this is a criticism that can be levelled more at the author than at the protagonist. Nadine Gordimer remains largely uncritical of Toby Hood's perspective in this context. On the second flank and by contrast, Gordimer treats the fact of race and its tragic interaction with the law. Toby Hood is evidently frustrated by racial legislation which drastically curtails his quixotic impulses to venture freely into a black environment. The argument is very simple: he is white, he can't have access to Sophiatown. The hand of the law is too apparent; ubiquitous. The last scene of the novel passes the final verdict. Toby Hood and his black friend, Sam, are at the railway station in Johannesburg. They are bidding each other farewell under the watchful eye of a young policeman stationed there to make sure the laws of the land and separation are respected. Alienation is set forth as a directly socio-

political phenomenon.

In The Conservationist, reality appears as a far more complex domain explored along different lines. The more encompassing metaphysical question is geared into place. For instance, what is at stake is an external reality compressed into a symbol which is the dead body. The idea here is two-fold: how the body contrasts with Mehring and how the body as an external reality internally mirrors on Mehring. The law as embodied in the Miscegenation Squad, who have come to prosecute him under the Immorality Act, is but one factor among many others contributing to his collapse. The black corpse, symbol of the organic unity that binds the blacks to the farm, and Mehring's fantastic mode of perceiving his environment form the superimposed structure of reality perceptions in the book. After the initial dogged dismissal of the body as that of a "city-slicker", Mehring suddenly becomes extremely aware of its haunting presence, that its owner has come to stay and erode his legal claim to the farm. The result is that Mehring begins to converse with him. Interestingly, the higher the consciousness, the bigger the loss of control. The farm reality becomes equal to the forces it represents, namely tradition, continuity and legitimacy, while it consumes and digests a world that has thus far sustained itself on fantasy and self-blinkered vision.

The impact of this state of affairs could not be more dramatic on Mehring; he begins to perceive himself as the body's double. In Mehring's destruction, Gordimer seems to argue, there resides the dissolution of all the tenets he has used to prop up his world: reason, civilisation, knowledge and power. The bulldozer is sexuality. In other words, it entails a process of deconstruction which brings back into perspective the whole urban ideology of white settlery.

Once again, we are thrust into this area of cultural strife between the country and the city. And without losing track of the original argument, I shall investigate Mehring's reasons behind his acquisition of the farm:

"Mehring was not a farmer although there was farming blood somewhere, no doubt. Many well-off city men buy themselves farms at a certain stage in their careers... the losses are deductible from income tax and this fact coincides with something less tangible it's understood they can afford to indulge: a hankering to make contact with the land. It seems to be bred from making money in industry. And it is tacitly regarded as commendable, a sign of having remained fully human and enjoying the simple things of life that poorer men can no longer afford."(The Cons., 22)

I have already indicated that Mehring is a pragmatist. He likes to think of himself as no "sucker for city romanticism"(The Cons., 22). His idea of a beautiful farm is that it should be productive. The "something less tangible" is substantiated with the notions of productivity and profitability. But if it comes to the worst, the destruction of the crops by a flood or fire, the farm could still be lucratively used as a form of tax-relief. What is important here is the profitable surrogacy of the farm to industry. The country is an annex to the city, in the same way Mehring likes to think that Antonia is an annex of his male authority. In a major sense, Mehring tries to get the best of two worlds. He is able to make money in industry and to draw the psychological comfort of having remained fully human without compromising his sense of pragmatism.

The hankering to make contact with the land is of particular significance. In the midst of the pressing atmosphere of industry, there arises the idea of the farm as a place to "get-away-to"(23). Obviously, what is intended here is that the farm functions as a gateway to the relaxed, the beautiful and, in a manner of speaking, the unreal... that is at the same time lucrative, of course. Getting away to it provides the same sensation one gets in say, fiction. The sense of detachment and freedom is found on the farm though it is only twenty five miles away from Johannesburg and within closer distance from a township. Consider the following

passage:

"...once or twice at least in a lazy Sunday, a huge jet-plane, travelling so high... would appear to be released and sailing across the upper sky on its way to Europe. To people like those on the grass drinking wine and eating crisp lamb from their fingers, the sight brought a sensation of freedom: not the freedom associated with a great plane by those who long to travel, but the freedom of being down there on the earth, out in the fresh air of this place to-get-away to from the context of stuffy airports, duty-free drinks and cutlery cauled in cellophane."(The Cons.,23)

It is not so much Mehring's problematic Eurocentrism that the passage treats. Nor is it so much the anachronistic notion of a rural golden age still throbbing in the heart of the post-industrial and jet-age. It is rather the thick layer of post-industrialism as a phenomenon of universalist-dimensions that Mehring is trying to hide behind, as if the colonial legacy and its present manifestations were irrelevant. His business jet-trips to Europe, the United States and Japan are used to smoke-screen the specificities of time and space; the intimate bond between industrialisation and Apartheid that is. It is as if he is trying to find a kind of buffer-zone, so to speak, where he can look at himself strictly as the product of the modern, industrialised era and to detach himself from the colonial situation he is helping protract. To him, the whole issue is a question of the universal post-industrial havoc of stuffy-airports...typical of the modern city, which is preying on humanity thus seriously undermining the close bond of man and nature. This is what Antonia refers to when, for example, she indicts him with:

"Perhaps you'll really believe it's love. A new kind. A superior kind, without people.You'll even think there is something between you and the blacks, mmh? Those 'simple' blacks you don't even have to talk to."(The Cons., 178)

The jet implications whether as fancy flights from reality, as an expression of

rationalised agricultural practice (irrigation), or simply as an allusion to the chauvinism of Mehring's sexuality, do as much to reinforce his feeling of freedom and association with it as to undermine both that freedom and that association. The underlying implication in a statement like "appear to be released from the sky" is a clear indication to what he unconsciously thinks of South Africa. The plane is released as if from incarcerating space towards freedom.

Elsewhere, on a journey from Europe back into South Africa, the plane is compared to "a hospital ward where the patients had not entirely settled for the night yet" (The Cons., 127-128) and to a prison, "the lights went up brutally on the sleepers as prisoners are forced awake..." (The Cons., 130) This is to say that the distant awareness of incarceration is present and stems not from post-industrialism but from the tight-aired climate of colonial, burgeoning South Africa. It also means that as a result of his dissociation from Europe as well as from Africa, he is thrust into a zone of historical void which finds its clearest expression in the same scene where he is flying from Europe back into Johannesburg. He is sitting next to a Portuguese teenage girl. The girl is submissive enough but he is making an approach to her in an attempt at unilateral sexual satisfaction:

"...They know it had come now, whatever time this was... an hour between the hour of Europe and the hour of Africa, not registered on any watch glowing on passengers's wrists in the quiet dark... an whatever place this was... It could have been the last of Europe or was Africa, already, they were unaware of passing over. She need not be afraid of wanting what was happening to her because it was happening nowhere." (The Cons., 129)

Mehring knows that what he is doing is "an insane risk. A prosecution for interfering with a young girl; yes crimen injuria" (The Cons., 131). And yet he is doing it on the illusory assumption it is happening nowhere, in a void. This attitude

reflects itself on a grand-scale in his relation to the farm. The immanent danger embodied in its proximity to the city of Johannesburg and to the township, but especially in the dead body, is blinkered off.

In this regard, the importance of the farm does not stem solely from white settlerdom's nostalgia for a rural golden age, as I have already pointed out. In Mehring's case, it is significantly the practical expression of desperate attempts to smother feelings of colonial guilt and to assert a certain measure of innocence in the face of the mounting crisis:

"In fact, on this side, they were still far across the veld, ridge after ridge of the prototype that little children draw : a box with a door in the middle, a window on either side, smoke coming out of a chimney."(The Cons., 24)

The farm is not only the perfect hide-away where he feels that he is "accountable to no one"(The Cons., 110), but also where he can actually bury colonial guilt-feelings as if the farm is isolated from time and space, completely out of range:

"From one of those planes one wouldn't be able to make out the place at all."(The Cons., 24)

The aeroplane becomes a symbol of the detached vantage point from which he surveys his environment as well as for his divorce from reality. As Judie Newman observes:

"The closed world of the airplane communicates an impression of consciousness operating in a void, dissociated from the world beneath, annihilating reality."(The Cons., That Book of Unknown Signs' Critique: Studies In Modern Fiction, 1981, 36)

At the same time, it is a symbolic sexual expression of what Mehring is doing to the

landscape. I have already made the claim that Mehring's attitude towards the Portuguese girl on the plane is a reflection of his overall attitude towards the land. There is a close bond on the level of the symbolic expressed in sexual language between the farm and the novel's female characters. Another reason behind Mehring's acquisition of the farm is that he "was possessed by the idea of a farm-house only as a place to bring a woman" (*The Cons*, 42). Farm and woman become joined up in their status as subjects to male domination and sexual phantasms. Here again, we may deduce the essentially male character of colonialism.

There is a tradition here. Mehring emerges as an extension of Haggard's frontier, hero who sees in the landscape of the African interior a corrupt and licentious woman. But one of the fundamental differences between the romance hero and Gordimer's romantic hero is that the one succeeds, the other does not. Allan Quartermain uses his masculinity as an asset. He 'penetrates' his licentious Eden and is enriched, whether in terms of material wealth or in terms of experience. He goes back to England with diamonds and knowledge of Africa and the Africans, all of which he invests in the service of Empire. Mehring's masculinity is used along different lines. It is a way of articulating tragedy and a vision of apocalypse.

6.1.2.4 Sexuality_ an expression of apocalypse:

It appears that Mehring's affair with Antonia is confined strictly to the sexual. He likes to think of her as a part of his domain which at the same time makes no claims on his 'right' to independence. He lets her know that:

"...there's a special pleasure in having a woman you have paid for...for that one night, or that one afternoon or day. You've bought and paid for everything."(The Cons., 77-78)

To this she retorts:

"My god. You want to convince me that you can buy anything Mehring and his wholly-owned subsidiaries"(The Cons., 78)

The story of these two characters' relationship is one of constant mutual attack and indictment. Their exchanges always pull in opposite directions. In the face of her intellectual analyses which always undermine the safety of his assumptions thus winning her the name of "the thinking cow"(The Cons. 175) with "[t]he high-minded stupidity. Written all over her intelligent face"(The Cons., 45), Mehring resorts to his chauvinism and strongly asserts the language of the body:

"The only way to shut you up is to establish the other, the only millennium, of the body, invade you with the easy paradise that truly knows no distinction of colour, creed, and what-not"(The Cons., 160)

Such fascist reaction is symbolic of the way Mehring perceives his environment. Sex and technology become cognates designating the process of ravishment to which the continent is subjected. The most important symbols are the sword of dazzle on his car, the plane carrying him from Europe into Africa, the plane used for irrigation and the tractor on the farm. But most significant of all

however, is the allusion to gold mining technology...

It is clear by now that fascist sexual behaviour in The Conservationist is an important aspect of Mehring's alienation in that it reflects the displacement of his reality perception. What you cannot handle conceptually, can be contained libidinally. But this seems to have landed Mehring in a serious state of implacable guilt—feeling as the scene with the Portuguese girl shows:

"Her fluid on his hand as one says a man has blood on his hand."(The Cons., 131)

Let us investigate what this state of affairs is actually doing to Mehring. Moving towards the end of the novel, the narrative gets all the more fractured and confused. On his way back into Johannesburg, Mehring picks up a girl who lures him into a bizarre sexual episode. Stopping on a deserted mine dump, Mehring's grip over reality is completely loose and the narration resembles delirium. The notions of time and space are also fractured, past and present, people and landscape are all bundled up into one big mass of confusion.

"While his tongue plunges down her throat to choke the bitch, stuff her, in the closed-up house with the whisky bottle on the floor and the cologne in the bathroom, his gorge rises in revulsion. No. No. The grain of skin is gigantic, muddy and coarse. A moon surface. Grey brown with layers of muck that don't cover the blemishes. She pulls away ; she pretends that, she knows how to excite, they are panting, eyeing each other, and_ suddenly_ he has become aware of a feature of the landscape not noticed before, a pair of strong male calves in woollen stockings exactly on a level with his eyes; behind her shoulders some yards off in the scrubby growth the eucalyptus have put out."(The Cons., 260-61)

The passage depicts Mehring's consciousness in a state of chaos bordering on delirium or hallucination. We can distinguish three different figures that change face. The girl he is actually with. At the same time she is Antonia as suggested in

the the close-up house, itself a reference to the farm-house, nest to his sexual episodes with her. The dead body on the farm is also invoked in the image of the muddy skin and the layers of muck. But note the fusion of the pair of legs he sees with the landscape. They first seem as a feature of it. In fact, they are a reflection of the girl's legs open to suck him in just as the landscape threatens to do:

"His left leg plunges before him down into a whole... As he heaves, the mud holds him, holds on, hangs on, has him by the leg and won't let him go, down there. Now it's just as if someone has put both arms tightly round the leg. It's suction, of course, that's all... He would get out his boot if he could, but the leg's caught nearly to the knee... It's absurd; he's begun to giggle with queer panicky exasperation."(The Cons., 228)

Mehring feels that he has been lured by the girl although he cannot really make out whether she is white or coloured; may be one of those poor whites or perhaps a Portuguese factory worker, "one of those little silent immigrants who can be trusted not to speak"(The Cons., 261-62), trapped for thugs or the miscegenation squad just as he has been trapped into buying the farm which he now describes as "a bloody love-nest"(The Cons., 261). The girl who lures him and the one he was petting on the plane become one. In this atmosphere of panic and hallucination, the whole edifice of the farm as a safe haven, shut off from the upheavals of the South African situation collapses. Mehring recognises at last that his love-affair with the farm is down to an end; it has been nothing but fantasy and deception, "a double fake" and a "trap"(The Cons., 262). Such an end has always been there but has been catalysed by the girl whose advent constitutes the ultimate act of castration and the fall of the romantic hero:

"O Mehring, how you romanticise, how you've fallen for that place, a stink to high heaven."(The Cons., 251-252)

The fall of the romantic hero marks the disastrous touchdown from his flights of fancy and the forced return to reality, the reality of the farm activated by the dead body, symbol of change and continuity, who erupts again to erode Mehring's fantasy and power:

"The sun went behind a cloud and a cool palm of shadow rested a moment on cheeks warm from sleep; easy, always, to drop off down there after a late night or a long journey moving through emptiness, casting a rigid flying shadow over seas and forest and deserts without touch: never coming as close as the single silver-blond stalk that sinks and rises on the breeze to the ear or nose of the sleeper." (The Cons., 250)

F. Chapter Six

The Prospects And Limits Of Deconstruction In Nadine Gordimer And André Brink

Part Three

6.1.3. André Brink's Rumours of Rain or the fall of the Self:

6.1.3.1. An obsession with violence:

The similarities between The Conservationist and Rumours of Rain are not hard to find. In fact they abound to such an extent Brink's novel has been described as a pastiche of Gordimer's. I do not intend to dwell too much on the similarities between Mehring and Mynhardt for they have already been discussed by André Viola in his article 'Conservatives, Progressives and Revolutionaries In The Novel's of A. Brink and N. Gordimer' (Afrique Littéraire, 1985). However, the two authors' respective perspectives do solicit some attention. In his article, 'Tradition and Revolt in South African Fiction', Paul Rich notes that the basic difference between the two novels is that:

"Brink has adopted a detached attitude towards his central character of Mynhardt whose autonomy is never critically examined in the novel. For Gordimer, on the other hand, Mehring exemplifies her long-held belief that no distinction between 'politics' and 'culture' can be made in such a politicised society as South Africa." (Journal of Southern African Studies, 68)

I have reasons not go along with this view. Martin Mynhardt, prominent Afrikaner businessman, is in a London hotel room from where he recounts his own life story. With Sir Joshua's Innocence above his head and the luxurious quiet of his locale, his narrative emerges as a story of continuous violence with which, he has come to realize, his life has always been surrounded. Such a discovery, he had made during the weekend he spent with his mother in the Transvaal when he tried to talk her into selling up the farm to the government as part of a very lucrative deal. That weekend, he says, was "the last weekend before the end of the familiar

world"(Runnours of Rain, 13), the world where he could still afford to indulge in his assumption that:

"I am surrounded by violence, yet untouched by it myself. Unlike my ancestors on their *via dolorosa* as Dad liked to call it, I realize that I have always gone scot-free."(R. of R., 28)

Then he comes up hard against the truth. After the return of his son Louis from the war in Angola, all chances of understanding between Louis and his father have miserably failed and been destroyed. Shattered by the horror of war and feeling betrayed by his father's generation, Louis shows all signs of contempt for all the things his father stands for. Mynhardt, on the other hand, realises that Louis has beyond any doubt become a complete stranger to him. On a different level, his life-long friend, Bernard Franken, prominent Afrikaner lawyer, has been convicted under the Terrorism Act. Soon after his trial, mine riots broke out at Westonaria, Mynhardt's industrial plant, then in Soweto. However, the last blow was of a different nature. In the course of a sexual act with his mistress Bea, who is also eventually convicted for political subversion, Mynhardt had a heart failure. It comes as a shock to him that nothing is infallible, least of all those things that one takes for granted like the wipers on his car or, more disturbingly, his own body. In this regard, it is interesting to see how the title fits in with all this. He writes:

"After the mine riots, the bits and pieces of human bodies washed from the road with fire-hoses, the way one would clean gnats from a windscreen, like rain trying to wash out the scars of drought"(R. of R., 29)

The image of rain alleviating the drought is symbolic of the advent of a new order of justice and compassion that will erode the present state of ugly belligerence:

"Ceaselessly, irresistibly, it came down from the dark skies. In a blunted stupor I resigned myself to the thought it would never stop again. I didn't care any more. Let it go on, I thought, let it increase and grow worse and worse, a flood to soak the earth and uproot trees and split rock..."(R. of R., 446)

Such is the extent of Mynhardt's conversion to reality, to the truth, "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica", he writes at the end of the narrative. Everything is disclosed, including his autonomy. Paul Rich misses the point... Let us note at this stage that where there is detachment is in the state of stark contrast between London as a symbol of peace and tranquility and the mad barbarism of violence in South Africa.

6.1.3.2 Textual strategies— Language, literary 'positioning', gender:

The real basic difference is determined by three concepts vital to an understanding of the novel: language, literary or philosophical position to the text, and gender. In The Conservationist we find the following statement: "It [the corpse] is a sight that has no claim on him [Mehring]". who makes this statement? One is tempted to answer that it is obviously the narrator's. One is equally forced to admit that it is very difficult to dissociate Mehring from the narrator in a case like this as there are two antiposed currents in the same statement. We know, for example, that it represents exactly what Mehring wishes were the truth. At the same time, we know for a fact that the narrator is telling us that it is a mere assumption as Mehring is proven wrong; the sight does have a claim on him, the body has come to erode his power. And this is not conjecture. In an interview with Jannika Hurwitt, Nadine Gordimer herself declares that: "[i]n The Conservationist you've got interior monologue and you have a real narrator. It's not always Mehring speaking. But the line between when he is and when he is not is very vague" ('The Art of Fiction', Paris Review, 1983, 109). Such ambivalence towards Mehring, 'I am a highly intelligent and powerful man' but 'he is a presumptuous fool', gives an ironic twist to the whole narrative. Let us give this phenomenon a simple name, irony. The function it performs throughout the narrative, what it does to Mehring, is of paramount importance. But note that it is enacted either in the hands of the narrator, when it is not Mehring himself, or in Antonia's. The sarcasm of the statement above is completely in tune with Antonia's 'sinister' reminder that Mehring is a hundred years too late for the end he had envisaged for himself on buying the farm. Irony here links the political with the historic. The anachronism of white power is brought into sharp focus. The fall of white rule in Mozambique where the flood that brought the corpse had originated from is antiposed to

Mehring's ambition to perpetuate his name on the farm.

That is not all. Antonia's sarcasm gives her ample aggressivity and edge. The sum of her unabating, daunting challenge to Mehring and his masculine authority casts doom over his fantastic mode of existence and finds translation in his ultimate act of castration— as represented by the miscegenation squad for instance. Femininity and irony then go hand in hand in The Conservationist as they combine effort to throw into doubt the entire masculine structure in which Mehring functions and the literary tradition that had articulated it.

A banal statement would read like this: Nadine Gordimer is a woman... In Southern African Literature, An Introduction (Rex Collings, 1979), Stephen Gray argues that the stylistic asceticism of colonial frontiersmen's journals such as David Livingstone's Travels and Researches in South Africa, cannot be justified on the ground that the frontiersmen's status as pioneers necessitated they be pre-occupied with the struggle of daily survival in a hostile environment, which over-rode the possibility of beauty, humour or irony in their writing. The real reason for such austerity, Gray continues, lies in the intention of the author as such. In my discussion of romance, I tried to show that its subject is a function of the Self. This means that the special formula of extra-ordinary encounters with extra-ordinary beings, human or animal, is manipulated by the author who is usually more concerned with ways of reflecting his own qualities of courage and grandure than with any level of reality. Thus the style comes out curt and 'virile', "a touch of irony" Gray points out, "such impulses would have had to crumble" (S.A.L.A.L., 106)

One can see the position of Nadine Gordimer as a female writer in this picture. If language was hijacked to reflect a masculine attitude in colonial discourse, it can be used to castrate that very masculinity. Gender and language are combined in an effort to counter-attack and subvert the essence of colonial discourse.

Mehring is symbolically presented as a modern colonial hunter. His reaction to authority resembles that of the frontiersman who "[w]hen...finally displaced by the

colonial bureaucrats [the law in Mehring's case]... whom he resists and despises... he becomes dispossessed and dies" (SAL, 107). Mehring does not want the police, who represent the "supremacy of ignorance confusing audacity with authority" (The Cons., 27) sticking their noses into the kraal. Nor does he want any time wasted "hanging about bloody magistrates' courts" (The Cons., 28). The idea of the hunt is represented as much by his search for new young girls to penetrate, which concurs with his official occupation of gold hunting, as well as by the guinea fowl eggs which stand for both conservation and game. Conservation in this context is a pretence that the compulsion to kill no longer exists. For him the body can only be from that distant place the city, it has nothing to do with the farm. Violence is dismissed as an infringement on his private domain and casually attributed to the blacks' drink-gamble-stab weekend sprees.

The hunter, tracing new frontiers in search of game and the romantic ideal, frowns on anything different or hostile as feminine and irrational. The different and the hostile have to be subjugated to his rational and masculine authority. The romantic ideal, Paul Rich suggests in 'Romance and the Development of The South African Novel', exists outside reason and language. Therefore, in order to deconstruct the notion of the romantic hero, Nadine Gordimer resorts to an appropriation of both that reason and that language by eventually reducing Mehring to a self-converser in a state of delirium or hallucination.

6.1.3.3. Gender:

Language, literary or philosophical positioning, and gender are used along different lines in Rumours of Rain. Mynhardt's self-gratifying feeling of independence is expressed through a similar formula to that in The Conservationist but the effect is achieved in a different area. Consider the following passage:

"Call it the luxury of the perfect pasha, the arrogance of the supreme male chauvinist: or simply the easiest way out for a man with a heart complaint Yet I am inclined to see much more in this total surrender to a woman who demands no more than an arranged fee and who, outside the serene hour she has shared with you (nice romantic phrase this), has no further claims on you at all. It is one of very few situations which leave one completely free because no responsibility is imposed on either of the persons involved."(R of R, 14)

The function Bea performs in Rumours of Rain is similar to Antonia's though the former remains more docile as her challenges to Mynhardt are carried out within the limits of his own idea of the feminine and the beautiful. In fact, she consents to the role of mistress that Mynhardt has chosen for her and is too emotionally dependent on him to challenge that status. Bea's will is not really geared towards achieving anything similar to what Antonia is associated with, only towards fitting in in a male-dominated society on the terms set for her. Bea lacks that subversive streak that Mehring finds so unsettling in Antonia. Thus her accusation to Mynhardt that:

"Because this is a man's land ... Big-game, rugby, industries, power, politics, racism. You Afrikaners have no room for women"(R of R, 428)

remains largely just that, an accusation or complaint rather than a threat. This may have as much to do with the author's gender itself as with the fact that, throughout, as a character, Mynhardt retains throughout some "gentlemanly" traits and is emotionally vulnerable. As a matter of fact, it seems that the whole notion of the pragmatic and ruthless businessman who is corrupt enough to mislead his mother into selling the sum of Mynhardt history as part of a profitable but nonetheless scandalous deal, but who can at the same time venture into some serious intellectual, philosophical as well as moral, abstractions is a bit of a contradiction in terms. But that is not part of the interest of this study.

What does interest me is that the issues of gender and sexuality are not pursued to the same significant extent as in The Conservationist and remain on the whole subjected to a stronger sense of historical existentialism. The essential element in Brink's range is the phenomenon of violence, the deconstruction of which uncorks a sweeping obsession with death and apocalypse...

However, it would not be inappropriate to attribute Brink's lax emphasis on gender in Rumours of Rain to his mounting awareness of the real limitations of the similarity between women and blacks, which is a major tangent in his earlier novel An Instant In The Wind. Trekking across the South African interior with her husband Alexis Laarson, a naturalist who gets destroyed on a rare-bird pursuit, Elisabeth is rescued by a runaway slave. The idea is that in the absence of the masculine power for which Alexis stands, Elisabeth and Adam manage to thrash out their differences and to recognise each other's humanity through a recognition of their common denominator as slaves in a colonial and male-dominated society. But on getting back to the Cape and civilisation, the whites claim their woman-slave back and kill Adam who had been hunted for a fatal assault on his ex-master. I feel tempted to pass a value judgement on this badly-written novel but I shall content myself with saying that it makes its points through a number of old

clichés as I shall demonstrate later.

7.1.3.4. Literary positioning/Language— Expression of a double conflict(the private/the public, The civil/the political):

In Mapmakers, Writing In A State of Siege, André Brink notes that with the emergence of "a language more fully shaped to the needs of the situation"(109) in the 1930's, through the contributions of such authors as Alan Paton, for example, there

"emerged a vital and viable new literature bearing the paradoxical stamp of art in being both utterly local and utterly universal in its exploration of man in space and time."(109)

There are two points subject to contention here. Firstly, Brink's paradoxical stamp of art. In my chapter on Alan Paton I tried to demonstrate that Cry, The Beloved Country was primarily a defence of the civilisation idea. Such defence was declared not in the face of 'the Black Peril' but in face of the rising Afrikaner Nationalism in the run-up to the 1948 elections. Alan Paton's universalism then was little more than an organic measure of the local principles that really governed his fiction. To say that he was a universalist when his representations of the Kumalo brothers conform so neatly to the best of colonial literature, sacrificing them for the sake of a purely political (therefore local) question is to stretch the meaning of universal into the zone of nonsense. The evidence is easily produceable. Once it became apparent to the English-speaking intelligentsia that the battle for political office was a lost cause and that the advent of the Nationalists was a fact of political life in South Africa, there came Too Late the Phalarope to make the point that if the Afrikaner now undisputably holds the key to political life, in terms of civilisation, he has nothing to show for it. The argument was almost based on racial grudge: we of British stock are the custodians of

civilisation, and it pointed to the stinginess and masochism endemic to Afrikaner Nationalism with Calvinism at its roots. The 'paranoid' blend of Calvinism and Nationalism was denounced as a bankrupt and morally unfit cultural formula. One can see that the same ticket that carried Paton on his so-called universalist ride in Cry, The Beloved Country was used home-ward to the stark flavour of Too Late the Phalarope: religious discourse and morality which smoke-screened the political idea in the former novel. Beyond who is right and who is wrong, the point I am making is that by the time of Too Late The Phalarope, the debate had started to take on a more polemical tinge indicating its real local nature. There is no need to dwell on this point any further as it has already been dealt with in ample detail.

The second point is more pertinent to the discussion of Brink himself. One does not need to do a painstaking reading of Turnours of Rain to see that in Brink too the local and the universal *seem* to exist side by side. Paul Rich was even able to claim that Brink comes within the same tradition as Paton:

"Writing first in Afrikaans and later translating his own work into English, Brink sees his writing as coming within a distinct tradition of South African writing, represented by figures like Bosman and Paton." ('Tradition and Revolt', 66-67)

Even if, for the sake of argument, one credited Paton with a certain measure of universalism, Brink's formula of the local and the universal, certainly a complex one, is entirely different in rationale, manifestations and implications. Writing at a time when Afrikaner Nationalism had clearly developed into an angst, and seeing the civilisation idea as represented by white settlerdom tragically on the retreat as a result of the steady unleashing of violence at Sharpeville and later Soweto, Brink is clear about the position he has come to occupy in the cultural spectrum. Gone is the time when Afrikaner and English-speaking writers could afford to

indulge in cultural squirmishes with each other. As Jean Sévry notes, many Afrikaner writers, among them Brink who translates his own novels into English, "n'ont plus cette hostilité lourde, et de mauvais aloi, à l'égard du 'Uitlander'" (25 Questions sur la littérature de l'Afrique du Sud' Afrique Littéraire, 1985, 24). The banning of Brink's first novel Looking On Darkness for instance, made it sufficiently plain to him that he had stepped beyond the line past which even his Afrikanerhood, a main deterrent hitherto, cannot save him from the censor's wrath.

By that time, the battleground had substantially shifted from the-liberalism-versus-nationalism formula to the civil-versus-political-society one. Inevitably, Brink felt that he was now "writing in a state of siege" declared by "mapmakers", as much as any other writer (and Gordimer is an appropriate example) who might dare transgress the limits of the map. (Although one might make conjectures that this is one the reasons why sexual language is subjected to a greater sense of history in Rumours of Rain, it is not a point I am making). I have already treated the issue of the significance of Brink translating his own work into English but one or two more indications would not go amiss even at the risk of self-repetition.

The passage from Afrikaans into English is an existential enterprise. Being each other's product, Brink re-examines Afrikaans as an entity he has always taken for granted, from without. English puts him in a position to experience the limitations and horizons of his own language. And if one accepts the premise that we exist in language as much as it exists in us, a venture outside it is also a venture outside ourselves, to gain a better, more objective perspective on our own being. But what is especially significant about this venture is that it coincided with the 60's, a time of great political upheaval and turbulence resulting from the Sharpeville Massacre and was represented by the larger literary group of the Sestigers. Their sojourn in France nurtured the feeling of venture in language and consequently conditioned the emergence of existential tendencies in Afrikaans

literature. It is here where one can locate the universalist flavour of Brink's writing as we shall see it. But what I am interested in is how the local absorbed the universal. It is to say, how existentialism was put in the service of effecting a rift between civil and political society which in turn gave rise to feelings of death and apocalypse as manifestations of alienation. To use an even simpler formula, how existentialism was politicised.

Brink's description of the Sestiger phenomenon as an experience of existentialist agony which questions the 'platitudes' of one's identity, history, and links with the community manifestly squares up with the general direction Martin Myrhardt gives to his narrative. Hence the passage from language into history, politics and life as a whole. For Brink too there cannot be a distinction between culture and politics. This is why it would be too simplistic to advance the argument that Brink, with his formula of the local and the universal resorts to what Gordimer parodies in Flehring who tenaciously, but unsuccessfully, tries to disentangle himself from the specificities of the South African time and space.

Re-evaluation from an existentialist point of view is what decides the difference between Brink and Gordimer. The critique proceeds from Myrhardt's retrospective realization that everything seems absurd and grotesque. Reason and civilisation have given way to madness and violence. Thus he cites a whole list of situations where human life seems not just cheap but absurdly insignificant as well: the convict whom, as a child, he had seen shot dead on the farm, the little boy who dived in muddy water only to strike a submerged log, the motorcyclist whose head was chopped off by a lorry carrying corrugated sheets of iron, the lecturer who committed suicide, the woman who jumps in front of the train, the man who jumps off the ledge and the bits and pieces of human bodies after the Westonaria riots. However, the grappling with death from a philosophical point of view remains largely subjected to the political notion that violence is the product of

Mynhardt's deadlock as he accounts for it. In the following passage, the notion of the absurd seems set in a timeless framework:

"To us the Second World War had been restricted to radio news and the talk of grown-ups... Everything had been reduced to rumours, instead of reality. And perhaps one does have a deep-seated need, even if it were for once in one's life, to pit one's nothingness, one's whole existence against something of true magnitude. Other men, other generations, seem to be precipitated willy-nilly into such events. But our knowledge was second-hand; we had to actively set out in search of reality. In the note-books I filled at the time I think I interpreted the whole affair as a quest for heroism. The need to discover for oneself something great and awe-inspiring. Today I tend to regard the opposite as much more important: not our attempts at heroism, not the ecstasy of greatness, but a shattering experience of our own insignificance."(R. of R., 38)

One has to note the contrast or mutual abrogation between second-hand news and personal experience, two different levels of knowledge, between magnitude and nothingness, and finally between heroism and insignificance. It is plain that in each set, the substance of the first cognate is hijacked. This brings back Brink's idea of re-examining one's link's with one's identity, history and community, which puts the individual in a state of polarity with his community, the writer with his hegemonic culture. This is conveyed especially in the parallel between radio-news, symbol of officialdom, and the drive for personal experience. But note also the price paid for effecting the divorce with hegemonic culture. Magnitude and heroism are substituted for insignificance and nothingness. This conflictual situation is presented in the garb of something larger, on the human or universal scale, man versus the universe. This is of course indicative of the powerful existentialist current at play.

what is more revealing than the evocation of a continuous state of

belligerence between man and the universe is the parallel drawn with the Second World War. For if Nazism represented the forces of evil and barbarism civilisation had to contend with, Apartheid is being perceived through the same telescope. The carpet of civilisation is being slipped from under the feet of white settlery in so far as it has come to be perceived as an adjunct of Apartheid. The questions the novel indirectly poses are what is civilisation and who are we? Such questions are not asked in a contentious or corrective tone. Rather, they are the assertion of a new type of truth, that of lost certainty. At this stage, Mynhardt has already transgressed the line demarcating what he refers to as the familiar world; the existentialist message erupts: without (new) certainties, the wilderness is cold.

It is significant that Mynhardt compares the effort to recollect exactly what had happened during the weekend in question with trying to row upstream. The reference here is to the canoeing episode he had undertaken with Bernard Franken. Finding no legitimate motive for such undertaking, Mynhardt can only explain it as a form of "death ecstasy" (*R. of R.*, 39). The Afrikaner, he tells us, is "steeped in death, almost voluptuously conditioned by it" (*R. of R.*, 193). Afrikaner history minus the violence is reduced from a saga of heroism in the face of the 'magnificent' landscape and of its concomitant 'barbarians' to the shacks of insignificance. The formula here is that existentialism functions on the two rails of history and politics. Consider the next passage:

"Bernard was still there, in front of me, his canoe spinning madly before he managed to get it under control again. A few yards ahead of him was a log, a huge willow, torn, roots and all, from some distant bank. Both of us were watching it as it slowly turned and rolled inward towards the heart of the whirlpool where it went under. It didn't come up again... Frantically we tried to row in a futile, ridiculous effort to counter the suction of the undercurrent. In that cauldron we were less than two bobbling walnut shells... And now I'm caught here, in this blue and golden room, with a lifetime trapped in a whirlpool! All I know is that I have

no choice

What I really want to know is this: why can't you let me be
Bernard Franken? I didn't have anything to do with it, did I?
No one can hold me responsible for what happened, damn
it"(R. of R., 39-40)

As already said, Mynhardt does not know why he went through with such a precarious experience. He just felt driven towards it as part of a search for meaning or an intimation of death. But the point he makes is through the picture of two human beings facing a formidable enemy which has terrifyingly powerful dimensions. The landscape is compared to a cauldron of loss where himself and Bernard seem so small and insignificant. Their pathetic effort to counter the suction borders on the ridiculous. Now sitting in his London hotel room, Mynhardt realizes that the effort to row upstream is an appropriate Sisyphean simile for Afrikaner history as a whole. Pitting his will against a continent he does not understand, has produced the madness and death-wish that characterises his history. Mynhardt reflects "[it] was as if the drought was bent on getting rid of us. Beyond buying and selling, beyond economics and politics, beyond white and black, lay the land itself, and in times like these one discovered it was only by its leave and by its grace that we were tolerated there"(R. of R., 247). The continent "might decide to throw us off, like an old dog shaking himself to rid him of fleas"(R. of R., 279). Apocalypse and Sisyphism are given utterly local dimensions. Man versus the universe is substituted for Afrikaner/white settlerdom versus Africa. The dogged search for substance, Mynhardt argues, has deprived the Afrikaner of vitality and thus engulfed him into senselessness and absurdity. Outside violence and death, he seems unable to exist. Thus Martin Wilhelmus Mynhardt, one of his ancestors, "has left us the substance of his dream"(R. of R., 201), an illusion of gold. "Who and what had [my ancestors] been anyway?" Mynhardt wonders, "Losers all. Everyone in his own way a victim of the land"(R. of R., 217).

Mynhardt feels that the Sisyphus role is one of ascription not choice. It has

been handed down to him as a heritage just like the will to survive or the Apartheid problem. His belief in "freedom and hope and faith and charity" has been strangled by the will to survive, "the hunger to succeed, the instinct to kill" (R. of R., 265-266). In an exchange with Charlie Mofokeng, his black friend, Mofekeng submits that his Sisyphus operates in the dimension of the social not the metaphysical because:

"It's the social that determines the nature of my task, the nature of my rock. On my way downhill to pick up the absurd rock again, I don't see anything metaphysical: what I see is my social condition, my oppressors. You think in terms of suicide if you wish to stick to Camus. Not I, because I exist socially. I've got to make the jump from suicide to murder. And I don't think either of us can start again with innocence. To hell with Blake." (R. of R., 154)

What we have in the passage is a repudiation of the nihilism of metaphysical existentialism. Within a master-slave situation, neither of them could afford to embrace Camus' version of Sisyphus. It is essential to note that Mynhardt implicitly rejects the metaphysical dimension through Bernard Franken. For although the latter stands by himself as an 'independent' character, he is also virtually Mynhardt's double — a sort of alternative voice. Besides a common childhood, Bernard shares with Mynhardt his special position in both his wife and his mistress' unconscious. More, he is Louis' godfather. Mynhardt always feels that he is only standing in for him:

"[Bea]d been 'meant' for him. In a sense I was only standing in for him, his surrogate. We'd changed places." (R. of R., 413)

This constitutes precisely the reason why he cannot let Mynhardt be. What is all the more significant about this character is that he takes the view articulated by Mofokeng one decisive step further. He spares 'nothing of life and fortune', not in the service of civilisation or Apartheid ideology, but for the sake of dissociating

Afrikanerdom from Apartheid. Bernard then is an expression of the political angst of what might have been a detached consciousness. In fact he is the political consciousness of the novel. His arrest and ultimate conviction constitute the logical extension of Mynhardt's realisation that the age of Innocence is over. Guilt, he now believes, is the true nature of Afrikaner history:

"[Innocence] is not a positive or real phenomenon, but simply a denial of the real phenomenon, guilt. It is part of our social foundation, part of our Christian tradition, that we are guilty by definition. Our dimension is guilt."(R. of R., 370)

Religion forms part of Brink's challenge. It is represented as a major contributor to what Mynhardt has come to accept as an all-embracing state of alienation. His socio-economic philosophy of constructive development is related to 'the Western Protestant Ethic' thus reducing everything, including human relationships, to what Paul Rich defines as "the cash nexus"('Tradition and Revolt', 68). His belief that "[o]ne couldn't base an economically independent nation on begging and charity, it would only strengthen the Black's suspicion that all he had to do to obtain something was to ask for it, without any effort on his part. It robbed him of the motive to achieve something in order to be rewarded"(R. of R., 239) and in the mental retardment of the blacks, necessitates "directing a flow of capital towards the homelands where the roots lie"(R. of R., 55). At the same time Mynhardt knows that his notion of "whatever I possess, I've earned" and "economic contract with the land"(R. of R., 55) clashes with the notion of those who feel dispossessed of their land, a land where he knows he is only "tolerated". In the person of Bernard then, the contradictions dissolve. His commitment to ending Apartheid brings a sort of redemption to the Afrikaner from "total complicity" (R. of R., 370). Mynhardt reflects:

"Perhaps there is a similar transition from a state of innocence to a state of guilt in historical process... Somewhere in history there comes a day when, for the first time, a territory is annexed, not because land is necessary but because a nation has grown addicted to the idea of expansion as such. There comes a day, when for the first time, violence is used not because its unavoidable but because it is essential."(R. of R., 369)

F. Chapter Six

The Prospects And Limits Of Deconstruction In Nadine Gordimer And André Brink

Part Four

6.2.1. July's People Between transgression and conformity:

6.2.1.1. Civilisation and apocalypse:

What Rumours of Rain does to An Instant In The Wind, July's People does to The Conservationist. It brings a new awareness of the question of gender and racism. July's People is the story of Barn and Maureen Smales, two white liberals from Johannesburg who have fled to their servant's village after fighting has broken out between government troops and black rebel forces. Once wealthy architects, they have now been stripped of all the luxury and assets a wealthy suburban life could provide. They are left to themselves, striving to cope with the harsh realism of their new basic life and with the trauma of a day-to-day battle for survival, something they had always anticipated but whose occurrence has nonetheless caught them unawares:

"First the Smales had given the time left as ten years, then another five years, then perhaps as projected, shifted away into their children's time. They yearned for there to be no time left at all... They joined political parties and 'contact groups' in all willingness to slough privilege it was supposed to be their white dog nature to guard with rifles and tanks, they were not believed... They had thought of leaving... They had stayed and told each other and everyone else that this and nowhere else was home, while knowing, as time left went by, the reason had become they couldn't get their money out..."(July's People, 8-9)

Among the important things the passage accounts for is Nadine Gordimer's choice of two liberals. On one level, it casts doubt on their ambiguous and hypocritical stand which emulates the notion of home as governing their decision to stay when in fact the matter harks back to purely material reasons. On another level, and as Edith Hilton observes, it purports to say that "once an unjust system

is established, it hardly matters whether one is a liberal or a bigot: the system itself is in control" (*Fables From Our Time*, Yale Review, 1982, 258). Following this line, conservative, liberal, radical or revolutionary; male or female, alters little in the picture. The fact of race and the power such a fact implies are in the final analysis the decisive factors in the elimination of the colonial situation as represented in the book. The fact that they are liberals and not bigots does not in any way save the Smales the agony of the historical irrelevance into which their situation is rendered in the bush. And what applies to race, applies equally to gender as we shall see. Maureen remains a symbol of, and an accomplice in, the power her husband represents.

Here I wonder if this argument, which is presented in the novel, does not contradict Gordimer's own stand on the question of black representation as I have discussed it in a previous part. On the one hand, she rejects such an argument as Susan Greenstein's: that "white writers also come up borders patrolled by a crude but potent challenge which questions their right, no less than their ability to create black characters" (*Miranda's Story*, Novel-A Forum On Fiction, 1985, 229). This territorial exclusion acquires metaphysical dimensions adequately justified in The Conservationist. Gordimer rejects Greenstein's notion firstly on the ground of her Africanness, which goes beyond the limits of mere radicalism and secondly out of belief that the area of the historical unspoken between black and white remains to be explored. At the same time, she submits that whatever their political pigmentation, the whites are engulfed by their system in the strife against blacks. How then can a white writer adopt an African perspective towards his subject matter? Does such an aggressive and denigrating stand as she takes on The Smales describing them as "white pariah dogs" (J.P., 8) do the trick and make that African perspective accessible? Surely, as I argue later, the matter must be much more complicated than that.

Another illuminating idea in the passage above is that the Smales had reached a stage where they became prisoners to their material amulets. In a significant way, their loss of control over those amulets made it impossible to make a decision about leaving South Africa even though that would have remained only a relative solution to the deadlock their residence in South Africa had become. Comparatively, their total inability to adapt to the basic life of the bush does essentially derive from their being completely alienated beings who cannot survive outside the cosy circle of possessions their civilised suburban life had once conferred.

The tangential argument cutting through the novel is the contrast between the fake orderliness of life which urban civilisation creates and the random but genuine nature of life in the bush. Their new dilemma is a measure of being put up against the latter:

"In various and different circumstances certain objects are going to turn out to be vital. The wager for survival cannot, by its nature, reveal which in advance of events. How one was to know?.. the circumstances are incalculable in the manner in which they come about, even if politically or apocalyptically, foreseen, and the identity of the vital individuals and objects is hidden by their humble or frivolous role in an habitual set of circumstances." (JP, 6)

The perception of life as an organised and well planned sequence of circumstances intended to give one control over the future and so give meaning to life has collapsed in the bush. The Smales' existence has turned into a senseless random governed only by the desperate preoccupation with daily survival. They have been reduced to day-to-day drifting while held in devastating suspense as to what is going to happen the next day. In the material deprivation of their new environment, they can no longer enjoy the privilege of thinking further than today and their own

bellies. Reason and survival stand anti-posed

The overall argument in the book is that the Smales' ordeal is the by-product of their descent into hell as much as it is the result of civilisation. Once the assets of civilisation have been withdrawn, their alienation from the natural environment takes gross and humiliating dimensions. As Bernard Genies points out, their new situation is one of acute conflict not on the political but the natural level:

"Et là où les blancs s'attendent à subir les revers de leur domination, ils découvrent qu'en fait on les laisse livrés à eux mêmes. La seule menace qui pèse désormais sur eux n'a rien à voir avec un rapport de force d'ordre physique ou politique. Simplement ils doivent revoir complètement leur mode de vie, apprendre par exemple à se nourrir en utilisant les ressources qu'offre le site naturel. C'est sans doute le pire des châtiments qui pouvait les guetter." ('Ceux de July', La Quinzaine Littéraire, 11)

To paraphrase Genies, the threat that hangs over the Smales is of a metaphysical order. Clearly, the fact that the Smales are left to themselves is an indication to the constraining irrelevance to which they have been relegated by their African hosts. What is particularly interesting about such a reaction is that it scores a major attack on one of the romance genre's most cherished idioms. The colonial quasi-rule that if the white man survives the first encounter with the savages he becomes king, reiterated in King Solomon's Mines, finds itself parodied. The Smales are neither assaulted nor regaled, just ignored. But their response to such confining indifference is very revealing. As a way of tactful protestation, Bam most congenially offers to rig a water-tank to benefit the villagers. The offer comes as a desperate attempt to combat marginalisation and to fuse back into a position liable to give relative control or at least influence over the course of events in the new environment. In other words, Bam is possessed by the urge to prove useful. But this urge is counter-balanced by July's sardonic nonchalance. He simply "laughs and gives [the water tank] a kick" (JP, 25). For the Africans, the idea

of a water-tank is just as foreign and superfluous as the Smales themselves:

"The water-tank was from back there, like the Smales themselves and their children; the white man is the one to make a place for it here."(J.P., 26)

The passage expresses the same idea as Richard Shelton's poem "The Tattooed Desert" with which Gordimer opens The Conservationist, as we shall see later. Suffice it to say here that Bam is like the protagonist in the poem who is carrying medicine for a disease no one had discovered. Nonetheless, out of a combination of pragmatism and totally misplaced concern, Bam insists on the usefulness of a water-tank:

"...You could have a decent rain-water supply during the rainy season. The women won't have to go to the river. It'll be much better to drink than river water."(J.P., 25)

Such anguish to display and deploy his technological expertise at the good service of African society puts him in a position similar to Mehring's when he fails to criss-cross his and the Africans' respective ways of relating to the the natural environment. The contrast is one between acquisitive technological interference with nature's processes which lies at the root of Bam's intention to rig the tank and the organically healthy submission to the elements which characterises African behaviour.

This seems to point the accusing finger at civilisation. The way it is treated in July's People goes towards saying that it is an asset of colonial victimisation as it is an asset for self-victimisation. Bam's little technological project meant to interfere with the village women's natural behaviour of going down to the river to fetch water, for them an article of faith, is simultaneously used to highlight his alienation from the African environment and therefore to cast doom on his future, an idea already treated in The Conservationist. But in a different context, it draws

attention to the role that he seeks to devise for himself. Paul Rich sees him as "a modern secular missionary seeking to apply the technological rather than the religious fruits of Western Civilisation" ('Apartheid and The Decline Of The Civilisation Idea', 377). For Gordimer, such an endeavour can only be placed outside history and its ultimate fate is futility. The intermediary or transcendental nature of Bam's technological project, the tank as an engineering construct translating not only his calculated interference with nature but its vulgar and alien principle (to that nature itself) is antiposed to the knitted-togetherness of the African and his environment, their organic dialectics, apparent even in the latter's shaping of nature. Everything is organic, nothing is functional. Consider the next passage:

"That was how people lived, here, re-arranging their meagre resources around the bases of nature, letting the walls of mud sink back to mud and then using that mud for new walls, in another clearing, among other convenient rocks" (JP, 26)

This is Gordimer's insightful naturalist talent at its best. The solid and wholesome circle of man and nature does not yield to the penetration of modern technology which would spoil the bond and inject it with doses of alienation, so to speak. This is the real autonomy which leaves nothing disclosed, as opposed to Mehring and Mynhardt's artificial autonomy based on possession and illusion. But the interference of civilisation and technology, Gordimer tells us, is not restricted to life only. Even death has its own alienated form, "even death is a purchase" (JP, 65). One of Bam's senior partners had acquired a private plane in which he crashed. By contrast, "July's old mother... would crawl... coming home with wood, and grass for her brooms on her head, bent lower and lower towards the earth, until finally she sank to it... the only death she could afford" (JP, 65). The Africans and nature are each other's fodder. Fine! But again, we shall see that Nadine Gordimer's naturalist X-raying has some unhealthy side-effects...

To go back to the water-tank, Bam's offer seems to hide a deep-seated sense of moral hypocrisy. In the final analysis, it expresses a cunning manoeuvre to forge a new type of relationship with the village females, erected on technological expertise or utility. Salvaging the tank is salvaging the wreckage of his own private life. Bam has to counter-balance the drain placed on his masculine authority by a landscape that has no need for technological prowess, offering nothing but castration, and by the decomposition of his relationship with Maureen which proves as fragile as threatening. The hypocrisy is spotlighted in the argument that water location and quality is ironically a consideration of greater magnitude than the morally nasty issue of investment in the migrant labour system where July and his wife have been trammelled. The wife's ordeal is outlined in the following passage:

"Across the seasons was laid the diuturnal one of being without a man, it overlaid sowing and harvesting, rainy summers and winters... For that season although she lived and worked among others as usual, the woman was not within the same stage of the cycle maintained for all by imperatives that outdid the authority of nature. The sun rises, the moon sets, the money must come, the man must go"(JP., 83)

Alienation results from the conflict between colonialism, technology and masculinity, a power aggregate Bam had always relied upon, on the one hand, and nature and its 'children' who find technology-related disruption a worse form of tragedy than material divestiture. Eventually, nature emerges from the conflict as the victor because it also represents morality— what is naturally right— and because it is a castrator as I have already shown in The Conservationist.

The evocation of morality is not without ground. I have already described the Smales' arrival into the bush as a forced descent into hell which is a parody of the colonial hunter's penetration of a paradise providing him with an intimation of the

age of innocence. Bam's petty hunting expeditions in the bushveld are by a corresponding logic an intimation of responsibility or complicity:

"All the old games, the titillation with killing-and-not-killing, the honour of shooting only in the wing, the pretence of hide and seek: invented to make killing a pleasure, were in another kind of childhood he had been living in to the age of forty, back there."(JP, 77)

The emphasis here is not so much on experience or maturity as on sin or guilt. The Oedipal obsession with blood in the novel functions on a level quite other than that of incest and patricide. It functions as an expression of colonial guilt exactly as in the case of the Portuguese teenager whose fluid becomes blood on Mehring's hand.

But where July's People fundamentally differs from The Conservationist is in its greater awareness of the constraint placed on the assumption about the potential solidarity between white women and the blacks. Antonia and the land are bound together not only on the ground that they are both subjugated to masculine fascism as represented by Mehring and colonialism but also on the ground of their threatening and subversive nature. This assumption is revised and re-formulated in July's People. Maureen's capacities in this area are channelled in a different direction. She tragically fails to even make the Africans interested in her travesty and consequently falls short of forging any kind of relationship with them. In fact, she emerges as an inseparable adjunct of Bam's masculine authority whose collapse she does not survive. She embodies the disintegration of reason and its total surrender to an angry landscape: yes to the similarity between women and the blacks, no to any hope of enacting a feeling of solidarity deriving from that similarity in any practical form.

Very early in the novel, the narrative mood is established:

"People in delirium rise and sink, rise and sink, in and out of lucidity"(JP, 3)

The two modes of consciousness are set well and clear. There is an uninterrupted inter-switch from lucidity as a lower world of experience to delirium as a world of incoherence and chaos, a zone where lucidity dissolves. In Madness and Civilisation A History Of Insanity In The Age Of Reason, 1967, Michel Foucault describes delirium as "the principle of madness... a system of false propositions in the general syntax of the dream"(106). This might tell us something about Maureen's situation. Set up against the harsh reality of the bushveld, a basic and desolate natural site, she acknowledges this type of reality only as a manifestation of the unreal. The contradiction is well intended. The whole experience that the new site has shaped is felt by Maureen as a bad dream, partly because the site itself is basic but mainly because of her disarmed approach to it. By disarmed I designate the sudden collapse of mediation between the Smales and nature, a role hitherto performed by civilisation and the tools it had provided. The feeling engendered by this combination is one of complete alienation from reality. The (very) real and the unreal become blurredly inter-linked and so the demarcation between lucidity and delirium is erased. What is particularly significant is that she tries to escape from what she already perceives as unreal into fiction. She tries to lose herself into another consciousness, a novel ironically bearing the title of *The Betrothed* which she had picked up in passing before the flight into the bush. The dislocation of reality produces a complete disintegration of reason. Everything becomes delirium. The problem, we are told, is:

"The transport of a novel, the false awareness of being in another time, place and life and place life that was the pleasure of reading, for her, was not possible. She was in another place, time, consciousness; and it was pressed in upon her and filled her as someone's breath fills a balloons shape. She already was what she was not. No fiction could compete with what she was finding she did not know, could

not have imagined and discovered through imagination. They had nothing. (JP., 29)

In a significant way, Laureen has lost actuality. There is nothing she can revert to as reality (from the unreal) or test the actuality of her situation against. She finds the new circumstances so unreal she becomes a piece of fiction herself. In the absence of any material possessions or privileges, the vigorous reality of the bush is perceived as unreal and erroneous. Madness in Foucault's strictly clinical sense "is precisely at the point of contact between the oneiric and the erroneous" (*Madness and Civilisation*, 106). I shall pursue this argument once I have investigated how the emergence of madness is related to the collapse of Bam's masculine authority.

6.2.1.2 Madness and apocalypse:

Away from civilisation, Bam is exposed to divestiture and can no longer provide the material comforts liable to protect his relation with Maureen. Their relationship is depicted as the product of those comforts and as seriously failing the test of nature in July's village:

"Habit assumed the role of initiative and reassurance — something [Bam] always had on him, a credit card or cheque-book. She would not look at him, and remark his divestiture."
(J.P., 59)

Bam's divestiture costs him his solidity as a centre of power and leaves him precariously exposed to Maureen's consummate re-evaluation. His rifle, the ultimate symbol of his power and manhood, proves just as useless as the tank "among these people who had taken them without asking why they should expect to be sheltered, fed, hidden" (J.P., 41), unless he is allowed to engage in the service of the chief as a mercenary, another closed option. He is then left with the realisation that "I am a boy with a pea-shooter" (J.P., 41). His and Maureen's sexuality is emptied of its human content as "The baring of breasts was not an intimacy but a castration of his sexuality and hers" (J.P., 90).

As Edith Hilton points out, the eradication of their sexuality results in their reduction to mere abstractions ('July's People', 259). Maureen becomes 'her' "not his wife, the presence in the hut... With her there was no under-surface of recognition, only moments of finding each other out" (J.P., 105). One can see here the basic disorder and utter failure of communication. The gulf-area of knowability points to the cancellation of the basic common landmarks humans construct and rely upon to perceive the area of response and predictability essential to communication. This

becomes clearer. With Barn's concern he might be told to move on:

"But she was no one to whom he could say that the chief was going to tell them to go. He had no idea how she would deal with this, certainly. There was no precedence with her" (JP, 105).

The ordeal is taken even further along by Gordimer's suggestion that language has become hard to reach and articulate through such potent statements of devastation as "only a cosmic sigh, they heard the sough of time and space, the wave poised over everything" (JP, 124) and "the words were not there, his mind his anger, had no grip" (JP, 127). The Smales fail to forge a new language capable of expressing the particularities of the new environment. It is an experience that leaves them literally speechless.

"He wanted to call the children into the hut but did not know how to explain the necessity he felt, or if he shared it. If she said 'why?', what would he say?" (JP, 41)

The point I am making here is that the idea of daily survival, a main anchorage point in the novel, and the forces of alienation are tied together in an effort to submit the Smales to the same conceptions to which Crawford's Africans are submitted and hence may be seen to parody the genre. Reason and language, two concepts existing within each other and for each other, have been suspended. Barn, for instance, tries but fails to forge "words that would make the truth that must be forming here, out of the blacks, out of themselves" (JP, 127). In other words, if civilisation is the only ground on which he and his family can sustain themselves, its cancellation ensues in complete loss of touch with reality, reason and language which are substituted for what seems oneiric, hallucinatory and degrading:

"They made love, wrestling together with deep resonance coming to each other through the other's body. In the

presence of their children breathing close around them and the nightly intimacy of cock-roaches, crickets and mice feeling out the darkness of the hut; of the sleeping settlement; of the bush.

In the morning he had a moment of hallucinatory horror when he saw the blood of the pig on his penis— then he understood it was hers."(*J.P.*, 80)

What I would like to note in the passage is the two levels of consciousness available to the Smales. Sexual intercourse has become an expression of agony and crisis on the purely physical level. All cognitive awareness has been dissolved into overwhelming bodily experience which is conceptualised only through hallucination. But whether physical or hallucinatory, the encounter is vulgarised. Either it happens in the presence of cock-roaches, crickets and mice or it evokes bestiality. Maureen's blood and that of the pig are confused, which is an indication that, for them sex is naturalised only as a measure of the "master bedroom". It is the facility that defines nature. When the master-bedroom is no longer available, sex is transformed into a bestial dimension and powerful images of cannibalism are projected to give the Smales's tragic outcome its fullest resonance:

"They had not known that meat can be intoxicating. Eating animated them in the way they attributed to wine, among friends, around a table. Barn sang a comic song in Afrikaans for Royce. —Again! Again! — Gina wavered through a lullaby she had learnt from her companions, in their language. Victor became a raconteur, past, present, and distance resolved in the best tradition of anecdote : — You know what we do at school? On Friday when the big boys go to cadets, and they're not there to boss us around in the play ground."(*J.P.*, 79)

Bestiality and the collapse of reason will be dealt with a little later. Prior to that, let us conclude discussion of the allusions in the passage at hand. The first interesting feature is the collapse of tenses. Consistently with the nature of day-

to-day survival, time is rendered into its one pertinent dimension, the present tense which has a transpositive function. The past is emptied of its meaning because only the present has an urgency that makes it vitally matter. This formula has its own turbulent innuendo which I think forks into three different directions. a) Fragmented speech which was a way of articulating delirium and madness in The Conservationist. b) the cyclic move of the Africans and their nature which continuously wheels the present into the past and the past into the present, thus connecting the ancestor with his children giving them a sense of tradition, continuity, vitality, purpose and what-not as in The Religious System of The Amazulu is contrasted to the Smales' alienation in time. They are hopelessly incarcerated in the present as they eventually forsake the wait for Godot. c) much like Davie Crawford's savages, the Smales now live only for the day and their own bellies. The tide is reversed.

Also, Victor's big boys are a symbol of the aggressive and artificial hierarchical edifice which white civilisation has erected in South Africa. In a major sense, Victor's anecdote is a reflection of the present topsy-turvydom: what happens when the white big boys are no longer there to boss July and his likes around. Interestingly enough, July's speech is always articulated in the present tense, which justifies the connection

The most important allusion however is to the relative nature of civilisation. It is power that emulates the illusion of civilisation. Sitting around a table drinking wine is a mere 'civilised' version of sitting on the ground eating meat. The demarcation between civilisation and savagery is presented as devoid of substance. In other words, such a demarcation is not a natural one but a product of power. The terminology of primitivism itself becomes a way of projecting the lights of visibility on something that is intolerably different and undiscernable. To use Foucauldian concepts, the Smales are the product of a civilisation that can

govern only through transparency and illumination. This form of power, Foucault notes in 'The Eye of Power', "will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen in a sort of immediate, collective and anonymous gaze...[and] will refuse to tolerate areas of darkness" (Knowledge / Power, 1980, 154). The point the scene makes is that minus the power, the Smales have been turned into their own ideas of what Africa and the Africans are about. I pursue this point in the case of Alexis Larsson in Brink's An Instant In The Wind.

F. Chapter Six

The Prospects And Limits Of Deconstruction In Nadine Gordimer And André Brink

Part Five

6.3.1. An Instant In The Wind – 'New' clichés:

6.3.1.1. Colonialism and masculinity:

In a sense, bestiality and the collapse of reason equal madness. As Foucault observes, "when the madness has become a beast, this presence of the animal in man...is silenced, but man himself is abolished" (Madness and Civilisation, 76). The very technique used to round off the novel is itself suggestive of the collapse of the notions of reason and civilisation. We are left uncertain as to what exactly happens to Maureen. She has heard the putter of a helicopter and started to run to where the noise is coming from "like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for the their lone survival, the enemy of all that would make claims of responsibility" (J.P., 160). To argue whether the plane is manned by black revolutionaries or represents an American *deus ex machina* as Nancy Bailey does in 'Living Without The Future' (World Literature Written In English, 1984, 221) is simply to argue whether the glass is half full or half empty. I think it remains extremely probable that the helicopter is a product of an imagination let completely loose. It is the ultimate sign of Maureen's tragic failure to understand the nature of her situation as the "real fantasies of the bush delude more inventively than the romantic forests of Grimm and Disney" (J.P., 160).

To sum up, alienation is expressed in the form of a consummate attack on civilisation, reason and technology—its metaphysical sky—and power political. Such an attack serves the significant purpose of distancing the present narrative discourse from colonial-discourse and of deconstructing the tenets of white settler ideology, thus broadening the gulf between the politics of colonialism and its culture. And yet I have to acknowledge the lurking suspicion that there is

another face to Nadine Gordimer's and André Brink's attack on civilisation. It is bizarre indeed that the strong reaction against civilisation has brought to light a very problematic situation. It has produced its own unconscious and ahistorical romanticism which stands in utter contrast to the two authors' original intentions of exorcising colonial images and representations through thematic and ideological deconstruction, thus bringing colonial discourse full circle.

Richard Shelton's poem referred to earlier testifies to the kind of difficulty the anti-civilisation stance has run into. Its first two stanzas read,

"I must have been almost crazy
to start out like that on my bicycle
pedalling into the tropics carrying
a medicine for which no one had found
the disease and hoping
I would make it in time.

I passed through a paper village under glass
where the explorers first found
silence and taught it to speak
where old men were sitting in front of
of their houses killing sand without mercy...

It is very understandable that challenging white supremacist discourse necessitates the inclusion of a calculated critique of the civilisation sitting at the heart of that discourse. To separate the two seems to border on the impossible. But it is a curious thing indeed that when all is said and done, the Africa both Gordimer and Brink assert is largely the Africa of "a boy's dream". In substance, it is not that different from Buchan's or Haggard's. It is still an essential creation which must retain its truth by remaining as pure and wild as a Victorian garden. It is a fine statement to say Africa does not yield to colonialism. But it is a repetition of colonial discourse to say that, because it does not yield to colonialism, it refuses reason or technology. Its intrinsic no-to-colonialism has developed into a strange

insularity to being anything else other than a natural aggressive dimension where man and the landscape enjoy the most harmonious of relationships, which is fine. The crooked bit is to advance that the continuity of harmony between Africa and its natural inheritors is safe-guarded by their heart-to-heart exchange on the purely sensual level. The attack on cognitive knowledge as part of the white man's enterprise of conquest can only imply that Africa is a sensual dimension. Africa and her Africans, we are led to believe, do not know each other. They feel each other through the musical waves of the unconscious and the intuitive. Phineas's wife's ceremony in The Conservationist is a good case in point. As Judie Newman observes, the purpose of this ceremony is to cause the ancestral spirit to materialise through sacrifice of a goat, "the rest of the initiate is the ability to find hidden objects" ('The Cons., That Book of Unknown Signs', 34). Africa's intuitive knowledge and spirituality is contrasted to Fiehring's cold and detached scientific mode of perceiving his environment. Which might be a statement of fact. The point remains that the two authors' Africa emerges as essentially intuitive and essentially sensual, which is equal to the cultural nonsense produced by either colonial discourse or Sedar Senghor's Négritude.

Because science destroys myth, as Gordimer invokes in July's People, in the same way Caliban's happiness and harmony with Algiers was destroyed by learning Prospero's language, Africa has to resist both science and language because it is essentially a preserver of myths and essentially silent as in Shelton's tropics. The Africa that emerges in July's People rejects the fruits of science into irrelevance exactly as it does to the Smales and their water-tank. Africa can live peacefully through the harsh naturalism of July's bushveld. In fact, it is the only way it knows how to live. This is the Africa of July's People. It is the only society in history whose power is in what is described as primitivism and who can protect itself against the might of colonialism using exactly that type of power.

Science, knowledge and technology are all foreign phenomena that are liable to do her more harm than good. So let us enjoy it as a wild and basic idea which can continue to provide us with an intimation of the paradise we have lost and can only recall in myth. This is the extent of the cultural nonsense that Gordimer and Brink's fiction hides. Civilisation is a medicine for a disease that no one had discovered. Civilisation destroys the romantic.

This is the problematic in which the fiction I have examined gets caught. And with July's People, the irony is set in place right from the start. As opposed to the colonial hero's penetration of the African interior, itself a re-entry to the pre-historic garden of Eden, foreshadowing the arrival of civilisation and the beginning of history, the Smales' is a forced descent into hell. Paradoxically, if civilisation marked the beginning of history for the colonial hero, it also marks its end for Gordimer. The collapse of white rule and civilisation in her fiction is marked with chaos, violence and death. But what triumphantly survives is a rural and technological renegade, Africa, who will simply pull on its naturalist blanket and go back to sleep in the margin of history. Africa has never but tolerated monotronics any-way.

Once again, the similarities between Gordimer's July's People and Brink's An Instant In The Wind are not hard to find. Brink's novel is also an attempt to experiment with human nature reduced to its basic form. As Elisabeth wonders, "what is the utter minimum one truly requires?" (An Instant In The Wind, 44). Finding themselves alienated from the society of man (both gender and species) with all its norms and limitations, Elisabeth and Adam have to work out their own formulas of behaviour to, and consciousness of, each other. This new situation is built up through a series of confrontations where Elisabeth tries to make him knuckle down to her authority as a white woman while he tries to reject his status as black slave and to assert his humanity. When she asks him to fetch her water, he rebelliously snaps: "Fetch your own water" to which she retorts, "I won't

let a slave speak to me like that"(ALLY,21). Through such recurring situations, Elisabeth realises that she has to make a decisive choice. Either she clings to the prerogatives of white authority warranted to her by Cape society and so perish in an environment not made for her, or reason with her own self and pride and recognise Adam for what he actually is, not for what she has been taught he is. The moment she realises that she has to change strategy with Adam, she implicitly admits that he is not the being en soi but the being pour soi. She finally accepts that he lacks what Jean Paul Sartre calls "la solidité des choses". He is therefore bound to be free.

There is a major contradiction in the novel's argument. Elisabeth and Adam can recognise each other only after the collapse of the masculine power that subjugated both of them. Her husband's destruction on the bird-pursuit is symbolic of what Africa does to both his power and that of white conquest. In other words, away from civilisation, Elisabeth and Adam do achieve some kind of solidarity. However, on close examination, one can see that even at this stage, the situation is still highly problematic. The collapse of white, masculine power does not make Elisabeth less alienated from the landscape. She still does find it hostile and difficult to adapt to. On the other hand, Adam in his recognition as a subject, as the being en soi becomes one of two things. Either he is an object of mediation through which Elisabeth relates to the wilderness or a new master on whom she has to depend for guidance, protection and especially survival. This is to say that they remain fundamentally out of tune even in the absence of Alex's masculine authority. By discarding the relics of her civilisation, tools, maps etc., she changes from one type of alienation to another.

Let us look at the matter from a Sartrean point of view, since it is a dominant perspective in the novel. Elisabeth recognises Adam not because of her awareness of the division within herself between the social and the human. In this sense, the act of recognition is a triumph of human nature over social prejudice. She has

chosen to recognise Adam and therefore she achieves a measure of her own freedom as a woman and as a social being. At the same time, the fact that without him she cannot survive in the wilderness is indicative not only of her alienation from nature but of the compulsion under which she has to choose. "To be free", F.H. Heinemann writes, "means, negatively, 'not to act under compulsion'" (Existentialism and The Modern Predicament, 1953, 113).

Being alienated from society, Elisabeth is inevitably faced with the task of reviewing her system of thinking. She comes close to equating her whiteness with her possessions. She is gradually seized by "a passion of destruction... to discard, to strip herself, to rid herself of all possessions" (A.I.I.W., 44). In fact, it is indicated that her whiteness becomes doubted and even exposed to dissipation. Being in the wilderness, her identity is no longer taken for granted; it is no longer based on skin-colour:

"Now quite suddenly, there is no one in terms of whom she can be recognised." (A.I.I.W., 49)

Alternatively, she achieves a state of oneness with Adam and the new identity is sealed with sexual intercourse. This is the ultimate stage of sacrificing her white identity and miscegenation comes as some sort of rite de passage. The point is taken. If miscegenation is a social vice, it is perfectly all right from a human point of view:

"We are still human. And so we remain scared, petty, and treacherous." (A.I.I.W., 106)

The interesting thing is that the state of oneness with Adam eventually produces a similar oneness with nature. Elisabeth seems to forsake her wish to return to the Cape and its civilisation. After all, returning to the Cape would be a return to the domain of masculinity, but especially to a state of social guilt.

Elisabeth has finally tapped the paradisaic and idyllic dimension of the wilderness, and her relationship with Adam has become guilt-free. Consider her new ambition:

"In the day time, you'll take the boys to the forest, or to your nuts in the sea, and the girls and I will tidy the cave and find some clay, then I'll try to make pots. We'll fetch water and look after you. At night we'll sleep together around the fire. We can make music together."(A.I.W., 127)

The attack on masculinity seems to reproduce the previous centuries' romantic discourse in a peculiar way. The eighteenth century Romantics' notion of harmony between man and nature which produced the noble savage, and Robinson Crusoe's "tentation d'un monde sans hommes", as Mannoni calls it, are all literally here. Let me reiterate the premises of the novel. White women and blacks share the status of slaves in colonial society," 'You think a slave is nothing but a woman! Thinking: and a woman nothing but a slave'(A.I.W., 27). Elisabeth snaps at her father. The idea here is a little bit more than just trite. In order to restore a chance for independent action, denied by colonial society, to women, masculine power is called back to the reserves and the theme of miscegenation is asserted to fill in the ensuing vacuum. In this regard, Susan Greenstein observes that:

"The role of white women is often symbolically rendered through a miscegenation myth which sees them as Mirandas, the prize sought by the Calibans of this earth."('Miranda's Story: Nadine Gordimer and the Story of Empire', Novel-A Forum On Fiction, 1985, 228)

Elisabeth's sexual engagement with Adam thus comes as a sacrificial act (he baptised her with his blood, she with her moisture) that expresses her revolt against the masculine Prospero-system which confines her significance to the domain of the purely sexual or sensual. Adam and Elisabeth find a new fuse of solidarity in their Miranda-Caliban status and are made to consent to such a status.

In fact, I am disposed to read a little bit more in their new relationship than Greenstein does. Even in the 'slaves' achievement of a recognition of each other's humanity, the formula, carried to its logical conclusion, gives Adam feminine dimensions since the temptation of a world without humans becomes a temptation of a world without men. Man-Friday-Caliban, becomes the man who is not really that but may seem as a cultural eunuch.

This is not all. The collapse of the masculine romantic hero makes room for the construction of a new common denominator between Adam and Elisabeth. Consider the next exchange between them:

"_And tell me about the sea.

_ I can't tell you. You must feel the sea to know him."(ALLW:118)

On location, the exchange goes on:

"_Are you afraid ?

_ Yes.

_That's good. It makes it easier to feel him."(ALLW:120)

What I would like to focus on here is the way to knowledge and the contrast between "feel" and "know". To achieve the same degree of harmony with nature, innate in Adam, Elisabeth has to switch from the Cartesian "I think therefore I am" to what is represented as Adam's "I feel therefore I am".

7.3.1.2. Gender, race and the alternative ego:

Adam is many ways the alternative voice to Alexis Laanson's alienated position which culminates in his symbolic destruction by the landscape. The conquistador and fascist masculine status is overcome by the natural, the sensual and the legitimate which Adam represents. When Elisabeth asks Adam where he has come from, "[h]e turns back with a vague, sweeping gesture, including most of the dusky world behind him" (ALLW, 20). His indifferent motioning expresses the idea that the question put to him is irrelevant. In fact, senseless. He comes from the wilderness which is part of him as he is part of it. He is nature's son. God's creation in the raw. The wilderness is flowing in his blood.

"My land I've seen it with my eyes and grasped with my hands. I eat it and drink." (ALLW, 35)

This existential fusion between Adam and his environment is a hint that, unlike Alexis, the wilderness is part of his bodily schema, to use a concept by Franz Fanon; he identifies with it "not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge" (Black Skin White Masks, 78). Alexis on the other hand, represents the paragon of cognitive knowledge which is alienated from nature. Africa for him is an abstract, rational experience taken not for what it is but for what he makes it: an object to examine, catalogue, and conquer. He explains to Elisabeth that:

"Sometimes one is overwhelmed by a new place, you feel quite helpless because there is so much all around you, you wish it were possible to gather all inside you. It's as if your eyes and ears simply cannot cope with it all. But then you set to work, naming things, trying not to look too far ahead but concentrate on one thing at a time. And suddenly it's all done, and you discover it no longer overwhelms you. Now you can handle it, it belongs to you. Nothing can take it from you again, even if you are miles and oceans and hemispheres

away. Now you can possess a small portion of the earth. You see, I am assembling a portion of Africa to take with me one day. Something of this vast continent which will be my own" (ALLW., 40-41)

For Alexis then, Africa has still to be named, defined, transposed unto a map. It has to be re-created before he can recognise its existence, by which time he has already possessed it and can claim it belongs to him. Adam on the other hand, Elisabeth therefore, function on the level of the senses. They manage to get back to the Cape because it is "easier to trek through the landscape of truth than to comprehend it or to account for it" (ALLW., 194). Thus the novel inadvertently tells us more than it means to. The underlying statement emerges as strange as problematic. This Africa is after all so difficult to understand and discern you can either subject it on the cognitive level as Alexis does or submit to it on the sensual level as Elisabeth does.

7.4 Recapitulation:

To recapitulate, Nadine Gordimer's The Conservationist and July's People, and Andre Brink's An Instant in The Wind and Rumours of Rain treat the same problem despite the two authors differing perspectives. In all four novels, the tenets of white settler ideology form the subject of a fierce attack operating through a focus on the themes of civilisation and reason. They use different voices to pass the death sentence on white knowledge of the environment where it has operated throughout to forecast the collapse of the power that knowledge has buttressed. And the verdict is uttered in chilling simplicity. The language of reason and technology which white settlerdom has resorted to in order to translate its experience in Africa is tragically inadequate and is responsible in great measure for its intractable alienation. Mehring, Hlynhardt, the Smales and Alexis exemplify the tragic outcome of a savagely empiricist consciousness that is willing to recognise only the physically perceivable. The Smales and Alexis experience in the flesh the serious repercussions of what Mehring and Hlynhardt experience as a crisis of consciousness. Thus the collapse of these protagonists' perception epitomises the apocalyptic vision of the collapse of their rule.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the authors' attack-strategy is spearheaded by sexuality. This is due to the masculine character of colonialism. Masculinity is perceived by the authors as pervading all the domains of power from the abstract notion of reason to its practical translation in technology. However, it remains to be stressed that the alternative voice to such masculinity produces its own peculiar view of Africa and her Africans, a view which one has to say is essentially romantic and ahistorical. Ahistorical in the same way Mehring is. In fact, Mehring's anachronism paradoxically reflects that of the author. It is very ironical indeed that the attempt to do without the essential idioms of colonial

discourse has given the two authors more than they can chew. Having deconstructed those idioms, they seem to have reproduced them. What has changed is the intention and political perspective. Neither Gordimer nor Brink depart from 'the happy compulsion' to serve the ideals of race, civilisation or empire which had motivated Rider Haggard and John Buchan. And yet they do join the ranks of their predecessors by reproducing a vision of Africa that paradoxically subverts colonial discourse and bears its whiff.

And I suspect that Nadine Gordimer is somehow aware of this anomaly. I am referring to an interview with Stephen Gray in which she declares that she does not believe in perfection, only in limited goals... Camus' limited goals. Sisyphus remains a happy figure for Camus even in his senseless rock-task, which invites us to join Richard Schacht's party of inevitable alienation... Perhaps one must take the Smales a little more seriously than is already done. After all, the product Gordimer makes them deliver is that the civil-political system where consciousness operates captivates it more than one is able or willing to admit.

The point in all this is that alienation is not solely socio-political. Cultural or metaphysical difference represents the development of the history of ideas of the Other who is finally captured in a socio-economic strategy which in this case happens to be the Apartheid system.

North African francophone literature produced in the colonial era, up to 1962 or Algeria's Independence, is a rich field in this respect. We shall see that even in the absence of a strict or vulgar socio-political fragmentation, alienation is still such an urgent daily business. I shall discuss alienation in Algerian writer Kateb Yacine's Medjma and Moroccan writer Dries Chraïbi's Le Passé simple and Les Boucs. Le Passé simple will be used mainly as a backdrop for the second novel for reasons to be explained. Prior to that however, I shall examine some aspects of the theme in Ezekiel Mphahlele. The discussion of this author will give us scope for seeing some of the similarities and differences in the treatment of alienation

between South African black literature and North African literature of the colonial period.

G. Chapter Seven

The Ezekiel Mphahlele Phenomenon

Part One

7.1. Introduction:

Although any sweeping generalisations must be avoided, one conclusion should be emphasised from earlier. From a conceptual or metaphysical point of view, the white South African novel should be seen as conforming to two major patterns. Firstly, it is part of a specific colonial legacy and tradition in writing. As Patricia Morris indicates in her article 'The Early Black South African Newspaper and the Development of the Novel':

"The nineteenth century growing literary consciousness of the middle-classes in Britain had to do with an ideology maintained firstly by a bourgeois life-style and secondly by a need continually to affirm an ever hard won social identity. The English South African literary situation has its origins in nineteenth century British colonialism which imported and imparted both its 'literature' and literary ideology" (Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 1980, 15).

Secondly, the white South African novel is part of a more general and less concrete package in the sense that it is a legitimate descendent of European thinking.

These two statements immediately bring us up against a different issue which constitutes the real subject of the present chapter. Such an issue relates to the white South African author's failure to embrace or at least understand the black experience for reasons that could be described as "objective", harking back to socio-political fragmentation, and, in another major context, to the nature of a meta-cultural conflict between two cultures representing divergent ways of looking at the world¹. The present chapter will try to pinpoint the major

¹John Ngubane perceptively observes that: "Black and white in South Africa are caught in an ugly conflict of minds. The idea of fulfilment which the Africans translate into experience clashes with the philosophy by which they give meaning to reality. Race and colour are merely

components of 'black experience' and alienation as perceived by one of the most outstanding figures of South African black writing, Ezekiel Mphahlele. His autobiography Down Second Avenue(1959) and autobiographical novel The Wanderers(1971) provide the focal point of examination, although a few of his short stories will also be included.

On a different level, an attempt will be made to compare the black South African author's handling of the theme of alienation to that found in a few novels from North Africa. The colonial factor will be used as a common denominator and this will account for the fact that the treatment of the North African novel is confined to pre-1962 writing, that being the year Algeria, France's latest colony in the region, became independent. This issue will constitute the subject of the next two chapters.

Ezekiel Mphahlele was born in 1919 in South Africa. He worked as a teacher of English and Afrikaans at Orlando High School(1945-52) and as fiction editor of *Drum* magazine(1955-57) in Johannesburg. He also held several academic positions: lecturer of English literature at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Director of African Programmes in Paris etc., He is a well-established short story writer, novelist and critic. As a result of oppressive legislation in South Africa during the 1950's, Mphahlele was driven into exile. This seems to have made him into a symbol of the black south African intellectual operating under extremely difficult and restrictive political circumstances. There is an interesting paradox here which accounts for my choice of this writer as opposed to other well-known black writers such as Peter Abrahams or Richard Rive: he comes from a highly political background and yet his writing seems to reflect a highly depoliticised vision as will be demonstrated below.

the vehicles for the collision at the level of fundamentals; they are not in themselves the causes of the conflict"(Ushaba, Washington D.C., Three Continents Press, 1974, 1)

7.2. Down Second Avenue – Romanticising the 'real':

There are two different levels of consciousness in Down Second Avenue in between which a history of personal revolt is spun. Alienation acquires its fullest meaning in the ultimate outcome of that history. Let us refer to the first level of consciousness as memorisation and to the second as factualisation.

7.2.1. Memorisation or the age of innocence:

7.2.1.1. The country

This process consists in a spontaneous narrative of childhood life and experiences. As far as alienation is concerned, the narrative seems rather out of focus and lacking any strong sense of perspective. For example, the book starts with this statement:

"I have never known why we _ my brother, sister and I _ were taken to the country when I was five"(Down Second Avenue, 11)

Rather than take this statement primarily as an admission of ignorance about parts of his own life as Ursula Barnett does in Ezekiel Mphahlele (1979), I would argue that it represents a sample announcement of the author's main plight in the book. Alienation in black South African literature seems to be anchored in the degree of frustration caused by lack of control over one's life or destiny. And clearly, Mphahlele's book abounds in examples that epitomise this process of objectivisation as things happen to him through no choice of his own. But the passage above is also interesting in that it initiates another theme which runs throughout the autobiography. Confusion and muddle-headedness are part and parcel of Eseki's social environment and psychological make-up from the early stages of his life:

"We went to live with our grandmother_ paternal grandmother. My father and mother remained in Pretoria where they both worked, my father a shop messenger in an outfitters' firm; Mother as a domestic servant. That was in the autumn of 1924.

I remember feeling quite lost during the first weeks in that little village of Maupaneng, seventy-five miles out of Pietersburg town; a village of about 5,000 people"(D.S.A, 11)

Note a crucial feature of this passage. Events are not taking place in a geographical vacuum. Amidst the tension and feeling of loss, there emerges a geographical polarization between the country and the city. Such polarization is not only a major source of tension in the book, it is the framework within which is enacted the sense of alienation that pervades the life of the black man as perceived by the author.

On these grounds, it is significant that Chapter One is entitled 'The Tribe'. Mphahlele can stop and look back, rather nostalgically, on childhood days in the country, something to which he has actually also devoted Chapter Two, Leshoana Sands. But childhood days in themselves are not important to us. Or if they are, it is because of their moral and cultural set-up which the author describes and which acts as a backdrop against which alienation is measured. The tribe, socio-cultural microcosm, is a guarantor of psychological wholeness and a safeguard, both quantitative and qualitative, of stability. Simple and basic as the conditions of life which the tribe offers may be, they still leave the black man with ample room for self-sufficiency and, above all, control over his own life. The amount of emphasis laid on this particular trait in Down Second Avenue is a clear indication how much of it was missing in the author's life and, among other things, helps to account for the powerful sense of admiration he has for certain individuals who seem to have had control over certain aspects of their lives. Among such individuals are his grandmother and his aunt Dora who, amidst all the crushing poverty and squalor of Marabastad, emerge as having that particular quality of character-strength whereby the dignity of being in possession of one's destiny is maintained. Talking to Lewis Nkosi and Richard Rive in an interview, Mphahlele declares:

"These two people have had tremendous influence over my life.[...] these two people impressed me very much with the complete control that they had over their lives. Politically speaking, they didn't have that control over their lives, but in the family and within the community of Marabastad where we lived they had complete control over their lives."('Conversation with Ezekiel Mphahlele', Africa Report, 1964, 9)

A compelling description of the grandmother, moral pillar of this tribal world, is thus offered in the opening part of the autobiography,

"My grandmother sat there under a small lemon tree next to the hut, as big as fate, as forbidding as a mountain, stern as a memosa tree."(D.S.A., 9)

The double-tone in this passage: she represents not only overwhelming authority as seen by a child but also gives a sense of moral strength and satisfaction as felt by an adult, is repeated in another passage:

"Things stood out clearly in my mind from those years: my granny, the mountain on the foot of which the village clung like a leech, and the mountain darkness, so solid and dense. And my granny seemed to conspire with the mountain and the dark to frighten us."(D.S.A., 11)

7.2.1.1. The concept of blackness – The communal and the individual:

In his article 'Staffrider and Directions Within Contemporary South African Literature' (Literature and Society In South Africa, 1984), Michael Vaughan shows how the sixties and seventies saw the emergence of a new strategy in black writing based on the concept of Blackness. Such strategy consisted in gradually drifting away from the liberal model centered around the individual in favour of a more mass-oriented concept of the struggle against Apartheid. Blackness, according to Michael Vaughan, came to represent the wish to achieve more solidarity among the blacks. While I cannot argue that the concept of Blackness plays any significant part in Down Second Avenue, and while I would not classify the book as one that closely pertains to that register of writing Barbara Harlowe terms as resistance literature in Resistance Literature, (1987), it remains to be said that Mphahlele is a precursor of that tendency, although only remotely and on a somewhat superficial level. The importance of the first two chapters in this regard is that they celebrate community life, with special emphasis on community. And no doubt one of the basic differences between the author's celebration of that life and the concept of Blackness as it was manifested in the literature of the sixties and seventies is that the former is more sociological than immediately political in both undertone and intention. In fact, at this stage in the autobiography at least, Mphahlele's concept of community is part of a humanist vision of African society:

"The man whose wife was ill and may be had no daughter to cook for him had his food with the others at the fire-place." (D. S. A., 15)

On the cultural level, knowledge is dispensed on a communal basis which allows the various members of the tribe to tap the same sources for guidance and

inspiration:

"We learned a great deal at the fire place, even before we were aware of it; history, tradition and custom, code of behaviour, communal responsibility, social living and so on."(D.S.A., 15)

Part and parcel of this humanist vision of pastoral or pre-urban society is a certain degree of nostalgia and idealization. The picture might have blots of poverty and deprivation:

"Often the crops failed us. Mother sent us a few tins of jam and we ate that with corn-meal porridge. Sometimes she sent us sugar which we ate with porridge. Other times we ate roasted flying ants or hairy tree worms or wild spinach with porridge"(D.S.A., 18).

It is still one of innocence amalgamated with a certain degree of abstract harmony:

"But all in all perhaps I led a life shared by all the other country boys. Boys who are aware of only one purpose of living; to be"(D.S.A., 18).

But the harmony of this song of innocence is broken by the snap-shot premonitions of city-life. The conflict between christian and heathen, the tones of which Mphahlele muffles and invokes only humorously at the beginning, suddenly acquires a wider, more significant dimension. Thema, one of the villagers who had gone to live in the city stopped going to church because he thought that:

"... men were not brothers in the city. The Black man must enter the white man's house through the back door. The Black man does most of the dirty work. When a white man who hasn't gone far in school is given such work he says I'm not a Kaffir. I Black man cleans the streets but mustn't walk

freely on the pavement; Black man must build houses for the white man but cannot live in them; Black man cooks the white man's food but eats what is left over. Don't listen to anyone bluff you and say Black and white are brothers."(D. S. A, 17)

And then Old Segone, the village story-teller, recounts:

"We were afraid for Thema's mind. Something seemed to have happened to him in the city. Something terrible and dark. He just wandered about, as if he was waiting for something to happen"(D. S. A, 17).

7.2.2. Factualisation or the age of conflict:

7.2.2.1. The city:

Passing from 'Leshoana Sands' to 'Into the Slums', Eseki performs a journey from the country back into the city. In a way, this is a passage from innocence into experience or from 'paradise' into 'hell' where much knowledge occurs but also where alienation is the order of the day. If Eseki came to regard the first thirteen years of his life mostly spent in the country as "a waste", he will now start developing a new awareness and a greater sense of perspective. The opening two sentences of the third chapter are an immensely significant statement, the kind that ushers in a totally new dimension to Eseki's personality, points to a more sophisticated stage in the long road towards an overall consciousness, eventually responsible for his decision to go into exile, and finally introduces a different mood of writing:

"When I was about twelve I noticed something that had already begun to take shape in that part of north-eastern Transvaal that fell under the rule of Chief Mphahlele. The young able-bodied men were leaving the villages to seek work in answer to the call of the city. Vaguely I understood that Pretoria was the Mecca" (D.S.A., 22).

This is the first realization, implicit as it may be, that the author registers to indicate his disillusionment with the world of the country. That world is not only "innocent" it is also fragile. Tribal life and its communal style of existence are not an isolated domain. They are the periphery that provides cheap labour for the powerful core, Pretoria or the city at large. In the following passage, both his sad disillusionment with the country and his resentment of the city are convincingly

conveyed:

"And there was a less glamorous side to all [that was said about the city]. Wherever you went _ in the fields, at village festivals, at church and every other place where people congregated _ you found mostly middle-aged women, old women and old men. The land was not giving out much. The black man could work only the strip that was given him by the chief. The chief had no more to give out. The old men at the fire-place complained endlessly that most of their land was taken away by the white man."(D. S. A, 23)

The new mood of the book at this stage is one of a depressed and low-spirited narrator:

"I hated clouds, as I still do today; had always hated them because they made my soul gloomier than it was, there at Maupaneng and here in Pretoria."(D. S. A, 27)

A very important aspect of alienation in Down Second Avenue is the degree of doubt and restlessness that characterises the protagonist's psychology and frame of mind. Such doubt and restlessness are conveyed in ways that suggest deep-seated feelings of aimlessness, rootlessness and absurdity:

"And somehow I seemed to be travelling a long, long winding road that promised no destination; just like those red roads of my earlier years, where the dust far ahead of you told you that the end was not yet. Was it to be thus in the city?"(D. S. A, 50)

7.2.2.2 Religion and African humanism:

How do such feelings manifest themselves in the book and how does the author account for them? A theme that figures in the early stages of this autobiography but which gains greater magnitude as we go along is religious conflict or discrepancy. I have already noted that in the village of Maupaneng there is a form of religious prejudice between the Christians and the 'tribal kraal communities' or 'heathens' whereby each party subjugates the other to a process of vilification. The heathens are accused of practising witchcraft while they consider Christian presence in their kraals trespass and sacrilege. I have also noted how the city is associated with all sorts of inequities which are coated in a religious guise which of course gives the issue a colour-dimension. With time, Eseki becomes very aware of (and sensitive to) the role of religion in his life both as an individual and as a member of a collectivity. This is what he notes:

"But Church attendance dropped those days. And the preachers blamed loose morals for it. The depression was God's punishment, they said. Women, old men and children of our age kept up their attendance. The young men and women stayed away."(D. S. A, 98)

Trying to look at such decline in religious interest among the blacks, Eseki seems to realize, in terms of the supernatural, as the preachers do, or even from the point of view of morality and social change — The Columbia Hall which epitomises the new social forces gets much of the blame — is to search in the wrong bag. What we have here is a major shift of axis as far as Eseki's awareness is concerned. In fact, this is the beginning of a new political outlook that will try to understand the political forces of Apartheid society and to deal with alienation in political terms. Or so it seems. Let us examine the following passage:

"What I do know is that about eight out of every ten educated Africans, most of whom are also professed Christians, still believe firmly in the spirits of their ancestors. We don't speak to one another about it among the educated. But when we seek moral guidance and inspiration and hope, somewhere in the recesses of our being, we grope around for some link with those spirits."(D.S.A., 64)

There are two major points to be read in this passage. Firstly, the duality of religious belief among the educated Africans. While on the one hand this is an indication that the old self and identity have been preserved against a long history of christianization, and which, translated into political terms, means that they subscribe only partly to the religion of the oppressor, such duality is, in a different context, exactly what it says: a clear symptom of a state of crisis with which Eseki tries to come to terms by steering away from religion altogether. Towards the end of the book, he declares:

"Something dramatic was taking place inside me. Where I had accepted things as part of a moral programme, my personality revolted [...] I questioned the necessity of religion, I got stuck and suspended belief indefinitely."(D.S.A., 164)

Elsewhere, Mphahlele dwells on this point in fuller and more elaborate detail. Talking to a group of students at the University of Texas at Austin, he explains the logic behind his rejection of Christianity in particular and religion as a whole. The passage is relatively lengthy but worth quoting in full:

"When the black man tries to use Christianity for a political problem such as in South Africa, he finds it does not take him anywhere. They come to a dead end somewhere because it has a theology that does not necessarily fit in with the

political tempo of any particular time. [...] the theology of the Christian world is against any kind of political overthrow or political agitation. It is the gospel of kindness, humility, of nonviolence. It instills a sense of authority to the extreme extent that you do nothing about it. Leroy Jones would argue that Islam is the other preference. I don't see there is any choice between the two. When we have pushed all these foreign religions in the background or flushed them out of our minds, do you know what we are left with ? We are left with ourselves to depend on. [...] only our naked selves with our ancestors to think of [...] When we have divested ourselves completely of the Christian myth we will know that we have won the battle."('Interviews With South African Writers In Texas', Palaver, 41)

As has already been pointed out, the idea of independence is essential to Mphahlele's struggle against Apartheid society and alienation and can be seen articulated in a variety of different contexts. But what I shall pursue now is his notion of African humanism hinted at in the closing sentences of the passage above and made to encompass issues of divergent but related orders. Simultaneously, I would argue that it is the very medium of African humanism which Mphahlele uses to transcend or defuse his alienation which eventually ensues in just that, alienation, though on a somewhat different level, as it sometimes leaves his thought and writing dangerously exposed to certain literary and cultural maladjustments...

It is obvious that the notion of African humanism is buttressed by the concept of the ancestor. Such a concept acts as the moral alternative for the religious/Christian myth after its rejection. The ancestors in Mphahlele's definition are:

"those who fell by the white man's gun. those are the men we think of and those are our moral props if we need any at all."('I. W. S. A', 41)

This element highlights all the more the importance of the grandmother in Down Second Avenue. She held a lot of fascination for Mphahlele on account of her ability to exercise control over her communal life but, in a more significant way, by virtue of her role as an ambivalent mediator between the ancestors and Eseki as she imparted to him ancestral morality and tribal wisdom. On a different level, "her belief in the present [as] simply prologue to eternity" as Saunders Redding puts it ('Out From Second Avenue' Africa Today, 1971, 78), helped shape Eseki's thinking and spirituality which come to us in the form of his African humanism, at a later stage. This is how Mphahlele expresses it:

"And my grandmother had a charming way of talking about God, the Christian God, and talking about the gods and ancestors in the same breath and there was never any sense of conflict in her mind between the two." ('Conversation With E. Mphahlele', 9)

This tone of reconciliation between two types of metaphysics resonates in his writing as it is extended to canvass his overall view of the situation in South Africa. The following passage from Down Second Avenue brings this juxtaposition into sharp focus:

"I admire the white man's achievements, his mind that builds tall buildings, powerful machinery. I used to want to justify myself and my kind to the white man. I later discovered that it wasn't worth it. It was to myself and to my own kind I needed to justify myself. I think now that the white man has no right to tell me how to order my life as a social being, or order it for me. He may teach me how to make a shirt or how to read and write, but my forebears and I could teach him a thing or two if only he would listen and allow himself time to feel. Africa is no more for the white man who comes here to teach and control her human and

material forces and not learn."(D.S.A, 218)

Two major points are to be retained from this passage. The first one concerns Mphahlele's integrationist stance as a whole. The second has to do with the concept of blackness implicitly stated in his realisation that the time he needed to justify himself and his kind to the white man is over. Such an assertion is not without a background or, especially, controversy.

Where integrationism is concerned, Mphahlele, like his grandmother who talks about the christian God and the African gods without a sense of conflict, believes that the cultures of Africa and the West can be reconciled beyond their intractable differences into a multi-racial society provided it does not sacrifice or compromise the individual's value. As Samuel Omo Asein writes in his article the 'Humanism of Ezekiel Mphahlele', the author firmly believes in

"the eternal value of a brotherhood that does not compromise man's essential humanity."(Journal Of Commonwealth Literature, 1980, 39)

In the interview already mentioned with L. Nkosi and R. Rive, Mphahlele himself gives an account of his ability to accommodate this Afro-Western cultural amalgam:

"My African values continue to remain a top, solid thing inside me, the African humanism, this sense of being one... wanting to be one of a community which is very African. The individual is the European part of me."('C. W. E.M.', 8)

In his collection of essays, Voices In the Whirlwind (1972), he elaborates further on this point, though in different terms however. He states:

"And so here I am, an ambivalent character. But I am nothing of the oversimplified and sensationalised version of a man

of two worlds. It is not as if I was pinned on a rock, my legs stretched in opposite directions. Education sets up conflicts but also reconciles them in degrees that depend on the subject's innate in-personality equipment. It seems to me a writer in an African setting must possess this equipment and must strive toward some workable reconciliation inside himself."(121)

The value of the individual in this humanist scale of things exceeds the bounds of his social, geographic and political being and rubs off the limitations of the colour issue. The vision that Mphahlele has of the ambivalent individual encompasses something of the universal, he asserts:

"In your higher education you assimilate patterns of thought, argument and so on from an alien culture in an alien language; they become your own. Of course you cannot help using your African setting as your field of reference; you cannot help going out of the queue of Western orientation now and again to consult those of your people who are not physically in it. You try to express their philosophy in a European language whose metaphor and allegory and so on are alien to the spirit of that philosophy: something that can be best understood in terms of metaphor and allegory that are centered heavily on human relationships and external nature. All the same you are in the queue, and you belong not only to an African community but also to a worldwide intellectual or worldwide economic community, or both..."(V.I.W., 127)

Such then is the strategy of Mphahlele's integrationism. Needless to say that it is a strategy of a narrow scope and limited goals. In Down Second Avenue, for example, Eseki comes up against patterns of social behaviour based not on the respect of individual qualities as such but on whiteness. The electrocuting paternalism or condescension of the white office-girls is a case in point:

"I had my share of trouble with whites and and their superior airs. It was 'yes, John' here; 'yes, Jim' there; 'what do you want boy?' here."(D. S. A, 137)

And even if Mphahlele can adopt such strategy of reconciliation successfully on the strictly individual and personal level, one would be hard put to it actually to imagine it being acted out as a group attitude among blacks in South Africa where the struggle against Apartheid has focalised — and not defused! — the principle of colour and cultural difference in the black camp. Against the background of the South African cultural and racial climate, even as it is represented in Down Second Avenue, Mphahlele's formulations seem to be mere "Intellectual Indulgence" ('H. E. M.', 49). A synthesis of the kind he offers can only lose a man his place in the world, which is exactly what has happened in his own case. Unable to transcend the principle of colour/racial difference (because that is not possible) and becoming increasingly unpopular among blacks in South Africa where the new populist orientation in literature was gradually rejecting the liberal model and its individualist hero-notion in favour of a more militant trend that places the concept of Blackness in the vanguard of things, Mphahlele seems to have ended in a difficult situation...

8.2.2.3. Négritude and African humanism:

On a different level, Mphahlele's assertion that it is to himself and his kind that he needs to justify himself immediately links up with his stance on Négritude. Here, it is useful to present some of his views on that issue. The following pronouncements are excerpts from a talk he gave at a conference in Dakar on African literature in April 1963. He asks:

"Who is so stupid as to deny the historical fact of Négritude as both protest and positive assertion of African cultural values? All this is valid. What I do not accept is the way in which too much of the poetry inspired by it romanticises Africa — as a symbol of innocence, purity, and artless primitiveness."(V. I. W., 165)

A little later, he goes on,

"Négritude, while a valuable slogan politically, can, because its apostles have set it up as a principle of art, amount to self-enslavement — 'an autocolonisation' [...] we should not allow ourselves to be bullied at gunpoint into producing literature that is supposed to contain a Négritude theme and style."(V. I. W., 38)

The reason for this attack on Négritudists, as Asein points out, is that:

"They seemed to justify the *raison d'être* of the black man by first reminding themselves that they are black."('H. E. M.', 40)

The bottom-line argument in Mphahlele's rejection of Négritude is that it brings the black man's self-image to square up with the very notion of Apartheid itself.

7.2.3. Political perspectives _ From background to subject-matter:

This little digression on the subject of Negritude should be seen in the light of my previous statement that Mphahlele's writing often fails to manifest the political and colour specificities which, I suggest, are essential ingredients to the South African situation. Does this imply an initial misconception on the part of the author as to the demands and challenges besetting him as a writer or a failure to meet the expectations put on him as a spokesman for the wretched of the earth? In the same interview with Texas University students, Mphahlele admits:

"I was interested in people, in their ghetto life and their own little dramas and tragedies which would not necessarily have to do with the racial issue. That was my first entry into literature_ my interest in people as people and not as political victims. It was when I became a teacher and came into contact with people and felt the political pressures around me that I began to wake up and became very sensitive to the political situation"(I. W. S. A. W. I. T', 40)

7.2.3.1. 'The Living And The Dead':

From his collection of short stories In Corner B (1967) I have chosen three stories to illustrate this point. Out of the three, only one, 'The Living and the Dead', probes, and only very remotely, the colour issue in the form of master/slave relationship. This story tells of Jackson, a black servant working for Stoffel Visser, an Afrikaner government official. One morning, Jackson fails to turn up for work and this has a negative effect on the orderly life of Stoffel who fails to deliver a committee report on what was to become the Group Areas Act to the minister concerned. Unexpectedly, a railway black worker comes to see Stoffel with a letter addressed to the missing servant and describes to him a scene where he saw another black man trampled upon by the crowds at the railway station where he regained the letter. Stoffel starts a search for Jackson in hospitals and police stations but to no avail. On returning home on Monday, he finds Jackson in bed, injured. What has actually happened is that while he was on the train, reading a book, a white man came along and asked what he, Jackson, was doing with a book, referring to him as a 'monkey'. Losing his temper, Jackson picked up a fight during which he was badly beaten and dragged to a far away police station.

In the midst of his exasperation over Jackson's failure to turn up for work, Stoffel expresses the idea that being in South Africa, one is necessarily trapped in its turmoil and consequently can only defend his position and identity as a white man. Whether one likes it or not, that is one's destiny. Talking to his friend Dopple Fourie, he says:

"You know I'd rather be touring the world and meeting people and cultures and perhaps be learning some art myself [...] instead of rotting in this hole and tolerating numbskulls I'm compelled to work with on committees. Dopple, there must be hundreds of our people who'd rather be doing something

else they love best. But we are all tied to some bucking bronco and we must like it while we are still here and work ourselves up into a national attitude."('The Living And The Dead', 87)

One thread that runs through this story is the tone of protest against the inhumanities wreaked on blacks. Such inhumanities come in the form of contempt, prejudice and above all violence. When Stoffel phones up the police station to inquire about Jackson, the reply given is full of contempt for the latter who is presented as a victim of extreme standardization and whose individuality is abrogated. The policeman speculates:

"perhaps [the] 'kaffir' had gone to sleep with his 'maid' elsewhere and had forgotten to turn up for work. Or [he] might be under a hang-over in the location. You know what these Kaffirs are."('L.D.', 94)

But what is particularly disturbing for Stoffel when he comes back to find Jackson in a state of agony and to hear him account for his absence is the realization that the latter did not live up to the bad image that was given of him and his likes by the policeman for example. Such realization triggers feelings of guilt, which for a while threatens to tear him apart:

"For four years he had lived with a servant and had never known more about him than he had two children living with his mother-in-law and a wife. Even then, they were such distant abstractions — just names representing some persons, not hum, and flesh and blood and heart and mind."('L.D.', 94)

However, this moment of guilt and uncertainty is short lived. Stoffel shuts it out in a way he knows only too well. He resorts to his "layers of crocodile hide to

protect himself against thoughts and feelings that might some day in the vague future threaten to hurt."(L. D., 87) In other words, he will try to exclude Jackson from all possible realities and, indeed, to see in him nothing but mere 'abstractions':

"And then Stoffel Visser realized he did not want to think. He wanted to do something... Jackson would want a day off to go to his father... Sack Jackson ? No. Better continue treating him as a name, not as another human being. Let Jackson continue as a machine to work for him. Meantime, he must do his duty_ dispatch the commission's report. That was definite, if nothing else was. He was a white man, and he must be responsible. To be white and to be responsible are one and the same thing..."('L. D.', 95)

Whether Mphahlele has created a successful white character or not is not the issue here². But of the three stories at hand, this is by far the edgiest, if one may attach such an epithet to literature that confronts the racial issue directly.

² For a discussion of Mphahlele's white characters, including Steve Cartwright in The Wanderers, see G. M. Nkondo's 'Apartheid and Alienation In Mphahlele's The Wanderers' Africa Today 1973 20 IV.

7.2.3.2 'In Corner B':

'In Corner B' is one of Mphahlele's short stories that hardly approach the colour question in any sort of way, thus strongly asserting its apoliticality. It is the best example of the fiction that deals with people's dramas and tragedies, people as people and not as political beings. Strangely enough, the setting of the story is not the planet Mars but a township in South Africa. It tells the story of a man who has been murdered by Tsotsis. His body has to be kept unburied for a few days so that even his relatives living in remote places have a chance to bid him farewell for the last time. In the process, there is a celebration of the communal spirit at the time of the funeral and a description of township life and of the everyday encounters and tragedies, big or small, of its people. There is not much happening in the story, its dominant feature being the musings of Talila over her past married life with her now deceased husband. The narrator recollects on her behalf:

"They had lived through nineteen years of married life that yielded three children and countless bright and cloudy days. It was blissful generally, in spite of the physical and mental violence around them; the privation; police raids; political strikes and attendant clashes between the police and boycotters; death; ten years of low wages during which she experienced a long spell of ill health." ('In Corner B', 110)

The closest the story gets to a deeper understanding of the violence that reigns in township life is a question that fleetingly crosses Talila's mind and which is only reported in the third person:

"Were the boys [who killed her husband] merely the arms of some monster sitting in the dark somewhere, wreaking vengeance on her man...?" ('I. C. B', 120)

But even that is overridden by the evening when one "caucus after another was held to make sure all arrangements were intact; for this was Saturday and the corpse had arrived" ('I. C. B', 121). Otherwise, the story is more concerned with the feelings of jealousy which tormented Talila as a result of an affair her husband was having with a mistress.

In 'Man Must Live' the story opens up at a railway station where the major protagonist, Khalima Zungu, holds the post of Inspector. The main thrust of the story goes towards establishing that whatever the circumstance, man must live:

"Yes man must live. Zungu had nursed this philosophy since he left the village school in Zululand. Let men accuse, deride, ridicule you in your actions; let them complain that you don't respect or fear them; let them say you don't earn your living honestly; but they too, sooner or later will come down to the hard, cold and indisputable fact that man must live." ('Man Must Live', 27)

But Zungu's philosophy falls apart the moment he gets married to a rich but very deceitful woman, Mrs. Massite. Taking the new comforts his marriage has provided for granted, Zungu wakes up one day to the hard fact that he has been unable to sustain his philosophy. As it turns out, his wife has deceived him. He realizes she had agreed to marry him out of expediency and nothing else. He has taken to drinking and the moment she realized "his value had ended where his drinking habit had began", Zungu hits rock-bottom:

"In his magical world of riches and splendour Zungu had been used as a tool of vengeance by his wife. Much against his will, however much contempt he had for the so-called intelligentsia, he had received them into the house and behaved as a gentleman would. [...] Then there was the ordinary class, to which Zungu belonged. He had to refuse them admission because his wife said they had tried to stand in her way when she aspired for wealth and learning,

out of sheer jealousy."(M.M.L', 34)

On coming back from a drinking party one night, he finds the house empty; Mrs. Massite and her children have left. In a fit of rage, Zungu sets the house ablaze and nearly gets trapped in the fire himself, but for a neighbour who comes to the rescue. Discharged from the hospital, Zungu has to face homelessness and despair. However, Zungu's redeeming factor is that he does not give up hope and that he restores faith in his old philosophy that man must live:

"Zungu's eyes are expressionless, whether he be happy or not. That twinkle is gone. But there is something in that solid blankness in those eyes; something of stubbornness when he looks at you, you cannot help but read the stubborn words; what do you expect me to be_ a magician or a superman, or a soft learned genteel animal? My lord_ man must live!"(M.M.L', 36)

This tendency to apoliticise his characters and divest them of their colour dimension could be attributed to a naive perception of the function literature should perform in his context. Such perception is compounded by his rejection of some of the premises and implications of the Negritude movement. One such major premise is elitism. However, it is that very censure that Mphahlele levels at Negritude that prompts me to ask if there are not elements in Down Second Avenue that suggest elitism? In other words, what category of people is it concerned with?

7.2.4 The questions of Representation – practice and implication:

Clearly, this is an autobiography that deals with a wide range of categories of people such as Grandma, Aunt Dora, Hawker, his daughter, Abdul, Dinku Dikae and so on. Some of the characters are black, some Indian, some others are Chinese and some others still are white... Most of these are ordinary people whom Apartheid affects on the most simple but profound level, their everyday life out on the street. So one can affirm that this is no esoteric stuff with great ease. And yet, there is something of a strange incongruity between what Eseki aspires to describe and the ultimate form his descriptions take. This incongruity, I would argue, is another arena for alienation in Mphahlele whose vision and representation of it is characterised by a measure of what Ursula Barnett refers to as 'aloofness' (Ezekiel Mphahlele, 51). Obviously, this is a term that has nothing to do with literary criticism. Still, it provides a clue I intend to follow here.

The suspension of belief is a decision that Eseki comes to take as a result of mounting frustration caused by the degree of inequities that he and his kind suffer in Apartheid society. I would add however that both in the context of the book itself and in general terms, this is doing nothing more than stating the obvious. Becoming aware of oppression entails alienation from its means. But where writing about the forces and manifestations of that oppression as such is concerned, Mphahlele seems to provide descriptions that are somewhat blurred and inarticulate, images which fail to evoke the harsh Apartheid environment in all its magnitude. Here is an example:

"Marabastad and winter – inseparable in my mind. Tin and wood shacks leaning in all different directions under a pall of smoke from fire-braziers. Lean streets called avenues cutting through ending up at a fence bordering round a municipal plantation and sewer works from which dull

throbs of smell came and lingered over the location. Water dripping from melting dew on roof-tops to describe minute furrows around houses."(D.S.A., 68)

The same could be said about the concomitants of this scene. Although one can vaguely sense that Mphahlele is trying to give the Marabastadians a kafkaesque dimension, the ultimate impression we get is out of focus:

"They looked like some fate-creatures, taking their place in a scheme of things they found, in the same manner in which they cycled down."(D.S.A., 70)

In the light of this, it would not be unjustified to advance the argument that Mphahlele is more interested in Apartheid as an abstract idea or effect than as a concrete environment where real people are not seen as if from a distance as "fate-creatures" but as full-blooded human beings crushing Apartheid and being crushed by it. In other words, the author is more concerned with the impact of Apartheid on the psychology of an intellectual and the stance he builds up towards it than with either a populist imagination or a populist orientation in writing. Let us examine the following passage:

"Moses in bulrushes, floating on water. What a beautiful thing to happen to a person to be hidden in a basket. To be so free, so lovable. To be loved and fondled and given all you want at the princess's bidding. If I found him among those poplars? I'd run to the police station to report. No, they'd arrest me and lock me up."(D.S.A., 74)

The first observation to make here concerns the quality of the irony and sarcasm deployed in the passage. They help create an atmosphere of incompatibility and antagonism between the dream-like world of religious mythology and the ruthlessness of the South African situation. The dream-world

provides ironic respite only to be soured by the encroaching voices of oppression. In a sense, this is good strategy on the author's part as he subverts religious discourse by trying to empty it from its original content and to pump it up with a more immediate, more urgent and eventually more politicised type of reality. Also it helps highlight the tension or diametrical opposition between a type of harsh reality, represented by Marabastad and police brutality, and a type of perception presented by Christianity.

In a different context, however, the same strategy seems counter-productive. For where does the average Marabastadian stand in the picture the passage draws? Taking the passage as a cultural reference in itself, it clearly seems centered on the author himself, him being educated and part of a minority called 'elite' as opposed to the average Marabastadian who has to struggle with Apartheid on the most direct and physical level. From this platform, irony and sarcasm become media for expressing a sense of frustration and defeat instead of being subscribed to serve the cause of what Barbara Harlowe calls 'resistance' literature. And nowhere is the sense of defeat more clearly expressed than in Eseki's statement:

"No use trying to put the pieces together. Pieces of my life.
They are a jumble."(D. S. A., 75)

The risks of such grounding are compounded by Mphahlele's universalist tendency as we have seen it above and which reflects itself on his literary style and vision. In Down Second Avenue he declares:

"I now realize what a crushing cliché the South African situation can be as literary material."(D. S. A., 218)

The result is an attempt to steer away from the specificities of colour and geography. Here is a case in point:

"From down here in the pit of sordidness, you hear humanity wailing for help, for food, for shelter; humanity gasping for air. And you know the scheme of things has come full circle: life thrown into a barbed-wire tangle; the longer it is made to stay there the more it is entangling itself and hurting itself; and the more it is failing to save itself; so much longer it will remain in the coils, degraded."(D.S.A., 59)

A striking feature of the passage at hand is the high degree of incongruity between its two levels of actuality and consciousness. By actuality I refer to the sum interaction between the spatial setting and its human concomitants, by consciousness the expression of that interaction—its conceptual, linguistic quality. My argument is that there is a case of misrepresentation and that an aspect of Mphahlele's alienation obtains just there. Although he is in fact describing the township of Orlando as a specific location existing in South Africa, where only black people live(d), he is more adept at conveying a sense of general agony surrounding Man not men, least of all black men. The author seems to lack the alertness for significant, concrete detail which make specificities of a given lived experience. While it is clear he is dealing with an under-world, that "pit of sordidness", which is incidentally reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*, the author just hovers overhead and is at a loss for means to accomplish his descent into it, and make that descent worth our reading the book by giving us a more vivid, more specific (and perhaps more original) account of the men concerned and their struggle, of what it means to be black living in a place like Orlando. Instead, the author borrows the lexis of a higher ground or upper-register, as it were. The product of such a technique is that we are presented with "humanity"(twice!) but hardly any African human beings.

The cultural implications of borrowing from such a register are serious enough and seem to have been so far away from Mphahlele's consideration as to raise some

objections. Patricia Morris argues that the attempts of the champions of black nationalism to establish the existence of a black national literature have failed in so far as they have succumbed to the assumption that there is a black bourgeoisie. "Such embourgeoisement", she contends "has clearly not taken place, and explains the minute size of the black literary elite." ('The Early Black South African Newspaper', 15) What is interesting in her article with regard to alienation is the detection of a crucial contradiction in the structure of the attempt to establish a national literature. She observes:

"It is not clear how extensively this black bourgeois group expresses itself or defined its black nationalist sense of cohesion by employing cultural artifacts [such as the newspaper] financed by the white middle class." ('E. B. S. A. N.', 15)

One can also extract a figurative significance from this statement and see certain issues from Down Second Avenue in its light. Some literary practices reflect the quality of Mphahlele's language as being more in tune with a certain English tradition in style than with a black cultural or political reality. Lapsing unawares into this choice, as I suspect he did, has had serious repercussions on Mphahlele's strategic location as a black writer. Consider the following passage:

"I went to the top of a mountain. There I felt a touch of the ultimate, but only for a fleeting dizzy moment. Below were fields laid waste by rushing water : fingers and fingers of furrows with photographic unreality. Grey earth cried in vain to the skies; as grey and fruitless as the cough of old men who cry for the migrant sons in mine pits of far away lands, where their lungs began to rot." (D. S. A., 184-5)

Compare this passage with another one from Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country:

"The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh. The lightening flashes over them, the clouds pour down upon them, the dead steams come to life, full of the red blood of the earth. Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them any more."(8)

It would be over-stretching the argument to say that Mphahlele's writing as exemplified in the passage above emulates Alan Paton's style in Cry, The Beloved Country. Conversely, it would be extremely conniving to deny that it does at all. A compromising statement, however, is that Mphahlele's poetic structure hinges on Paton's. The very imagery or figures of speech point the way to the uncomfortable corner where Mphahlele has alienated himself. Once more, note how the issues of race and society have been pushed into the background in favour of a more ambitious thrust towards celebrating the sensitivities of a romantic individual self. But that is not all. Let us examine another passage from Down Secon Avenue:

"My longing search continued. Mind and heart stood still. It tormented me to feel so insufficient, and not know the why and wherefore. At times thought and feeling would gush forth in torrents so that things became jumbled symbols of my hope and yearnings; the purple pink sunsets; the wasting bleached earth; the rock hanging precariously on the cheek of a hill; the muddy grey waters of the Caledon; the eternal streak of cloud lying stretched out like one of heaven's drunken sots. But alas, my dreams had long taken flight and now hung dry in shining cobwebs to which my fermenting furies clung crucified."(185)

The romantic tone of the passage is blended with imagery of a religious potential: top of the mountain, Ultimate, crucifixion. These are all essential

ingredients to Paton's style. And in a manner similar to Paton's Stephen Kumalo who climbs to the top of the 'mountain' to atone for his sins, to pray or to feel the touch of the Ultimate, God, who will send salvation to the village of Ndotcheni³, Eseki also climbs "in search of something". One of the differences between the two however, is that Eseki, once at the top of the mountain, realizes that the pattern of exchange between heaven and earth is reversed. In his scale of things, heaven is overwhelmed by the earth to which he eventually confines himself. But the quality of reversing that tide is interesting. Coming up against his heaven, Mphahlele turns back, not to Second Avenue but initially to the theme of migrant labour, fertile soil for alienation as his other work, *The Wanderers*, is to suggest. However, the return here to migrant labour is as transient as the touch of the Ultimate he feels. The theme that emerges as the most dominant is surprisingly that of a threatening landscape.

There are two points here. The type of landscape Eseki reverts to is not urban or social. This desolate landscape, which suggests a wasteland, is essentially pastoral. The second point is that the African landscape of the white South African novel is understandably of vulgar, alienating dimensions, especially when the white author sets it against the peace and tranquillity of the British countryside—as I have shown in an earlier discussion of this feature. To find a black writer who actually deploys the same theme along similar lines is particularly startling and can only be interpreted as inappropriate strategy which points to his alienated position.

³ UJarvis also sends (material) salvation to the village of Ndotcheni; he finances the building of a dam, sends milk to the village's dying children and eventually donates money for the building of a new church. The agricultural demonstrator he hires is symbolically described as an angel from God. Thus the social and religious gods become inter-connected.

G. Chapter Seven

There is a very important aspect of the Ezekiel Mphahlele Phenomenon that has not been discussed in the preceding chapters. This aspect is the role of the church in the development of the nation. The church is a key institution in any society, and it has the potential to be a powerful force for change. In the case of South Africa, the church has been a major player in the struggle against apartheid. The church has provided a platform for the oppressed, and it has been a source of moral support for the anti-apartheid struggle. The church has also been a force for social justice, and it has worked to improve the lives of the poor and the marginalized. The church has been a voice for the voiceless, and it has been a source of hope for the oppressed. The church has been a powerful force for change, and it has played a major role in the development of the nation.

The Ezekiel Mphahlele Phenomenon

Part Three

7.3. The Wanderers – A vision of exile and alienation:

7.3.1. The problematic 'hero':

Mphahlele's other major literary work is The Wanderers which appeared in 1971. This is an autobiographical novel that deals with a variety of issues such as migrant labour, urbanisation and political exile, all of which form an arena for alienation.

The Wanderers opens up with news of Felang, Timi Shabani's eldest son, who has been captured along with other African nationalist guerrillas by a group of white farmers on the border with Zimbabwe, who then, threw the guerrillas to the crocodiles. This critical event ushers in a taste of the violence and atrocities inherent to the South African situation. But as the narrator reflects, it is not death itself which is atrocious and inhuman. It is rather the mode or fashion in which it has been inflicted:

"I began to realize more than ever before the difference it makes to the living how one dies__ at any rate at the time we hear the report. The news that a man has died of an illness, however ravaging this might have been, or that a man was shot in active service, or that a man died in an accident seems to find a greater readiness in us to accept it than the news that a person's body has been outraged."(The Wanderers, 10)

There is a number of points to be registered here. First of all, the fact that The Wanderers begins with Felang's death and ends on the same note leaves us wondering if the notion of death does not perhaps form, in a figurative context, the real major theme of The Wanderers. In many ways, it seems to have developed into an obsession residing deep in Mphahlele's reservoir of political imagery. After all,

Felang is not the only character whose fate is sealed in this novel. There are two more deaths which I regard as being no less significant. On the one hand, there is Rampa's death after being released with serious injuries from the labour farm, which is a climactic turning point in the life of the novel's main protagonist, Timi Shabani. For having investigated Rampa's initial disappearance and ultimate death, and having courageously exposed the results of that investigation in Bongo newspaper, Timi has to opt out of South Africa to live in exile for fear of the ensuing consequences of his own courage. In this way, Rampa's death provides the final catalyst for Timi's crucial decision to live in exile, which forms the other major theme of the novel, on the very literal level. On the other hand, the death of Steve Cartwright, the white liberal journalist and one of Timi's close friends, announced in the epilogue, also has significant implications. However, such implications cannot be affirmed or ascertained but can only be put in the form of open questions which remain largely unanswered in the novel. Does Steve's death indicate the death of white liberalism or that the time of friendships across the crazy colour-bar is over? Perhaps it serves to suggest that despite his long-held humanist beliefs, a more radical vision of South Africa looms large on Mphahlele's unconscious and is therefore unavoidable? These are persistent questions that can only be seen against a background of disillusionment and resignation on the part of Timi who is torn apart by the experience of exile and disappointed with the experience of post-colonial Africa. It seems that while history has come full circle in The Wanderers, the only gained and dependable conclusion as far as he is concerned is the process of slow death—disappointment, resignation—his philosophy and ethic of African humanism have undergone. And at the end of the novel, we get a feel of what has been undone but not what is in the making, so to speak. Timi seems to be at a loss of direction. The only thing he knows for sure and accepts is that he is a wanderer. He tells his children:

"It would be the cruellest mockery of our time for those who invented machines to come and bomb the laugh off our faces and shatter the rhythm of our joints to smithereens... Where did we go wrong did I ask ? Now I know Karabo knows and may be Felang too that the word 'wrong' cannot be used here... we are wanderers."(The Wanderers, 310)

Another point worthy of recording is the manner in which Felang's death was received by his parents⁴. It is striking how such outrageous death has been conveyed in such reticent terms virtually away from any emotional involvement. A mere two and a half pages and Mphahlele sets about his task. We are even told that "Karabo, my wife, received Steve's account [of Felang's death] with resignation"(The Wanderers, 9). Once again, the question comes up, has the experience of exile smothered that intensity of feeling which Eseké displayed so much in Down Second Avenue and which impelled him into adopting a more radical stand towards the South African situation and therefore towards death, finally accepting it as part of the process?

Let us examine the character of Felang in the light of his relationship with his parents. Already from the start, his somewhat elusive nature is hinted at. And the overall impression of his relationship with both Karabo and Timi is that it is an arena for misunderstanding, confrontation and eventually collapse. Karabo brings this element into perspective when she reminds Timi of what he used to say during their "trying times" with Felang:

"... you'd say, 'A child will wrench himself free of a parent's love and by so doing drive it to sleep. Then some event will rekindle it, but it may be an event that makes the love futile, like a dead river, unnecessary; the event may place the child out of reach.'"(The Wanderers, 10)

⁴ Barney C. McCartney notes that "[we do not] feel any sense of tragedy or even pathos at his death. His parents feel helpless about it, discuss it coldly and philosophically, and we are only slightly interested." 'The Wanderers', East Africa Journal July 1971 p. 41

The complexity of this character then is constructed from that texture of elusiveness that surrounds him and frustrates his parents. But even as far as the reader is concerned, Felang remains an opaque creation. The potentially explosive exchanges between Timi and Felang, in other words, their respective verbal onslaughts and frustrated but insolent silences leave us helpless as to the son's malaise, knowing no better than his parents "what is eating" him. Having said this, it should also be added that initially Felang himself does not seem to know what his own problem is all about. In a sense, his opaqueness is both symptom and expression of his alienation, not just from his parents but also from the general setting where he is supposed to function as a character⁵. It is as if Mphahlele is trying to make the point that the rootlessness of the wanderers has hit the very core of the Shabani family structure, even while they are miles away from South Africa, or is it because of just that?_ by emerging in the tangible form of a character who is supposed to be disturbingly restless but who nonetheless has "atoned".

In fact, the idea of atonement carries so much weight in The Wanderers that it threatens to outweigh or even dwarf the importance of Timi's experience. No matter how reactionary, impulsive and perhaps even inconsequential to the theme of exile_ Timi goes back to England and not South Africa_ Felang's death has some extremely significant and redemptory dimensions. Given the circumstances of exile, the torments and internal conflict, the moral and psychological dilemmas shown to be the order of the day in Timi's life, Felang's death comes to throw all that into a subordinate position as having a mere rhetorical value. This is so not because joining the Nationalists or choosing death is a more practical engagement against the forces of Apartheid whatever they may be. It is so because Felang's

⁵ I do not agree with Barney C. McCartney's view that Felang is a flat a character. My argument is that there is a considerable difference between flatness and opacity.

action involves an element of decisive choice regardless of the consequences, something that Timi cannot achieve but can only preach. He wonders:

"How can they [his children] understand that the basic truths I'm teaching them only amount to a state of mind that becomes of little immediate import in the face of the economic and political power. May be exile is irrelevant to the destruction of fascist power: it is those down there in the South who really matter."(The Wanderers, 309)

On a different level, the realities of the Timi/Felang relationship could be described as exceeding the boundaries of the strictly personal. The collapse of dialogue and communication between these two characters symbolises that between two generations, the elder of which has begun to show signs of historical redundancy. Ironically, it is not Timi who is sacrificed but Felang. Had the former been sacrificed however, the situation would be less historically consistent and more problematic. For Felang's death represents an anticlimax in the escalation of his alienation and at the same time a redemptory feature. It represents a rejection of the values and moral dilemmas of both intellectual and geographical exile in favour of if not a clearer at least more committed vision that tries to steer away from the burden of suffering and its continuous rationalisation such as it is in the case of Timi. Thus there might be some validity in Ursula Barnett's statement that:

"We must interpret the story of Felang as symbolic of young Africa's search for identity and his martyrdom and death as a vindication of its aspirations"(Ezekiel Mphahlele, 143)

But we can only qualify this interpretation with 'perhaps' as defeat does not figure in a very explicit or vulgar form in the novel. The last but one paragraph of the narrative pulls in both directions. That is, it could be read as a retrieval of hope and faith even within the sphere of historical redundancy to which Timi's

generation has been confined and also as the decomposition of a crisis, something of a historical hiccup after which life will resume though on a more promising tone:

"Karabo is carrying a new life in her. A boy or a girl? I wish it to be a girl. Holeng the clown of the exile crew we had in Iboyoru passed through here, back from vacation in Zambia. This was after Felang had left us. When he saw Karabo's belly he shouted to our youngest, 'Hallo, Fetjane... the last in the Shabani line! Feeling yet for another, Karabo? One for the road eh!' 'No', Karabo said, 'This is full stop for me! You want to set up an education fund for this coming one?' Yes, one for the road." (*The Wanderers*, 312)

A third interpretation is that Felang acts as an alternative voice to Timi's suppressed ego, a surrogate self. Against the generally composed, even subdued, nature of Timi who aspires to an orderly life where conflict is subdued through rationalisation, Felang emerges as a rebellious, impulsive and even anarchic figure which eventually fulfills itself and resolves its alienation in death. But whatever the interpretation, it is only his death that comes to footnote the true nature of Felang's malaise for us. It represents the culmination of years of alienation and the decomposition of an acute internal conflict which his parents failed to perceive or understand. On receiving a letter from the Congress of Liberation in Tanzania to the effect that Felang had joined their forces, Timi reflects:

"Karabo was clearly stunned. She merely shook her head. I found talking useless. I thought, May be he'll find the self-fulfillment he is looking for." (*The Wanderers*, 312)

7.3.2. Exile and the city/country idiom:

How does the theme of exile relate to the city/country idiom to form a whole, that phenomenon I refer to as alienation? I would argue that the focal point in Mphahlele's fiction in particular and in his thought in general is a certain notion of conflict between Western civilisation and African traditional modes of living. That is to say, between pre-urban and post-urban (South) Africa. In general cultural terms, the European city, representative of the new order of life, the white man's, becomes a metaphor for foreignness and colonisation. Part and parcel of this metaphor is the political atmosphere that jettisons both Eseki of Down Second Avenue and Timi of The Wanderers into exile. In this respect, the cultural metaphor of the city suddenly seems larger than the theme of exile or large enough to actually encompass it...

Although many of the themes that occur in Down Second Avenue recur in The Wanderers, that of the city has a greater poise and a deeper entrenchment in the structure of the latter, both as a geographical space and as a cultural metaphor. But the framework in which Mphahlele sets about his task in Down Second Avenue leaves the city as a geographical space antiposed to the country. The very first chapter of the autobiography acts to enhance the image of the country as the natural setting of the African, one of stability, moral anchorage and even consolation derived from its communal structure, despite the fact, we are told, that it has been subjected to much erosion and impoverishment ecologically as well as in terms of man-power. Such erosion and impoverishment are obviously the result of efforts to satisfy the industrial needs of Apartheid society, as the text states. This particular aspect of dependency and subordination, together with the concurring cruelty of psychological violence and rootlessness is much more focalised in The Wanderers where the narrator sees in the city a symbol of the

power that continuously seeks to prey on the country, whatever form the onslaught may take. And it is this direct link-up between the city as a geographical space and cultural metaphor on the one hand, and the political world on the other, that gives this novel extra-strength. As part of their investigation of Rampa's case, Timi and Naledi, Rampa's wife, go to see a woman with whom her husband was supposed to have stayed with for a period of time in the city of Tirong. Naledi immediately moves on the offensive:

"How could you keep a man you knew had a wife?"

The other woman firmly replies:

"This is the city, my sister. You ask questions and you get answers or you do not. You have to keep alive. I did not even know how much he was working for. I was content that he was bringing home money for my rent and food, and I was giving him the comforts a man should have from a wife. He was free to go any time."(*The Wanderers*, 47)

Despite such apparent callousness, this is not Aln Pator's city where alienation is seen in terms of moral decadence. In Mphahlele's city, alienation is seen in terms of human relationships which are distorted by a continuous and desperate attempt to survive in the basic sense of the word. What is even more interesting about *The Wanderers* is that it represents the city as a political idiom; an allegory of the might of Western civilisation spearheaded by the political power:

"When you saw the outlying fields eroded, you knew that they had been abandoned because the young men had gone to the mines. When you saw village people scratch the surfaces of the soil for a living, you knew this was just another area of corrosion. When you saw the squalor near the cities, where black people lived, you knew the claws of power were

right there.(The Wanderers, 110)

In the next passage, the city is depicted as having sucked all life from the country, and the prevailing impression is one of death. The images are particularly compelling:

"On our way it seemed I was smelling death and decay all over these villages. There was little to suggest rebirth, youth, vigour. The children I saw were the only sign of hope in life but even in them it looked like hope grown old or blighted after rising above the ground, before bearing seed. [...] Karabo's saying that poverty smells rang in my mind in a way it never did when I was in the urban slums. There, the people's will to live, to survive, to stay on top of the rubble and not allow it to bury them underneath: this buried the smell."(The Wanderers, 146)

Such images of death and desolation form the picture of a wasteland. But Mphahlele insists it is not T.S. Eliot's wasteland:

"It was not the poet's wasteland : the kind that can only be grasped in the mind. The kind that stretches outward in ever widening circles, so far as the poet's imagination can lead us. It did not seem to be the wasteland that can only be understood in terms of a universal catastrophe. It was a land corroded by power, power that one felt directly through its various tentacles."(The Wanderers, 52)

All this powerful imagery comes into sharp focus and tangible form in the character of Naledi who embodies the process of family alienation and victimisation unleashed by the city as her family was destroyed through the evils of shanghaiing and farm labour. In fact, we are warned at the outset that migrant labour and political exile, two different experiences of rootlessness, are actually close aggregates of an impossible situation : death. The novel opens with a poem

dedicated to all Naledis:

They wait for those who never return
 for those who come to die;
 they wait for those who flee
 the arch tormentor
 to wander under alien skies.
 They know each time
 the sweat-fire fear despair of birth and cry who will atone who will atone?
 _each time
 the ogre thunders down the thoroughfares
 of freedom lovers :
 Mothers of the South
 who like Naledi
 stand and wait and give and pray_
 I offer up my tale
 for you to sanctify."

Before proceeding any further, it must be pointed out that Eseké of Down Second Avenue and Timi of The Wanderers are one and the same character as the latter book pertains to the world of fiction only through its structure, having a beginning and an ending for example. On this ground, it is useful to be reminded that the real reason for Timi's decision to leave South Africa is the general political atmosphere within his country. Such a decision is riddled with moral and psychological dilemma which Timi never manages to transcend or overcome and which he reiterates in the following passage:

"I would have to decide whether to stay and try to survive, or stay and pit my heroism against the machine and bear the consequences if I remained alive, or stay and shrivel up with bitterness, or face up to my cowardice, reason with it and leave."(The Wanderers, 53)

However, it is equally useful to indicate that the two themes of the city and

exile also link up through a narrative motif which is the publication of Rampa's story, itself a denunciation of the shanghaiing practice proclaimed to be illegal and non-existent by the powers that be. This of course has grave consequences which lead to Timi's decision to go into exile. But in a manner of speaking, the exile, or exit is just another entrance. Wherever he is, Nigeria or Kenya, he comes up hard against the fact that the time to opt out of the European city has long been over. Africa has undergone a substantial amount of change, disappointing change from his point of view, and has blindly internalised many aspects of the European city, such as behavioural patterns, eventually responsible for the tragi-comic picture of post-colonial Africa. Timi moves from the savouring of relative freedom to complete disillusionment which only stresses his alienation as a wanderer:

"During those [first] six months [in Iboyuru], Timi enjoyed the freedom of the day, of the night, void of tensions, of emotional upheavals or outbursts, free of the need to please the white man for a living or give an account of himself. He had the freedom of the streets, which he walked night and day, as if to tell himself that he was never going to surrender such freedom to any one." (*The Wanderers*, 173)

On the other hand, even while being miles away from Apartheid, Timi realises that he has entered the cycle of a new form of alienation:

"Six months of knocking about, of getting to know himself, to know alienation, aloneness, nostalgia, the longing to be back in the fire, just so long as he would be suffering along with others of his kind. He longed for his next-of-kin, for his friends. He thought much about the jazz club he had made it a weekly ritual to attend. The letter from Kush had aroused in him a painful desire to be back among those struggling to survive." (*The Wanderers*, 174)

One of the most shocking discoveries Timi makes while he is living outside South Africa is how disappointing post-colonial Africa is. The initial picture we get of

Iboyuru is one of political chaos and great instability. In a short political exchange between Timi and a journalist friend, Awoonor, immediately after the news bulletin that announces the coup led by Colonel Karara, Awoonor sums up the new political atmosphere in Iboyuru:

"So dere, my brother ! What do you think of our political circus."(168)

Soon, a scene where the demonstrators demolish a statue erected for the former president comes to corroborate what seems to be the farcical nature of the political landscape of post-colonial Africa. The mood is saturated with anger against the toppled president. But it is also saturated with great cynicism about the future. In devastating humour, Aliyi remarks:

"Only five years ago, we sang and danced when he was hoisted on that stone. Have you ever seen so many sculptors on the same job before? Would you be surprised if he came and ruled again and the same people laughed and cheered him back onto a new pedestal ? I wouldn't be."(The Wanderers,187)

This state of affairs is very relevant to us in that it helps develop Timi's awareness of the limitations of the freedom he initially enjoys outside South Africa and in the sense that it will pave the way for shattering some of his illusions, such as assuming a common heritage with other Africans on the continent. For his new feeling of alienation becomes more deeply entrenched as a result of two things. Firstly, although he comes to realize that:

"While in Iboyuru, the town was African, back at home it was largely the white man's exclusion"(The Wanderers,173).

he eventually has to accept, through his teaching experience for example, that despite independence, there is no such thing as an African city, metaphorically speaking, as yet. African societies seem still controlled to a large extent by white hands.

"Often he became impatient with orthodox, stick-in-the-mud ideas that were peddled by university authorities who came from the institutions of the Old World. He had striven through his education independently of old-world theory and practice. Yet he recognised also the cold fact that these theories and practices were backed by power : the power that came with money as aid, the power that came in the form of personnel that in turn created the old-world or entrenched it."(*The Wanderers*, 203)

The first practical blow Timi sustains in this regard is delivered by the head of the English Department at the University of Takora. Having applied for a teacher post in that department, Miss Graves turns him down not because he is unqualified but because his qualification, MA degree, was not awarded by a British University. And to the advice that African literature be taught in her department, she simply retorts:

"What African literature is there to teach in university"(*The Wanderers*, 213),

which he later describes as "Miss Graves' waspish imperialism"(*The Wanderers*, 310).

Secondly, he becomes more and more aware that being black does not necessarily lead to full acceptance or acknowledgement on the part of fellow black Africans. This is illustrated in a variety of ways. One of them is the termination of his contract due, ironically enough, to the process of Africanisation. Totally stunned as to why the axe has fallen on him and not on a white teacher if

Africanisation is at stake, he is told:

"The blacks on the committee echo the minister's voice who echoes his English adviser's... so where are we ?"(The Wanderers, 303)

Thus Timi has to accept the decision of the appointments committee as a fait accompli but his conclusion is unequivocal:

"Africa is still a white man's paradise, not a black exile's. The white man may eventually have no future in Africa, but he is certainly making himself indispensable as long as he can, while the black man still wants him or is still aspiring to be his equal."(The Wanderers, 304)

Elsewhere, he suggests that his belief in the notion of 'black man' has been seriously challenged, shattered and replaced by a cautious belief in 'black men', as it were⁶. In other words, he acknowledges the existence of black 'cultures', not a common black culture, which deepens his sense of alienation. For example, his helplessness with regard to affecting the status quo in education is double-sided. He is an individual and paradoxically enough a black foreigner:

"And what power did he represent? None. He was not even sure that he knew the problems of Iboyuru sufficiently to suggest a single remedy. He was a black foreigner, and could only talk to a man like Awoonor who could not possibly mistake his inquiring habit for the arrogance of an alien."(The Wanderers, 203)

But the state of alienation that Timi and his like experience in Iboyuru is not

⁶ This theme had already received some elaborate treatment from Mphahlele in The African Image (New York, Frederick Praeger, 1962) where he wrote, "And now I know why the idea of the African personality can remain but a glorious myth [...] At best, it can be but a focus, a coming into consciousness. It's no use pretending that it means anything in practical terms." pp.19-20

always of this dormant nature. They are reminded of their difference in louder, more aggressive tones. As an example of this, Timi cites the case of another South African expatriate, Holeng, who gets involved in an angry exchange of words with a few Iboyorus. Boasting about the freedom they enjoy in Iboyuru, they ask him why the blacks in South Africa do not enjoy the same rights and eventually remind him that:

"You're free in our contry and a slave in your own. This is our contry not your own."(The Wanderers, 243)

Another Iboyoru adds:

"Leave the slave a-lone! He's jost loudmouthed. If not to say we're civilised I coul' have slapped him!"(The Wanderers, 244)

The problem with The Wanderers is that it hints at the existence of certain aspects of life that Timi finds challenging or disturbing but does little else than gloss over them. Timi's reference to the cultural barriers between himself as a South African and his fellow blacks from Iboyoru remains frustratingly unexplored to any significant degree. It is all good and well to tell us that colonialism has instigated certain values and patterns of behaviour in Iboyorians as in the last two passages above but the novel certainly fails to demonstrate in what sense the South Africans are different from the Iboyorians in terms of culture_ there is no clear representation of the cultural barrier! When hints to this effect do actually occur, they are either extremely oblique and superficial or laughable. Here is an example:

"Timi observes to Naledi and Karabo on either side of him that the West African men use their bodies more than the South Africans, generally, who for their part use their legs

more. There is thus more stamping of the feet than one finds in the West. The tread here is light and there are no bold stops and starts. The women dance with equal grace; but again the West African female movements, when they are quick, sway and quiver muscle more vigorously. Timi wonders if weight has something to do with it. Southern women have equally bigger calves, bigger bosoms and hips, and one is aware only of the general outline of their movements."(*The Wanderers*, 229-230)

Timi might have something substantial or significant to convey in an observation like this. I certainly fail to grasp what it is.

7.3.3. Narrative strategy in The Wanderers:

One thing I cannot argue against is that The Wanderers is less apolitical in perspective than Down Second Avenue or the other works of short fiction. But having said this, I also have to add that whatever degree of political foregrounding the novel posits is not a direct result of a deliberate narrative strategy on the part of Mphahlele. The political import is a compulsion made by the subject-matter as such. It would be very hard to imagine an author dealing with a subject that is so highly political in nature as exile, for instance, from a perspective that is not correspondingly political. But here again, The Wanderers is not solely about political exile. The plot is multi-layered. One such layer accommodates the story of the search for Naledi's husband conducted on her behalf by Timi. As I have pointed out previously, Naledi's husband had been shanghaied to work on a potato farm, and Timi sets out to uncover the illegal practice for Bongo newspaper. The problem here is that such an essential element in the formation of both the plot and the overall significance of the novel reads more like cheap detective story material than a serious exploration of the psychology of migrant labour which the novel so powerfully promises to deal with in the opening poem. The Naledi story and the investigation of her husband's disappearance turn out to be sensational stuff, adventure and heroics! Timi goes to the farm in question with the photographic paraphernalia of the journalist/spy, disguises himself as a labourer and documents the lives of the prisoners as he proceeds to uncover Rampa's disappearance through scenes of intrigue and suspense.

This is by no means to say that the whole narrative moves along such lines. But where the subject-matter does not enjoy direct political immediacy, the narrative does not strain itself to posit a political perspective. Without contradicting myself, it seems to me that, at times, even where the subject-matter is actually

charged with political import, the narrative fails to establish the appropriate connection. This is a particular reference to the Felang case, to name but one example. His problematic behaviour which seems unreasonably aberrant to his parents, remains a mystery as much to them as to the reader. It is only the announcement of his death as a nationalist guerrilla, a highly political incident in itself, which seems to tear out the fabric of the mystery and to provide a clue that it is possible Felang's behaviour and the impact of exile on the Shabanis are linked. It is only then that the connection is made, somewhat sparingly though. Besides, I have already pointed out that the first announcement of his death at the very beginning solicits a sort of philosophical meditation from the narrator on the nature of death as a human tragedy at large. We have to wait until the end of the narrative to get a glimpse of the connection proper. And even then, we are left wondering whether that connection is intended or whether we have actually only over-read the text!

7.4. Recapitulation:

By way of recapitulation, alienation in Mphahlele operates on two different levels. On the first level, my concern has been with Mphahlele's strategic location. I have tried to locate the author's alienation in his relation to the text he writes. Alienation here is a textual phenomenon. There is a type of reality referred to as the South African situation from which Mphahlele seems divorced in that he conceptually fails to construct a literary idiom capable of encompassing the specificities of that situation. In Down Second Avenue, the divorce takes the shape of great apoliticality towards a subject-matter which is extremely political. In this sense, Down Second Avenue emerges as a record or history of a strictly personal revolt centered on a conventional hero-type, which traps the autobiography in the trammels of a highly individualistic vision and a bizarre kind of elitism. I have also argued that The Wanderers, though less apolitical and with different concerns, does not drastically deviate from this stance.

On the second level, the discussion has focused on alienation as a multi-layered cultural experience and is concerned more with representation of alienation as the outcome of a conflictual situation between the city and the country, two geo-cultural idioms, representative of Western and African pre-urban cultures respectively. A feeling of rootlessness and a constant search for a place to belong are treated as direct products of the conflict at hand.

The first level connects the present chapter with the previous discussion of white fiction where my parameter of alienation has been to demonstrate how far the white author can go towards breaking ties with the tenets of colonial discourse and white settler ideology. The second level, however, paves the way for a comparison between Mphahlele's treatment of alienation and that of some North African francophone literature.

H. Chapter Eight

1. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
2. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
3. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
4. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
5. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
6. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
7. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
8. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
9. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
10. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
11. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
12. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
13. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
14. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
15. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
16. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
17. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
18. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
19. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.
20. *Le roman algérien*, par Abdelkader Benou, Paris, 1967, 128 pages, 20 francs.

North African Parallels: Kateb Yacine And The Question of Identities (A Case Study)

8.1. Introduction:

In the previous discussion of Alan Paton, it was pointed out that for Paul B. Rich, the city-country division was a Victorian idiom transposed to South Africa through British mercantile links with the Cape. The aim of this and the next chapter will be to demonstrate that, in fact, there is nothing specifically Victorian about this idiom. It seems to have been an adjunct of the colonial encounter, which seems to corroborate its status as an overall symbol for metaphysical difference and for the resulting strife between conqueror and conquered on the cultural and political levels.

The city-country idiom, it is argued here, formed the main anchorage point in the Maghrebian francophone novel produced in the latter phase of the colonial era. Obviously, its deployment in the Maghreb resulted in different effects and implications. For example, as well as being a new socio-economic phenomenon, the city, with its distinct environmental and architectural designs, was perceived and represented as pertaining to a different cultural register. It became associated with a certain European mode of existence, itself closely hinged on technological prowess and superiority. These intimate associations derived even further strength and validity from the fact that for the conqueror himself, technology constituted something of a "second land", to use the expression of the Moroccan sociologist Abdelkebir Khatibi. Wherever the European set foot, technology of some kind was also there, to spearhead the process of conquest. In the eyes of the conquered, however, the city, besides representing an act of foreign intrusion, constituted an alien level of consciousness and a new form of being. Hence, the paranoid perusal it receives in the literature: it is fascinating and, at the same time, something to be feared and resisted.

Let us further substantiate some of these claims. In Morocco, for example,

although urban life had existed for centuries (the city of Fez as a cultural centre, Marrakesh as a commercial centre etc.), the new French quarters with their different geometric rationale, multi-storey buildings lining up along straight, wide and strictly parallel streets, starkly contrasted with the clustered house-architecture and narrow winding streets of the old medina. This conflict on the level of geometric rationale came to be perceived as an authentic translation of the aggressively transformational, if metamorphic, orientation of colonisation. Both the country and its past, especially as embodied in the Arabo-Muslim architectural tradition of the old medina, were considered to be under serious attack.

Since the struggle against the conqueror was waged in the name of nationalism and, to a more significant extent, religious "Jihad", the conflict in question was also dressed in religious garb. The medina became 'the houses of Islam' while the new French quarters came to represent the preying power of the 'nasrani' (the Christian), regardless of the type of town he has built, commercial, administrative or otherwise. Alienation here is treated within the context of the meta-cultural polarisation I have so far outlined.

8.2. Writing and Identity:

In his Littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lectures (1974), Charles Bonn begins by quoting Sun Yat Sen as saying:

"Il faut cacher dans les montagnes illustres le message que l'on veut transmettre."(25)

Like the Chinese Revolution, Bonn goes on, the Algerian Revolution

"fût en grande partie celle des campagnes, la ville étant traditionnellement, dans tout les pays du Tiers-monde, sentie comme étrangère, comme irréelle."(L.a.l.f.s.l., 25)

Let us retain these two features, "foreign" and "unreal", and call them a first premise. As a next step, let us evoke Frantz Fanon's statement in Black Skin, White Masks that:

"For the black man there is only one destiny and it is white."
(12)

and call it a second premise. There are two things to add in qualification of the above statement. Fanon's context is psycho-historical. The context of this study is more in terms meta-culture. Fanon's significant statement could be extended to the North African context as well on the premise that, as Khatibi point out, the North African has become "Un Occident Intraitable dans sa difference"('Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée', Les Temps Modernes, 8).

The colonial conquest of North Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries obviously resulted in considerable changes made to the socio-economic and cultural landscape of the societies of the region. Such changes were anchored on the

emergence of new cities patterned, in terms of architecture and socio-economic function, after the European model.¹ Much as in Mphahlele, the city came to be perceived as the prime symbol of European conquest and, in the final analysis, culture. Against this background, a process of search for identity was launched. It was cushioned on a return to the celebration of themes such as the country (the land), the mother and the ancestor and their assertion as part of the 'original' identity. This state of affairs is reflective of the extent of the challenge posed to that identity and of the flagging certainty as to "who we are?", 'we' being no longer part of the realm of the obvious. Significantly enough, several decades later, Khatibi still finds it important to note that

"Aux habitants de la terre natale... de toute terre natale... les racines topographiques de l'être ne sont point accordées comme un don de naissance." (M.C.H.P., 8)

If we start from the premise that belonging to a given culture is not a 'gift' but a 'right' to be won, a nation has to re-define and re-construct its 'Self' by re-writing its history. By so doing, Khatibi continues:

"toute société re-écrit l'espace de son enracinement, et par ce mouvement, elle projette sur le passé ce qui, dans le présent, lui échappe." (M.C.H.P.: 13)

Whether the generation with which I am concerned... post-Second World War... achieved or fell short of achieving this purpose does not really fall within the scope of this study. The major issue here is how they represented the opposition between the city and the country, and how they perceived their alienation therein. In the process, scope will be created for examining aspects of analogy and

¹ For a discussion of how such changes were effected in the case of Morocco for example see Edmund Burk's Prelude to the Protectorate in Morocco (1860-1912) (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1976).

divergence in the representation and treatment of alienation in South African black literature as represented by Mphahlele and North African literature as represented by the authors I am about to examine.

8.3. Nedjma— The historicity of tribal society:

In Kateb Yacine's Nedjma, four friends, Rachid, Mourad, Lakhdar, and Mustapha, live in the city of Bone and are obsessed with their love for Nedjma, already married to another man, Kamel. Nedjma, the Arabic word for 'star', is unattainable and her birth is surrounded with mystery, which is what the four friends set out to unravel. Although she is the adopted daughter of Lella Fatma, Nedjma's real mother is a Frenchwoman who had seduced four tribal men, including Rachid's father and Si Mokhtar. These two abduct her to a cave where Nedjma was conceived and where Rachid's father was found dead the next day. This secret was revealed to Rachid by Si Mokhtar during a pilgrimage to Mecca. On getting back to Algeria, they abduct Nedjma too and decide to take her to Mount Nadhor where the cult elders of the ancestor Keblout still reside. On the way there, they are met by a Negro who kills Si Mokhtar, abducts Nedjma, and chases Rachid away. The four friends meet again under different circumstances but the search for Nedjma continues.

According to Kateb Yacine himself, Nedjma subscribes to the idea that history should be re-written in order to be rediscovered. He declares that "Le sens de tout mon oeuvre est de retrouver le passé."² What history is this that Kateb is concerned with and how is it represented? It could be argued that the Frenchwoman in Nedjma stands for the intrusion of the city into the tribal sphere. As a direct result of such intrusion, tribal cohesion is blown apart and tribal relationships are subjected to a process of metamorphosis. In La littérature maghrébine de langue française, Dejeux writes:

"En séduisant les trois hommes de la tribu de Keblout elle a fait éclater la cohésion tribale et a établi la rivalité entre 'les frères-ennemis'." (228)

² Quoted in Jean Dejeux's Littérature Maghrébine de Langue Française (1980).

That Rachid's father, for instance, is a victim of such rivalry is almost a platitude. The significant point is that the intrusion of the Frenchwoman and the metamorphosis following from it seem to indicate that the tribe's inner composition has been exposed. The search for Nedjma does not take place within the tribal sphere itself but without.

A major consequence of such metamorphosis is a change in the notion of time for example. History in tribal society stands for natural continuity. It must remain faithful to both nature and the ancestral spirit as it evolves within their domains and in close proximity to them. Much as in the Religious System of the Amazulu in Nadine Gordimer's The Conservationist, time is perceived more in terms of chained renewal than as a beginning for an end. A passage from Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart illustrates this phenomenon best in a West African context:

"The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and when an old man died, because an old man was very close to the ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestor."(29)

In this chained and cyclic sequence, the ancestor enjoys a sacred and ubiquitous presence in space as well as in time:

"Lui, l'ancêtre au visage de bête féroce, aux yeux sombres et malins, promenait son regard sur sa tribu... Il racontait ironiquement par ce seul regard l'histoire de chacun, et il semblait à ses descendants que lui seul avait réellement vécu leur existence dans toute son étendue.(Nedjma, 11)

The point here is that life within the tribe evolves around the spirit of the

ancestor, guardian of nature and tradition, the two main streams into which tribal being seems to flow. In Things Fall Apart, each season is governed by a goddess and the dialogue between the goddesses and the tribe is continually established through the ancestor. The latter is in control of the land on account of his subterranean position. It is significant that Nedjma's name is an astral allusion. It is as if she links the earth with the sky.

This degree of congruity and harmonious being which the tribe embodies is also reminiscent of Mphahlele's celebration of communal life, previously referred to as a song of innocence. However, the discrepancy between Mphahlele's and Kateb's modes of perception in this respect is quite a substantial one. The former's celebration of the country as a symbol of moral wholeness is presented in such reticent terms as to suggest that the author is anxious to get to the real point of the autobiography as economically as possible. Mphahlele perceives his alienation within the context of urban psychological warfare. He finds Pretoria alienating not in the sense that it poses a threat to the country as such but in its status as a symbol of segregationist society undergoing a process of industrialisation in a manner that pays little attention to his dignity as a black man.

While such a treatment of the city is suggestive of the higher degree of urbanisation South African society had reached, it also points to the pressing nature of Mphahlele's task. He has little space for perceiving the city along a broader perspective. It emerges simply as a symbol of the corroding effects of migrant labour and what comes primarily under attack is not Pretoria as a city per se but the psychological repercussions of its socio-economic function.

On the other hand, writing from the point of view of a society that is still more agrarian and mercantile in its structures and outlook, Kateb can afford to blend his political perspective with 'metaphysical' ingredients. The city is represented from within, as a symbol of colonialism and its power. Such power is depicted as a repressive form of government committing such atrocities as happened during the

Setif uprising(discussed below). However, it is also represented from without, as a symbol of the culture of colonialism considered to undermine the author's own cultural identity.

8.4 Alienation_ the notions of time and space:

8.4.1. Time of conquest, time of resistance:

Alienation in Nedjma results from the pulverisation of the circle of continuity for which the tribe stands as the ultimate symbol. This act of aggression by the Frenchwoman, itself a symbolic reference to the colonial conquest, leads to desertion and errancy, two themes deployed to evoke the city's alienating effects. Desertion and errancy denote the process of 'defection' to the European city, such as performed by Si Mokhtar, and the chaotic consequences in which it has ensued. In other words, desertion and errancy signify the tragic transfer to a different configuration of time and space. Charles Bonn observes that:

"La ville est symbolisée dans Nedjma par l'horloge de la gare de Bône, ce Dieu des païens devant qui nul ne lève la tête."(L.A.L.F., 25)

First of all, although Charles Bonn's articulation of the link between the city and the clock is right, such a link seems grounded on a false interpretation of what "Le Dieu des païens" stands for. There is enough evidence to suggest that interpretation of 'the pagan god' as a reference to the clock presents problems of consistency whether with the text itself or with the general line of Kateb Yacine's constellation of symbols. We shall see how Charles Bonn's expression is derived from the text itself where it designates 'the sun'.

In fact, one of the major points about alienation in the novel is made through the polarization of the two entities of the sun and the clock. They are deployed as symbols for two different time-scales and for two divergent ways of relating to the environment and, therefore, to history. Their symmetry paradoxically

reflects the process of mutual abrogation in which they are engaged.

Desertion and errancy are two major ingredients of the defeat which the traditional order of things, temporal as well as spatial, has sustained as a result of the city's invasion. Hence, the need to rediscover and assemble the pieces of a fractured identity. Especially significant about the state of collapse within the tribal universe, however, is the temporal disorder marking the dramatic loss of the very notion of time itself, succinctly but eloquently expressed in the statement that "L'absence d'itinéraire abolit la notion du temps."(*Nedjma*, 33)

The attempt to rediscover the past and its appropriate version of time is substantiated by a journey undertaken by Rachid and Si Mokhtar to Keblout's tribe in Mount Nadhor. This return could be seen as a reversion to the source where "[the] veterans de la tribu qui avaient fait vœu de vivre dans la forêt"(*Nedjma*, 150) still maintain some form of life. However, only Nedjma is destined to complete the journey safely and successfully. Si Mokhtar is killed and Rachid is chased away by the Negro, in keeping with the spirit of Keblout who stipulates that deserters of the tribe must be either doomed or damned:

"Keblout a dit de ne protéger que ses filles. Quands aux males vagabonds, dit l'ancêtre keblout, qu'il vivent en sauvage, par mont et par vaux, eux qui n'ont pas defendu leur terre."(*Nedjma*, 151)

In the light of such a stipulation, Si Mokhtar's death seems as a purgatorial act of expiation for sacrilege against the tribe, the land and the ancestor. He is considered to have contributed to the tribe's metamorphosis as a result of his sexual involvement with the Frenchwoman. The product of such involvement is Nedjma who is the protagonists' somewhat oneliric obsession and, paradoxically, the personification of the scourge of illegitimacy and bastardy which the tribe has thereof incurred. The symbolic value of this highly evasive character, therefore, is

that she stands as a sign for the tribe's aspiration as well as an intrinsic reminder of foreignness on account of her illegitimacy and of the great physical resemblance she bears to her French mother. The novel proclaims her as an embodiment of the neurosis of the period. Jean Dejeux states:

"En elle se mêle le prestige de la soeur et le prestige de l'étrangère." (LMLF : 228)

The inference in this symbolism is that Nedjma also constitutes the embodiment of a larger equation: the "Us" and the "Other".

Si Mokhtar's sin against the tribe, the land and, in the final analysis, the ancestor is exacerbated by his opting for the European city. His attempt to gain redemption through returning to Nadhor with Nedjma is considered to be only partially relevant. The fact that he manages to deliver Nedjma (in both senses of the word) back to Keblout's veterans does not mitigate the magnitude of the conspiratorial nature of his crime against the land. On the symbolic level, this means that Si Mokhtar epitomises an entire generation's failure to come to terms with an exiled self and to recover the 'original' identity. Tending this failure appears to be one of Kateb's main motives for writing *Nedjma*. As Jean Dejeux observes:

"hanté de souvenirs indélébiles, [Kateb] recherche sans cesse le fondamental, la totalité et l'unité perdues, l'identité en somme qui fera à part entière la personne mutilée, exilée d'elle-même et dans l'errance." (LMLF, 217)

Another feature of the complex narrative of *Nedjma* worth examining is the representation of the ancestor. Besides being central to the narrative as we have seen so far, this motif derives further cruciality from the implications of the geographical diversity and vastness with which it is associated. The ancestor is revealed as an élan vital extending eastwards and southwards. It incorporates the

Orient and Africa as a source of validation.

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The first part of the report is a general introduction to the project, followed by a description of the methodology used. The second part of the report is a detailed description of the results of the study, and the third part is a discussion of the implications of the findings.

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8.4.2. The Oriental dimension:

The Oriental idea is evoked in the form of references to Islam. However, we have to proceed with caution here. It would be wrong to interpret the call to return to the source in the context of Kateb Yacine as having a dogmatic essence. There is nothing one can rely upon in the novel to suggest that he is even remotely interested in religion as a faith or as a system of belief. On the other hand, clear-cut evidence that he is most definitely not is available elsewhere³. This is to say that his resort to the oriental idea rests on a secular base and that the call for the return to the source denotes the preservation of that part of his cultural identity as it has been moulded by centuries of Islamic culture.

This helps account for the fact that although he has been to Mecca, although pilgrimage is one of the fundamental and most widely observed pillars of Islam, and although it is a confirmation of social prestige and mobility (at least in the period in question), Si Mokhtar fails to solicit compassion. And yet, his rejection by the ancestor is, in part, due to his religious sacrilege:

"Les vétérans l'écoutaient [Rachid] à peine. Ils ne voulaient pas entendre de réconciliation avec des parents qui avaient déserté la tribu, avaient causé sa perte, laissant la mosquée détruite, le mausolée sans étendard, se liant à des familles étrangères... bref, trahissant la tribu." (*Nedjma*: 150)

The articulation of betrayal and moral corruption which Si Mokhtar stands for on account of his debauchery and defection is directly linked with alienation. Part of the formula is that his desertion of the ranks left a religio-cultural heritage exposed to ultimate disintegration. It is clear that in the eyes of the ancestor Keblout, this passes for an irrevocable act of abomination and, especially, for a

³ See Hafid Gafaiti's collection of interviews with Kateb Yacine in 'Un homme une œuvre un pays' *Voix multiples* Mars 1976.

grave sign of evident self-exile. The religious issue in the context of Kateb Yacine is given further elaboration below.

8.4.3. The African dimension:

The Oriental idea is wedded to an African one which finds its embodiment in the person of the Negro, "gardien des lieux sacres" to borrow Déjeux's expression, to whom fall the responsibilities of recovering Nedjma and ultimately conquering alienation:

"Et comme tous les maies de la tribu sont exilés ou mort, ce nègre fidèle au Nadhor pouvait même nous chasser, puisque nous étions de ceux dont les pères avaient vendu leur part de terre et contribué à la ruine de l'oeuvre ancestrale."(*Nedjma*: 146)

Note here the qualities and special powers of the Negro. He is present as opposed to those in exile(the European city). He is alive as opposed to those dead. More significantly, however, he is powerful. Such power is a function of his ability to mediate between the tribe and its deserters on behalf of the ancestor and to dispense the latter's stipulated guidance. Such qualities render his status into an antithesis for alienation; he is immune enough to establish Keblout's healthy perspective. Furthermore, this virtually unlimited power seems countenanced only by the African continent itself:

"...nul ne lève la tête devant le Dieu des païens parvenu à son quotidien pouvoir: midi, réflexion d'Africa en peine de son ombre, inapprochable nudité de continent mangeur d'empires, pleine gorgée de vin et de tabac; midi endore autant qu'un peuple, submerge le voyageur; midi! ajoute l'horloge, en sa rondeur sacerdotale, et l'heure semble ralentie avec la machine sous la ventilation des palmes, et le train vide perd ses charmes, tyran abandonné"(*Nedjma*: 70)

Obvious as it is, the parallel between the might of the Negro and that of the

African continent is an interesting one. More interesting still, is the referential interplay between the clock and the sun. The passage establishes the referential value of Africa as an incorporated terrain of the ancestor. The picture of the angry gaze of the sky at mid-day, the serene presence of this all too powerful god that has witnessed the subjugation of one empire after another, is consistent with the image of the ancestor "au visage féroce". Besides, both the sun and paganism are indications to an initial and prime form of being. While the former is an allusion to the naked and untampered might of the African continent, paganism is an allusion to a different type of nudity: pagan truth before it was conquered by the sacerdotal powers.

These interpretations come alive in the parallel between the travellers, who arrive at the railway station only to vanish in a rush, and empires travelling through time in Africa. The interpretations also gain in strength through the contrast between what is pagan and what is sacerdotal. The clock is an indication to the conversion of time from the natural to the artificial and from the everlasting to the transient. Hence, the foreign and unreal character of the city.

In Mphahlele the landscape is deployed to a different effect. It provides an outlet for escape and thus seems highly romanticised. By using it as a backdrop for catharsis or respite, Mphahlele gives it a strictly psychological function. This, I argued, results in three different effects. Firstly, it highlights the apoliticality of his writing. Secondly, it underlines his individualistic tendencies. Thirdly, by so doing, it also brings into sharp relief the strong influence on his writing of the liberal tradition.

By contrast, Kateb's perception of Africa reflects its militant presence. In the passage above, it is perceived as an angry and aggressive myth put to the service of popular memory. It becomes a symbol of nature, tradition and resistance. However, these motifs are important, not in their stasis, but in so far as they give

expression the undercurrent of conflict and tension in the novel. The train, for example, becomes the logical extension of the clock which indicates not only the passage of time but also the passage from one form of being into another. In other words, the train represents the inexorable movement of progress towards the city and the "Other". The protagonists are torn between two geographical dimensions and two modes of being.

8.5. Representations of the city:

By and large, the city emerges as an arena of alienation, a zone of what is commonly referred to in this literature as 'déracinement' or rootlessness. Let us analyse the following excerpt:

"Prémice de fraîcheur, cécité parcourue d'ocre et de bleu outremer clapotant, qui endort le voyageur debout face au défilé métallique et grouillant de l'avant port; la voie fait coude vert la mer, longe la Seybouse à son embrochure, coupe la route fusant en jet de pave scintillant grain par grain dans le terne avenir de la ville décomposée en îles architecturales, en oubliettes de cristal, en minarets d'acier repliés au cours de navire, en wagonnets chargés de phosphates et d'engrais, en vitrines royales reflétant les costumes irréalisables de quelque siècle futur, en squares sévères dont semblent absents les hommes, les faiseurs de route et de trains, entrevu de très loin dans la tranquille rapidité du convoi, derrière les moteurs maîtres de la route augmentant leur vitesse d'un poids humain sinistrement abdique, à la merci d'une rencontre machinale avec la mort, flèches ronflantes se succédant au flanc du convoi, suggérant l'une après l'autre un horaire de plus en plus serre, rapprochant pour le voyageur du rail l'heure de la ville exigeante et une qui laisse tout mouvement se briser en elle comme à ses pieds s'amadone la mer." (*Nedjma*: 69)

Topographically, the city is situated high above water, which gives it the airs of a powerful giant. Architecturally, it is fractured and compartmentalised, which conveys a sense of anonymity— one part lives in ignorance of all the others— and disintegration. This sense of disintegration is more reflective of a certain frame of mind of the observer himself who sees in the city an environment hostile to his own identity. Temporally, the city is more of a futuristic entity. Its architecture, rail-tracks, window-panes, in short, its mechanical ethos and its high degree of

activity combine to give it an artificial or extra-terrestrial dimension. The city or new urban space reduces its human participants to the status of mere transients as the centre of activity is the train. The bottom-line wisdom of the passage is that: "this no place for human beings because it dwarfs and reduces them to a virtual absence. This representation is maintained throughout the novel. Popular imagination refers to the city of Constantine as "L'Ecrasante":

"'L'Ecrasante' annonçait l'homme dressé à la portière, et qui n'avait pas dormi la nuit[...] 'L'Ecrasante'...cimetière en déroute..."(*Nedjma*: 151-152)

Crushing, unattainable, inhospitable, without grandeur, without soul...These are all standard descriptions attached to the city throughout the literature at hand, be it pre- or post-independence⁴. And yet, the attitude towards it is by no means consistent. In many cases, it is perceived as a highly desirable woman, hence its sexualisation, an aspect which has already been exhaustively investigated by both Abdelkebir Khatibi and Charles Bonn in Le roman maghrébin and La littérature algérienne de langue française et ses lectures respectively⁵.

⁴ In Mohammed Dib's Cours sur la rive sauvage, (1964) Radia changes into Helle who lures Ivar Zohar into a mysterious journey before she declares: "mais la ville-nova c'est moi."

⁵ for Khatibi, see Chapter 4 entitled 'L'acculturation'. For Bonn, see 'terre et cité'.

8.6. The motif of the ancestor— some implications:

Part of the thematic structure of *Nedjma* is the celebrative process mentioned above. Particularly significant about this process is that assertion of the themes of the land, the ancestor and the mother is superposed to a rejection of the father-figure. Where it is not openly rejected, it is relegated to a background-position. On the whole, however, it is presented as worth of contempt and condemnation. The link between this aspect and the city is not hard to establish. The predominance and tyranny of the city phenomenon, together with the ensuing feeling of alienation, generate an anguish of a special nature: nostalgia for childhood. Such anguish, J. Déjeux points out, reflects a desire to return to "la chaleur du sein maternelle et au temps pre-natal" (*LMLF*, 244), which in turn could be interpreted as a desire to assume a new identity. The evocation of the mother in this context has two different functions. She stands for the source of new birth and renewal, and for the land that has been confiscated by the conqueror. This new parallel inevitably leads to the celebration of the ancestor, the supreme master of the land, to the detriment of the father who becomes accomplice to the conqueror as a result of deserting his ancestral heritage. On these grounds, the return to the mother acquires new dimensions. The present is dominated by dispossession, loss of original identity and, therefore, alienation. Rachid says:

"Des hommes comme ton père et le mien ... Des hommes dont le sang déborde et menace de nous emporter dans leur existence révolue... Ce sont des âmes d'ancêtres qui nous occupent, substituant leur drame éternisé à notre juvénile attente, à notre patience d'orphelins ligotés à leur ombre de plus en plus pâle." (*Nedjma*, 97)

This state of orphanhood, both in the literal and the symbolic senses, understandably generates a tendency to seek maternal protection. It is a reaction

against both the present and the father, temporal and metaphysical dimensions of betrayal and alienation. By contrast to the return to childhood, "se presente l'evasion vers les horizons lointains et etranger, vers les pays de liberte, prestigieux et seducteurs", writes Jean Déjeux (LMLF, 243).

It is noticeable that the escape Jean Dejeux mentions takes two different forms: evasion as narrative and as geographical migration within narrative. I shall use *Nedjma* to illustrate the point about evasion as narrative. Geographical migration will, however, be dealt with as part of the next chapter on Driss Chraïbi.

Book V in *Nedjma* is a portrait of childhood in a pastoral environment, an age and a locale of innocence that reflects itself strongly the language and structure of the Book. Note the almost text-book approach to sentence-structure and layout in the following passage. Note also how it seems totally on a par with the experience it narrates, namely Lakhdar in pre-school days:

"Non.
Il faut lutter contre les rêves.
Lakhdar paie le prix de la baignade et de la veillée.
L'âne boit.
Lakhdar tient la bride.
Le petit frère est heureux.
Lakhdar rêve.
L'âne boit longtemps."(*Nedjma*, 200)

Lakhdar as a child has a very ambivalent attitude towards Miss Dubac, his school teacher. She conveys a sense of mystery and fascination:

"Peut-être qu'elle crache des coquelicots dans les milles et une nuits ! Non, des roses."(*Nedjma* 205)

She is sought as a surrogate mother. Lakhdar establishes a parallel between Miss Dubac and his mother. Such parallelism is not without an undercurrent of irony, however. Miss Dubac has

"cent cahiers neufs. Elle peut écrire des lettres. Ses parents ont un chateau? [...] Elle est venu en car."(Nedjma, 205)

His mother Ouarda, rose in Arabic, on the other hand is bound to stay at home almost perpetually, is illiterate and wears wooden clogs. The tension generated by this irony finds an outlet in a day-light reverie with Lakhdar and Miss Dubac as its protagonists:

"Quand je serai grand je monterai devant. Avec la maitresse. Grandes vacances. Elle m'emmenera. Elève a encourager."(Nedjma, 205)

In a significant way, Lakhdar suffers from a neurosis of abandonment. He anguishes for a new adoption or even a new birth; his "elle me donnera un nom" expresses the desire to assume a new identity. But such transgression on the mother's domain is not to be tolerated. Lakhdar will punish Miss Dubac with sexual insinuations:

"Si elle me laissait sentir ses ongles. Si on changeait de sœur."(Nedjma, 205)

This is to say that the mother's domain is to be protected and avenged, so to speak, as part of the sacred. By contrast, the father's domain is all profanity. Interestingly, this pattern was not broken even in post-independence literature. In Mohammed Dib's La danse du roi, 1968, Babanac declares:

"Du jour où le français est entré dans ce pays, plus aucun de nous n'a eu un vrai père, c'était lui le maître. Et les pères n'étaient plus chez nous que des producteurs, Ils n'ont plus été que les violateurs et les engrosseurs de nos mères, et ce pays n'a plus été qu'un pays de batards."(159)

The areas of the sacred and the profane go hand in hand with the causes and effects of alienation. Note here that the issues of illegitimacy and identity so far presented as part of a metaphysical package are here infringing on the realm of morality as the following passage testifies:

"...cité d'attente et de menace, toujours tenté par la décadence, secouée de transes millénaires... lieu de séisme et de discorde ouvert au quatre vents par où la terre tremble et se présente le conquérant."(*Nedjma*, 153)

The passage from metaphysics to morality is as open as the city itself, "toujours fuyante en sa lascivité"(*Nedjma*, 70). The city becomes not only the paragon of conquest but also a nest of debauchery and corruption. Once in Nadhor, after Si Mokhtar has been shot by the Negro, the tribe sends a special envoy to discuss with Rachid the issue of his re-joining its ranks. The envoy says:

"Quand vos felons de pères l'ont quittée [the tribe] pour travailler chez les Français, c'était, paraît-il, pour lui revenir plus puissants. Où est votre puissance ? [...] Que vous soyez des débauches, c'est votre affaire, mais ne corrompez pas les femmes. Elles ne sont pas responsables de votre félonie. Aussi gardons-nous toutes nos veuves et toutes nos filles, bien que les derniers jours de la tribu soient venus[...]Laissez nous Nedjma et partez."(*Nedjma*, 147)

There are a number of useful points to be registered here. Firstly, as a result of their contact with the European city, this space "ouvert aux quatre vents", the fathers have been relegated to the domain of felony both in its French meaning, 'betrayal', and its English meanings of villainy and grave crime entailing forfeiture of property. The concept of villainy is crucial here on two considerations. Ethnographers and social anthropologists studying subject or prosepctive subject societies during the periods of European expansion into North Africa sometimes

relied on a special figure for the accumulation of their data. This figure is the villain who has been expelled from his tribe or community as a result of a crime he had committed against it. The special significance of the villain is that he usually has an insider's knowledge of the tribe, a grudge and a willingness to collaborate in plotting against it.

There is a peculiar version of this figure in the person of the unnamed Keblouti who defected to the French and served in their armies in Syria and Morocco. The envoy comments:

"...Celui-là est dangereux...[il] pouvait revenir en traître avec sa nouvelle puissance racheter nos terres tout en deshonorants la tribu." (*Nejma*, 148)

But villain also belongs to the religious register. In Arabic, it means either a person with loose morals and a corresponding disregard for religious values or a downright atheist, a term with strong derogatory connotations in its Arabic use...

8.7. Interplay of Identities:

Having said all this, Kateb's representation of the father-figure as a traitor and his assertion of the myth of the ancestor as a sort of alternative should not be taken at face value. The central position of the ancestor would be only too easy to interpret as a return to the source. This would pre-suppose Kateb's dogmatic belief in the existence of an 'original' or pure identity as such pre-dating the conquest of Algeria in the nineteenth century. This is clearly not the case. It has already been demonstrated that the notion of the ancestor embraces a wide geographical domain which enables it to change face and to allow an endless interplay of identities, a point to which the rest of this particular chapter will be devoted.

In fact, critics such as Francis Gandon take a categorical line on Kateb's use of the notion of the ancestor and advance that if there is a message to be read in *Nedjma*, it is that notions of the origin, any origin, should be eradicated. In his article, 'Semiotique et ethnology: quelques points a propos du theme de "La nuit de l'errance" dans *Nedjma* de Kateb Yacine' (1980), Francis Gandon begins by observing that the action in *Nedjma* is "drainée par certains topoi" such as the prison, the penitentiary, the villa Beausejour in Bone, the clinic and the "fondouk" or hotel in Constantine. He then goes on to express his agreement with an interpretation of the prison as the mother's uterus... This in turn leads Gandon to generalise this interpretation by observing that:

"sur le plan semiotique le lieu clos est lié à des
irregularités impliquant le désir érotique." (*Nedjma*, 27)

At a later stage, and with solid consistency, he indicates that:

"Les fils tentent de retablir le pacte avec l'ancêtre en lui
sacrifiant le fruit de la transgression initiale (*Nedjma*).

L'ancêtre refuse le rétablissement du pacte, ce refus déterminant une alienation et une stérilité sans remède. ('Semiotique et ethnologie', 43)

As the title of his article suggests, Gandon's main concern is "La nuit de l'erreur" or the night of error. This is a reference to a ritual once practised in parts of North Africa and described in H. Bosset's *Le Culte des Grottes au Maroc* where it is recorded that:

"D'après ces traditions, chaque année, à date fixe, tous les individus, hommes et femmes, de certaines fractions, se réunissaient une nuit dans une vaste caverne. A un signal donné, on éteindrait les flambeaux; et tous se mêleraient indistinctivement, chaque homme s'unissant au hasard à la femme la plus proche de lui tandis qu'au moyen d'une corde passée à hauteur d'homme le cheikh s'assurait que nul ne reste debout. Tout étranger qui tenterait de s'introduire dans la caverne sera impitoyablement mis à mort."⁶

Such a ritual would take place either in the spring when nature is assuming new life or in autumn when it withers into death. The ambivalent significance of the ritual, Gandon states, is that

"L'endogamie bénéfique touche à l'inceste maudit, la fécondité à la stérilité." ('Sem. et ethn.', 23)

Gandon argues that the ancestor assumes the reverse-role of the sheikh. By issuing instructions that only females should be protected, Keblout breaks the cord and separates the sexes:

"Par cette confiscation [of Nedjma by the Negro] l'ancêtre apparaît donc comme un sheikh inverse: par surcroît, alors que celui-ci conviait à la confusion des sexes au moyen d'une

⁶ The passage is quoted in Francis Gandon p. 23

corde et sépare les sexes.('Sem. et ethn.', 38)

There is a significant detail that Gandon overlooks. The ancestor's instructions are neither absolute nor positivistic. Only the males who have strayed or "les vagabonds" should be excluded. However, Gandon's awareness of the massive presence of the notion of closed space enables him to capture and articulate what he calls Kateb's heretical message which is:

"'Profiter' de la colonisation pour liquider non seulement tout ancêtre, mais toute pensée d'origine, car une telle pensée relève de l'alienation radicale."('Sem. et ethn.', 44)

Kateb Yacine is not alone among North African French novelists to adopt this perspective. In La mémoire tatouée (1971), Abdelkebir Khatibi writes:

"Au bout de la parole, il y avait le même terrain de la culture. J'avais les yeux ouverts au cœur de la France idolâtre et je disais: Occident, tu m'échappe, tu m'a arraché le noyau de ma pensée."(185)

And then again,

"Certes Occident, je me scinde, mais mon identité est une infinité de jeux, de roses de sable, euphorbe est ma mère, oasis est ma mère, je suis protégé, Occident!"(m.t., p.187)

The idea Khatibi expresses here squares up with the situation of the deserters in Nedjma. Rachid for instance is frozen somewhere in the middle between the city that seems unreal and rejective and the ancestor who denies him his place. Correspondingly, for Khatibi, alienation takes place as well as its fullest extent in the notion of difference between an absolute "Us" and an absolute "Other", a

difference Marc Gontard accurately refers to in 'Bilinguisme et écriture dans la littérature marocaine de langue française' (1981) as "cet espace de vertige"(12). For Khatibi, the perception of the "Us" and the "Other" as two absolutes existing outside each other, leads to what he describes in 'Le maghreb comme horizon de pensée' as "la différence sauvage" and "l'identité aveugle":

"Appellons 'différence sauvage' la fausse rupture qui projette l'Autre en un dehors absolu. La différence sauvage tombe de façon aveugle dans l'égarement des identités folles: culturalisme, historicisme, nationalisme, chauvinisme, racisme."(8)

On these grounds, the West and the Orient become not absolute beings existing totally outside, and in diametrical opposition to, each other but relative beings that overlap beyond theology and metaphysics:

"Si l'Occident est en nous, point comme une extériorité, mais bien comme une différence à mesurer rigoureusement par une autre différence, elle même à penser en tant que telle dans l'enjeu des écarts (de l'être). Si donc l'Occident n'est plus cette illusion de notre propre désarroi, tout reste à penser_mortellement."('M.C.H.P.': p.8)

Notwithstanding, I find Francis Gandon's term "profiter" objectionable. First of all, the generating force behind the text of Nedjma is the impact of the events of Setif, May 8th, 1945. Kateb Yacine comments:

"pour la première fois, mon vague humanisme fut affronté au plus atroces des spectacles... alors que le choc que je ressentis devant l'impitoyable boucherie, je ne l'ai jamais oubliée."⁷

In Nedjma itself, Rachid declares:

⁷ See Le roman maghrebin 106-107

"Depuis le 8 mai 1945, quatorze membres de ma familles sont morts, sans compter les fusillés..."(Nedjma, 83)

Could Gandon's conclusion be sustained against such a backdrop where colonisation is perceived not only as a cause of cultural alienation, problematising the question of the Self and identity, but also, and especially, as a symbol of massive and pervasive violence? Besides, what "pensée d'origine" does Kateb designate? Gandon conjectures that Kateb "ne s'adresse pas aux intellectuels mais à un 'peuple inculte et délaissé ... en marge des gardiens de la doctrines regroupee au tour du baigne passionnel appelé l'Islam, Nation, Front ou Révolution", Kateb's own expression from Le Polygone étoilé Once again, what Islam? The Salafist's? Secularised Islam? or is it perhaps the Islam of orientalist such as Gustave Von Grunebaum who sees in it nothing but an essentialist, static theology, and for whom the Islams of Ibn Khaldun(d. 1406), Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1839-97) and Taha Hussain (1889-1975) can all fit in the same bag as one and the same as if the five or so centuries separating Ibn Khaldun and Taha Hussain were nothing but a Rip Van Winkle's night's sleep⁹ That Nedjma epitomises the tension of the dialogue between the "Us" and the "Other" and thus tries to establish its own

⁸ The Salafist is an advocate of the return to the source or *asa'la*, Islam as was practiced by the prophet Mohammed. For a discussion and critique of this trend see Abdullah Laroui's L'Ideologie Arabe Contemporaine(1967), especially his chapter 'Trois hommes, trois definitions' ; Also, for a critique of both Salafism and A. Laroui's views on it see A. Khatibi's 'Le Maroc Comme Horizon de Pensee' pp. 14-15

⁹ In Essays in Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition(1961), he wrote, "The attitude of the Moslim intelligentsia towards its own background and toward the West has found expression in the work of a number of outstanding figures, some of them played no mean part in the political development of their day. The views of ten of these have been selected for more detailed presentation. While the personalities as well as the specific aims of these writers are widely divergent, their basic reactions are nearly identical and, at any rate, thier attention is focused on the same problems. Such unity in diversity seems to be typical of modern Islam."

discourse on the principle of Difference is granted. That is both its fate and its strength. Nedjma, "notre perte, la mauvaise étoile de notre clan" (Nedjma, 188), keeps the four protagonists tied together, through their love for her. At the same time, it is exactly because of that love that they are dispersed, "Nedjma dont les hommes se disputaient non seulement l'amour, mais la paternité" (Nedjma, 179). This divided being and its constant oscillation between the centre and the periphery is what Charles Bonn refers to as "enfermement" and "dispersion". They could be referred to simply as the Self and the Other. Cultural revival depends on how the balance between the Self and the Other is kept and the real question Nedjma poses is to what extent should our gates be open for foreign influence and how far do we have to go in guarding what we already are. The allegory in this novel is, in a way, similar to that in the Teddy Bear's Picnic song where we are invited to go to the woods but at the same time reminded that it is safer to stay at home. But the paramount importance of Nedjma is that it applies this imagery in both directions, the past and the future. Alienation can obtain in Westernisation as well as in re-Orientalisation (return to the source). Hence the importance of 'a double critique' as Khatibi calls it. Nedjma is like "Us" since she belongs to Keblout's tribe but she is also like "Them" on account of her French blood. In other words, she embodies the two premises of this chapter: foreignness and inevitability.

I. Chapter Nine

[illegible]

*North African Parallels: Driss Chtiabi,
Alienation And The Limits of The New
Ego*

Part One

9.1. Introduction:

To better illustrate the point about geographical migration, referred to in the previous chapter, I propose to examine Driss Chraïbi's Les Boucs. Although attention will be chiefly focused on this novel, it will be placed into context by a look at Chraïbi's previous work, Le Passé simple. This will illuminate the main theme of alienation and also our understanding of Chraïbi's estrangement from Moroccan traditionalist society.

Le Passé simple was published in France in 1954, a time of great nationalist fervour in Morocco. In it, the author depicts Moroccan traditionalist society as stifling and criticises it in scathing terms. The later novel also reflects his first encounter with Western civilisation outside both school material and Morocco altogether. While dealing with Le Passé simple I shall be referring to the character as Driss and to the author as Chraïbi.

The narrative of Les Boucs is transposed from the city on native soil, Algeria, into Europe. It tells the story of Yalaan Waldick, an Algerian intellectual, who comes to France with a hope of achieving better material standards, and finding justice and fulfillment of all the ideals France had hitherto represented in the eyes of her colonies. However, a journey into the misery of the North African immigrants in France shatters that hope. Furthermore, a life of poverty and squalor, a violent love/hate relationship with his concubine, Simone, the death of their son, Fabrice, and disenchantment with the French Left as represented by Mac O' Mac, a potential publisher of the manuscript of Les Boucs, who turns out to be the epitome of pragmatism and racial prejudice, all serve to aggravate Yalaan's situation. Having eventually realised that there is nothing he can do to save the immigrants from their misery, he is driven to despair, takes to drinking and, thus, becomes a burden on those he had set out to save.

Much in the same way as in Kateb Yacine, Chraïbi's fiction seems haunted by one crucial issue, an epistemological question residing deep into his characters' cultural being: how can the Orient know or accommodate the West, and how does one begin to perceive the meeting of these two geo-cultural dimensions without succumbing to alienation?

9.2 Le Passe simple – A socio-religious critique:

9.2.1. the father-figure:

A few things have already been said about the father-figure in Nedjma. Having caused the tribe's disarray, his sentence is symbolic exile. The accusation in Le Passé simple does not dramatically break away from this pattern although it is essentially different. Driss singles out his father for brutal scrutiny, and eventually revolts against him on the grounds that he upholds Islamic, traditionalist status quo. The passage here is from the specific to the general. Mohammed Zahiri notes:

"Le père, Haj Fatmi Ferdi, est plus qu'un simple père. Il est le symbole et le porte-parole de tout un ordre: le patriarcat." ('La figure du père dans le roman maghrébin', Présence Francophone, 1987, 108)

Let us survey the various angles from which Driss perceives his father. Throughout Le Passe simple, Haj Fatmi Ferdi is referred to as the "Seigneur". The implication here is two-fold. It evokes the authority of the European mediaeval feud whose relationship to those under his authority is one of master to serfs. Haj Fatmi fulfills the function of a Seigneur both at home, where wife and children are subjected to unrelenting tyranny and despotism, and outside it, as he combines the status of a man of commerce and landowner. Such authority, it is suggested, cannot be contested or challenged. It is absolute and pervasive:

"Le Seigneur m'attend. Sa loi est indiscutable. J'en vis." (P.S., 12)

The title of the *Seigneur* is also given a religious connotation. Haj Fatmi's unrelenting despotism puts him on a par with God:

"Ces âffamés[the beggars] et moi nous ressemblons: nous sommes fonction, eux de treize siècles d'Islam, moi du Seigneur, cristallisation de l'Islam."(P.S.,12)

Haj Fatmi then represents an oppressive monopoly. He is a family-head, a socio-temporal figure and a power spiritual. Such monopoly suffocates Driss and leads to his unleashed revolt:

"Voyez, mon Dieu: Haj Fatmi m'a appris à vous aimer... dans la peur du corps et la désolation de l'âme. Il a appliqué votre loi, une femme qu'il a torturée, si bien torturée, grave, ponctuel, digne, que cette torture en moins, elle tremblerait en poussière, des fils qu'il lie, ligote, taille, écrase, le devoir de l'honneur, dit-il"(P.S.,101)

This is a specification of the *Seigneur's* tyranny on the family level, which branches out into two different but related directions: the mother and the children. In this regard, Chraïbi escapes the pattern traced by Charles Bonn who considers the return to the theme of the mother/country in the face of the city/alienation as a trait of Third World literature as a whole. Although there is actually a sort of reconciliation with this theme in Chraïbi's subsequent fiction, *Succession ouverte*(1962) being a good example on this, the mother in *Le Passé simple* is a hopeless case. She is tormented and tortured. In a special sense, she belongs more to the world of the dead, beyond any notion of revival, than to that of the living. In the following passage, she is depicted as a socio-psychological void or non-entity, reduced to the status of historical insignificance as she has failed to secure a relatively strong position of independence from which she could aspire to contend the *Seigneur's* power or affect the course of events around herself and her children:

"Jeune fille, elle avait été cloîtrée. Epouse, le Seigneur l'avait enfermée à clef d'abord. Ensuite l'avait engrossée, sept fois, coup sur coup. De sorte que, privée de bonne et allaitante_ ou enseinte_ la porte ouverte n'avait plus de sens pour elle. Son dernier voyage datait du jour de noces"(P.S. : 65)

Paradoxically enough, even under such circumstances, she does not find redemption in Driss's eyes. Where one would expect her to be spared the narrator's rage on account of her potential ability to help orchestrate conspiracy against the father, as in Nedjma, the attack on her comes almost equally unmitigated. For Driss, his mother's affection and emotional attachment are seen as being in excess. They are described as "tendresses monstrueuses". And without laying too much emphasis on the theme of bastardy, at least in the sense most Maghrebian writers deploy it, it could be affirmed that the state of orphanhood is complete and comprehensive in Le Passé simple. Driss simply declares:

"J'ai besoin d'un père, d'une mère, d'une famille."(P.S., 153)

This state of orphanhood is evocative of the deadly effect of the Seigneur's despotism. Driss becomes obsessed with the idea of death which takes its fullest toll in claiming his brother Hamid. What is particularly interesting here is that despotism, as a cause, and death, as an overwhelming consequence, are presented within the context of an intricate and deceptive interplay between reality and fantasy. Such interplay will serve to explain a good deal about both Chraïbian character and critical perspective. A Khatibi's view on this subject is worth examining:

"L'irréalisme politique de ce romancier de grand talent est flagrant. Pour comprendre Chraïbi, il faut dire que son

attitude ne se base pas sur une analyse objective de la situation historique et politique de son pays; elle est essentiellement psychologique, en ce sens que son déracinement est trop grand pour pouvoir se réconcilier avec sa propre société."(*C.M.*, 27)

First of all, two different accounts of Hamid's enigmatic death must be taken into account. In real life, he died of meningitis. In the novel, he is killed by the Seigneur. Kadra-Hadjadji's way of solving this enigma is both credible and consistent with the novel's double-view. She argues that the sun is the symbol of the father-figure. In the novel, it is indicated that the day of Hamid's burial is the hottest of all Ramadan days. Out of this symbolic network, the sun as a symbol of the father's aggressivity is significantly allocated a religious connotation. This serves to thrust both father and Ramadan (the most widely respected of all Islam's five pillars) in the folds of complicity and indictment. The two superposed propositions emerge in the following form: Hamid is killed by the sun — Hamid is killed by the father. The one or the other, the outcome is the same. Driss revolts against his father as a source of death.

Clearly, Driss's obsession with death is equalled only by his obsession with God. He sees the repellent hand of religion everywhere. God is ubiquitous and the world is claustrophobic. This tragic vision constructed not from a clear political or socio-historical understanding of Moroccan society under the Protectorate, but only from a personal and impressionistic reaction to it, has some extremely negative repercussions on what could otherwise have been a sound, comprehensive (though ill-conceived by Chraïbi's audience of the time) critique of traditionalist society.

However, the significant element about this failure to present an extra-personal critical analysis of the Moroccan situation is that it underlines Chraïbi's wrath at the gulf he sees established between Oriental and Western cultures. These become essentially symbolised by despotism and liberty respectively. This,

In turn, seems to register how far Chraïbi is to go in his estrangement from his autochthonous social environment, an issue I will tackle later. Such reductive understanding of religion and, especially, of the nature of the period in which he was writing, combined with his extreme rejection of the society in question, account for the angry reception with which Le Passé simple was met inside Morocco and for the lamentable reputation of being anti-nationalist¹ visited on the author by the nationalists.

As the line separating the father-figure (guardian of the status quo) from Islam is so thin in Driss's perception, what befalls the one befalls the other. They are part and parcel of the same cultural package. Which is not altogether untrue. What is worth pointing out, however, is the facile passage from sociology and, especially, psychonalysis (Driss is tending his own rage and sadism) to metaphysics. It is striking how Driss finds it more problematic to slip from Djellaba into European clothes than from El Jedida society into heaven, or should one say, hell. Le Passé simple does not make the slightest effort to make a subtle but crucial distinction between religion (any religion since the case repeats itself with Christianity in Les Boucs) as a form of metaphysics and religion as a theological order liable to appropriation by societal structures. The end-product of such failure is a loss of orientation and a truly overwhelming sense of estrangement. (After Driss has thoroughly negated Oriental society and Yalaan Waldik Western society, we are left facing the impossible question: what now?)

¹ In its issue of January 14, 1954, the Moroccan daily "Démocratie" declared war on Chraïbi describing him as murderer, renegade, and traitor. As Charles Bonn explained, "La double critique de la famille traditionnelle et de la religion passait au yeux des nationalistes pour une atteinte à l'identité marocaine" (Violence du Texte, 16)

9.2.2. Alienation as a translation of divorce between power and ideas:

How does Driss see his own alienation? The following passage offers a clue to that effect. He notes:

"Imaginez-vous un nègre du jour au lendemain blanchi mais dont le nez est resté noir. J'étais vêtu d'une veste et d'un pantalon. Aux pieds, une paire de chaussures. Une chemise. Une ceinture à la taille. Un mouchoir dans ma poche. J'étais fier. Comme un petit Européen! Sitôt parmi mes camarades, je me trouvais grotesque. Et je l'étais.(P.S., 16)

The passage addresses the issue of change. Driss has been sent to a European school and thus initiated into a new world of aesthetic values. Such change is clearly perceived not as a progressive development from one state to another but as stark and sordid metamorphosis—note the use of the word, 'grotesque'. What is all the more interesting about the passage, however, is the sense of double-critique and double consciousness which Driss displays; his ability to transpose his critical sense onto the outside and turn it on himself. Such a critical sense, a gift of his French schooling we are told, is also cast on the whole environment where it functions; it spares nothing.

The contrast between the ensemble of the types of social and ideological realities surrounding him and the newly acquired mental ability, his continuous drive to question them, is exactly where Driss sees his alienation obtaining. He has become a double self treading cautiously and precariously between two modes of being that seem to negate each other. For instance, he recounts how his father's authority is so firmly established that he actually lives by it, "J'en vis", and at the same time describes his hatred for anything that is defined. What is firm and

established, he reacts, must be the epitome of death:

"J'appel point mort tout ce qui est défini, comme ce derb que je traverse et cette maison ou je me rends." (P.s., 12)

Here again, Chraïbi seems to reverse one of the major patterns of the literature. In *Nedjma*, for example, it is the father who is seen in terms of symbolic betrayal. He strays away from the tribe and asserts his individual self as opposed to tribal collectivism. The consequence is the collapse of the tribal edifice. In *Le Passe simple*, the givens are changed. Although the father remains at the heart of social interaction, it is the son who takes the initiative and establishes himself as the throbbing source of the need for individual freedom. One of the major consequences of this permutation is a shift in the articulation of the theme of betrayal. The father has betrayed because he takes his 'orientality' at face value. He refuses to loosen his grip on his authority.

In this regard, note the dramatic discrepancy between what Driss was meant to achieve as a result of his European schooling and what he has actually achieved. The logic behind Haj Fatmi's decision to send him to a European school could be described as essentially pragmatic. But we are led to believe that because it is pragmatic, it is also somewhat narrow-minded. This would acquire particular validity were Haj Fatmi to be considered a patriarch and a symbol of the emerging merchant class, itself an amalgam of the old aristocracy and the new bourgeois structures established by the Protectorate.

Haj Fatmi has his eyes set on the post-colonial era. The wisdom of modernity does not escape him. However (and this is the difficulty of his situation and what Chraïbi sees at the root of what he calls "colonisabilité": if we had been modern we would not have been colonised), modernity cannot be acquired in Arabic; it has to be acquired in French. On account of the few monopolies he holds on tea importation in the country, the Seigneur also holds a key power position in the national economy.

Come the post-colonial era, real power would have to combine a strong economic position with a modern mind possessing ample modern knowledge to maintain and consolidate the terms of its economic standing. This is the reason for the Seigneur's choice of a French school for Driss.

According to Driss, however, such an ambitious project enfoldes a serious error of judgement. He is put to a Western school where he learns the French language and a little bit more. He obviously comes to realise that French is not just a hollow medium of communication. It is also a window on its own conceptual and ideological realities such as "Liberty", itself an exact abrogation of that very tool his father uses to uphold his position: tyranny. Haj Fatmi's project undergoes a thorough transformation in the process:

"Et si à l'instant même, le Seigneur m'allait dire: 'il ya quelque chose que nous ne comprenons pas et qui nous effraie, tu n'est plus de notre monde, parles, exprimes ton désir, nous te l'accorderons', je repondrais: 'La liberté'" (P.S. 45-46)

The usefulness of the socio-cultural critique which Le Passé simple delivers is a function of its thesis that the purely pragmatic rationale of the Seigneur's decision is erected on a wrong understanding of the colonial enterprise and on a poor assessment of the historicity of the period together with the experience it had brought about. Haj Fatmi's power ambitions were not buttressed by a strong, organic cultural discourse capable of seeing that type of encounter between West and Orient to a safe shore. One of the major consequences is that Driss, a potential intellectual who would otherwise have assumed an active role in the making of that discourse, is driven into marginalisation.

9.2.3. Alienation as a form of cultural dislocation:

Short of possessing ample confidence in his own cultural background and frustrated by his inability to 'exist' in society Western-style, Driss fails to achieve the pragmatic footing which his father deems necessary if he is to deal with the West as equal to equal. Instead, Driss achieves a form of wild and sweeping intellectualism which carts away everything his father had meant him to stand for and which will declare him at war with himself, with his immediate social environment and with Oriental culture at large.

On a different level, Haj Fatmi has apparently unconsciously accepted, reiterated and adopted what I have defined elsewhere in this thesis as the Byronic themes of Knowledge and power which guided the colonial enterprise. This is in fact another aspect of his poor assessment of the nature of the historical experience he was traversing. But, yet again, while he cannot be said to have compromised his power as result, Driss could well be said to have been exposed to a fierce existential handicap:

"Je marchais dans la ville. J'allais vadrouillant, réceptif au déclic. Comme une chienne de vie, je poussais devant moi le poids d'une civilisation. Que je n'avais pas demandée. Dont j'étais fier. Et qui me faisait étranger dans cette ville(Fes) d'où j'étais issu."(p.5, 72)

Obviously, this is one way of expressing his alienation from his own culture and of posing the question of identity.

The father/son conflict which eventually finds an outlet in a daring and unflinching confrontation between the two, points to the existence of a double perception of Driss's acquisition of Western knowledge. Haj Fatmi's failure to domesticate that Knowledge, so to speak, and deploy it to his own ends and on his

own terms, eventually leads to his branding it as poisonous:

"Toi le poison. Et je ne sache pas que la Résidence se fut employée à faire chez nos fils aboutir son rapport culturel sous forme de poison; ou si c'est intentionnel, il ya violation d'âme, en tout cas du jour où tu as fréquenté un lycée tu n'as été que cela, un poison. Tu voyais partout des injustices sociales, disais-tu, chez un même individu, d'un instant à l'autre, des injustices temporelles: qui donc te demandait de les voir? et qui diable t'a enseigné que ce fussent là des injustices ?"(P.s., 248-9)

By contrast, Driss sees in that type of knowledge a zone of enlightenment despite the concomitant estrangement which he considers as the price he has to pay for it. For him then, it is a necessary evil—much in the same way as Chraïbi himself who qualifies colonisation as salutary. To have wanted to do other than to embrace it, Driss declares, "Il fallait limiter mon instruction à l'école koranique"(P.s., 153). The case so being, Western education comes in handy. To revolt against Oriental culture and take revenge on it, writes Houaria Kadr-Hadjadji in Contestation et revolte dans l'œuvre de Driss Chraïbi (1986), Driss "prend l'Occident pour référence"(43).

9.2.4. Representations of the West as a function of a struggle for power:

How does Driss perceive the West ? It is quite striking how deeply the family pathos affects Driss's vision of both West and Orient. Jean Dejeux's description of that family is quite useful:

"Un univers démentiel de cruauté... un noeud de vipères."(Le roman maghrébin, 289)

This demonic atmosphere totally governed by a tyrant full of hatred, populated by children full of fear and diffidence and a mother who stands as the ultimate symbol of an obliterated will and resigned submission, constitutes the screen through which Driss's perception of the Orient as a system of organization and as a cultural heritage comes forth. The Orient itself becomes essentially all those elements, tyranny, fear and submission. The West on the other hand, becomes an alternative or underground self to it. It becomes everything that the Orient has failed to become, liberty, confidence, and critical perceptiveness. Throughout Le Passe simple, "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite" is juxtaposed with "La theocratie musulmane"(P.S.,197). Driss submits:

"Je ne crois plus aux mille et une nuit. A condition dis-je que vous vous résignez à transformer theocratie en paternite"(P.S.,153)

In fact, the West does not only stand for Liberty, Fraternity, Equality but also moves on the Orient to inject it with those very qualities. In other words, to liberate it from the thrall of its own tyranny. Driss reminds us that "meme enfant, j'ai toujours eu la rage de la justice" (P.S. ,16) and in unequivocal terms states:

"En effet, les nouveaux commandements firent placer les anciens au second plan et en quelque sorte m'en jibérèrent. Et me predisposèrent au sens critique. Première étape. Dont je ne su profiter. Je m'étais déjà refoulé davantage. Jusqu'au sadisme." (P.S., 189)

Liberty and critical affinity, hence reason, are then the substance from which the West's fabric is made. The Orient, on account of its Islamic theocracy, is an archaic notion that cannot yield to those elements. It is virtually without substance or if it has any, it is simple. From here, the title of the novel².

Such are the terms Driss uses to break all epistemological ties with things Oriental. The break is performed in devastating violence which assumes the form of sadism. Jean Dejeux wrote:

"Arriver enfin à se posséder soi-même quand on a été trop longtemps aliéné, arriver enfin à tout dominer et à tout ramener à soi, à son tour, jusqu'à faire mal aux autres et à se faire mal soi-même en s'auto-mutilant dans un narcissisme délirant, tel est le premier terrain sur lequel a eu le premier combat contre le père." (L.m.l.f., 289)

This is to say that sadism is part and parcel of Driss's alienation. It is also his tool for revolting against his father who converses with him referring to himself in the first person plural, "nous". To assert his "I", Driss will have to disturb and frustrate what seems as a dangerously over-inflated super-ego. To draw a psychoanalytical picture, he has to combat his castration and establish his own virility. Sexuality or

² Another interpretation for the title would be to say that the past has been conjugated in the past simple, so to speak, as an indication to its end for the narrator. In other words, it has been buried. Another Moroccan novelist, Abdelkrim Ghallab who writes mainly in Arabic, had published a novel under the title *We Have Buried the Past* (my own translation) to which I think Driss Ferdi refers (c.f. last two lines of quote on page 18 of this section), which supports this argument.

things sexual become the ground of a fierce battle of denunciation. Such denunciation takes various forms: the unveiling of sexual perversion as in the tales of Abbou and the Berber boy, "fils du vent"; an onslaught on his mother who goes to great pains in aesthetically preparing herself to be invaded by Haj Fatmi Ferdi shortly after Hamid's burial; humiliating his two younger brothers whom he forces to masturbate under his gaze and to even examine their sperms on the microscope; the denunciation of his father's secretive polygamic practices; and finally, and perhaps most importantly, in his own sexual involvement with a young girl. We are told:

"Au commencement il y avait l'orgueil. Orgueilleux jusqu'au refoulement, puis refoulé jusqu'au sadisme, et sadique jusqu'à l'inconscience." (P.S., 185)

A little later he further qualifies:

"J'appelle orgueil la possession de soi." (P.S., 187)

This is an exceptionally unusual case of a ruthless struggle for power. Exceptional in the sense that where the fighting and hatred are at their fiercest, mutual fascination between Haj Fatmi and Driss is never completely out of the game. The father rejects everything that the son has grown to embrace exactly because he does not have it:

"Sur son masque il n'y a pas un frisson. Je supprime ce masque et je lis : il est analphabète et parlant fier de soutenir n'importe quelle conversation de n'importe quelle discipline [...] Il sait que cet Occident vers lequel il m'a délégué est hors de sa sphère. Alors il le hait. Et de peur qu'en moi il n'ait d'enthousiasme pour ce monde nouveau,

tout ce que j'apprends, il le tanne, casse, décortique, et dissèque. Desannoblit."(P.s., 20)

The son in turn hates his father but also implicitly acknowledges his admiration for the one who so tenaciously refuses to make any concessions where his power is concerned:

"Cet homme est essentiellement fort: alliant deux facteurs qui font un homme fort: le temps et l'oubli."(P.s.: 44)

Sadism here is the outcome of a frustrated attempt at transposing a share of power that has never been conceded in the first instance from its original source to the ego which becomes self-centred and equally over-inflated. For Driss, the conflict finally finds an outlet in his open revolt against his father. However, from Haj Fatmi's point of view, the conflict is defused along different lines: exile and damnation, two themes that find their ultimate treatment in Les Boucs. (Incidentally, the major protagonist in this novel is called Yalaan Waldik, damned be your parents in Moroccan Arabic). Driss is chased from the house, and Haj Fatmi seals his fate, "vous etes maudit", he curses.

Who wins the power struggle in Le Passe simple? My view is that Driss's revolt is a success only in so far as it is a revolt as such. Faced with such a formidable opponent favoured both mundanely and extra-mundanely, as he is the custodian of culture (Islam) and economic power, Driss could only hope to score a limited and narrow-ranged victory. The stream of Haj Fatmi's power is not interrupted or even abated on contention. He goes on enjoying all the strength and influential will he thinks a father-figure is fit to enjoy. This interpretation of Le Passe simple is given further poignancy if we note that in Succession ouverte, Driss comes back all the way from France to seek reconciliation with the past. Also, despite the Seigneur's death in this novel, his voice stays on to inform and shape the future,

since his will was left on tape not in written form.

To come back to Le Passe simple, after his initial expulsion from home, Driss comes back to negotiate with the Seigneur so as to clear all differences and revert to the state a priori. There is significance in the detail that his meeting with his father takes place at the Seigneur's farm in Ain Diab:

"Maintenant j'avais pu exprimer ma révolte si par la suite je n'avais pu la maintenir; et puis j'étais revenu. Et nous étions là face à face, à Ain Diab son domaine, où c'est vrai, nous avons soixante hectares à nous battre et crier, bien libre... ou peut être conclure un pacte (enterrez le passe? qui a dit cela un romancier)."(P.S., 216)

The fact that such reconciliation has a rural setting is extremely suggestive. It is the Seigneur's domain par excellence, the epitome of the feudal hierarchy which he upholds, and therefore puts him at an advantage... tips the balance in his favour. He makes a temporary concession by agreeing to the encounter, but his will is set: Driss has to be alienated in exile, in the city par excellence:

"Souviens-toi, me dit le Seigneur. La France c'est le bordel du monde et le cabinet de ce bordel, c'est Paris."(P.S., 289)

The passage could be interpreted in two different ways. One could argue that the father is warning his son against the moral corruption he thinks might be encountered in Paris. However, in the light of all the things that I have said about Haj Fatmi and about the father/son conflict, one could also argue that because Driss is moving out of his father's zone of influence, the latter is trying to riddle both the West and his son's dependence with moral dilemma. Where pastoral morality is sought both in Kateb Yacine and Mphahlele to help face up to the challenge of the city and its ensuing feeling of alienation, here it is seen as a force of alienation. What prevails in Le Passe simple is the father's victory and his

ethical perspective, both of which cast Driss into marginality. This is to say that the space that rejects him is rural and, paradoxically, not urban.

I. Chapter Nine

*North African Parallels: Driss Chriabi,
Alienation And The Limits of The New
Ego*

Part Two

9.3. Les Boucs Re-evaluation of the Western alternative:

9.3.1. Narration Individual or cultural persona?:

The notion of rural rejection brings us to Chraïbi's other novel, Les Boucs. At the outset, the following observation has to be made. If Driss Ferdi perceives Oriental culture in totally negative terms, thus jettisoning himself into an alienated corner, Yalaan will have cold feet about Western culture. By coming to perceive this culture in equally negative terms, Yalaan gives the full scope of the type of alienation involved. Here, although the novel immediately opens up in France, it would be helpful to attempt a back-track plot summary. A little Berber boot-black of ten is met by a French priest in the city of Bone, Algeria. To the question what he will be in ten years' time, the little boy, Yalaan Waldick, replies a bootblack of twenty. This angers the priest who retorts that if he were in France, Yalaan would learn Greek and Latin to become a man in ten years. Yalaan goes home and persuades his father to sell his last goat to send him to France, promising that in ten years' time he would replace the one goat with a thousand others. Yalaan embarks for France and the priest sighs relief, "J'ai sauvé une âme", he says (Les Boucs, 194)...

Yalaan Waldik, Algerian intellectual, tries to live the conditions of the North African immigrants in France to enable him to write a true novel about them. He has just been released from prison where the manuscript of Les Boucs³ was composed and comes back to live with his French concubine, Simone, from whom he has a son Fabrice, in poor and distressing conditions. Simone is in charge of

³ 'les boucs' is short for 'les boucs-émissaires' which is 'scapegoats' in English. However, the equivalent of this word in the Moroccan dialect is used to designate a combination of stupidity and apathy. The double meaning is probably intended and serves to highlight the derogation and prejudice surrounding the immigrants even in their own culture.

handing the manuscript to Mac O' Mac, specialist in North African affairs, for publication. It turns out that Mac O' Mac is more interested in seducing Simone, who eventually succumbs to his deceitful ways and that the whole affair of his interest in North African immigrants is a mere sham pretence. Sharing the life of twenty-two North African immigrants, Yalaan has a mental breakdown and develops what seem to be suicidal tendencies. Simone, also suffering from a frail nervous condition as a result of her connection with Yalaan and the immigrants in general, exacerbated by her son's death of meningitis, ends up chasing Yalaan from the house. Acting on the belief that he is not the sum product of French civilisation, Mac O' Mac stresses to Yalaan the futility of his experience with Les Boucs and tries to convince him to return home, to Algeria.

Without losing sight of the main issue here, which is migration to the city par excellence, one can already spot a problematic gulf between what the title of the book suggests and what the actual narrative is centred upon. The title promises that the narrative would concern itself with the miseries of Les Boucs, the North African immigrants. The narrative, however, pulls in a different direction and is essentially concerned with Yalaan Waldik, an intellectual. Are we being thrust into the same arena as in *Mphahlele* where the gulf between representer and represented is virtually unpopulated and irreconcilable? In other words, if the immigrants stand for the sacrificed scapegoats on the altar of civilisation as the title suggests and we shall see subsequently, have they not also been sacrificed on the altar of authorial representation which seems to squash them into a secondary and peripheral theme in favour of Yalaan Waldik's concerns? Algerian critic Houaria Kadra-Hadjadji replies:

"...oui si l'on mesure la place accordée au protagonistes... non si l'on adopte un autre critère, celui de la présence "subjective" des immigrés dans la conscience du narrateur." (*Contestation et Révolte*, 69)

A very valid point. However, the difficulty arises from the fact that I find Yalaan Waldik controversial as a character and would be hard put to it to accept the critic's notion of the narrator's consciousness readily on trust. We will be returning to this issue.

Now, if what is really at stake is the issue of elitism, one would have to concede with Addison Gayle JR. that all literature with a conscious ideology from classicism to existentialism, passing through romanticism, classicism and realism "were likewise composed for an elite, by an elite." ("Under Western Eyes", Black World, 1973, 44). Here again, one should not stop at this vague and indiscriminate level. There are various levels of elitism and, more importantly, varying backdrops against which it could be measured. Mphahlele for instance ties his characters up to a universalist notion of Man. Hence its vague implications which render those very characters deficient in specificity and therefore life. I submitted that by so doing, he detaches them from their cultural context and, in this sense, lets them hang too loose for us to grasp the content of their experience in Apartheid society, their most dramatic trait being their individuality as if they have no cultural denominator binding them together. On a different level, I have pointed out that the phenomenon of Apartheid is transformed into a psychological function. The author does not probe the question of what it is like to live in Apartheid society as much as he emphasises his own psychological tribulations as an individual, educated man.

With Yalaan Waldik, the picture seems different, at least initially. His original project is to live the conditions of les Boucs in his capacity as an intellectual as opposed to the author who fails to accomplish a descent into the township and fades away into nature. Chraïbi's protagonist aspires to give, or be able to give, an insider's testimony on the conditions of the immigrants. Where the great difficulty arises, however, is not in the nature of his representation but from its standpoint.

Even where he is making a convincing exploration of their hardships and misery, he is still making a point about them, not writing or speaking as one of them. This shade of meaning is essential and points the way towards another difference between Mphahlele and Chraïbi. Let us assert it in the form of a question for the time being. Is not the implication in such a shade of meaning that while Eseki gets entangled in the trammels of a certain romanticism, Yalaan falls prey to the confines of his intellectual status?

One significant indictment of Yalaan is made by Mac O' Mac. Trying to alienate Simone from Yalaan, he tells her:

"Il prend ses desirs pour des réalités, j'ai souvent relu ses lettres. Le cas typique d'un intellectuel ou plutôt d'un néo-intellectuel venant d'un autre continent, d'une autre somme d'histoire. Maniant avec quelque aisance notre langue et nos avocasseries européennes, mais uniquement cela." (Les Boucs, 76)

A contrast is made between reality and desire, and Yalaan is accused of confusing what is subjective and personal, an inside function, with what is extra-subjective or collective, a function of the outer world. This contrast is further supported by yet another one. The epithet attached to Yalaan in the passage is that of intellectual— as opposed to the immigrants, that is. But one can see that the frame of reference is extended, thus freezing the individual status of Yalaan and elevating it to the cultural level. The matter here is seen in terms of other continent, other sum of history as opposed to "ours". Why this shift in the referencing system? Note the contradiction in the argument. It proceeds to nullify any claim on Yalaan's part to be one of les Boucs and at the same time admits they are inseparable since all of them are rejected on the ground of their incapacity to adapt to Western culture. The denial then is worked out on the individual level but

hammered in on the cultural one. The point here is that the case so being, Yalaan's intellectualism is legitimate since it is engaged in the immigrant's cause. They have to be put into cultural perspective, if for anything, to countenance Mac O' Mac's chauvinism. Somebody has to think and speak on their behalf. And yet, even from Yalaan's point of view, the above statement sounds somewhat pretentious. He declares:

"Je ne me crois représentant de qui que ce soit, hormis de moi. Ceux-la même qui m'aiment... Raus et les Boucs... m'ont toujours considéré comme un étranger, un cas à part. Mais mon Dieu, comme j'ai appris à aimer ce que naguère j'ai fui." (*Les Boucs*, 97)

Here, we come to the point of Yalaan as a controversial character and to Kadra-Hadjadji's idea of the narrator's consciousness. The slipperiness of this character/narrator comes from his loose or muddled consciousness. There are at least two examples to substantiate this claim. First of all, nowhere in the novel are we presented directly with the figure of Mac O' Mac actually in the process of uttering his indictment of Yalaan. Although he is depicted as a facetious, hypocritical and thoroughly nasty figure, such an indictment, it would appear, is mere speculation on Yalaan's part. It is what he thinks Mac O' Mac would have told Simone. In fact, Yalaan goes so far as to actually assert rather unequivocally the speculative nature of the statement in question:

"Mac O' Mac n'a peut être rien dit de tout cela. N'en a même rien pensé" (*Les Boucs*, 75)

If this is true, then Yalaan conforms exactly to that picture he thinks Mac O' Mac would have drawn of him, namely that he takes his desires for realities. One might quite justifiably argue that Yalaan is so well informed about the way Mac O' Mac

thinks that he can equally legitimately claim to read his thoughts for us. however, this argument collapses the moment Yalaan becomes just as objectionable as a narrator, on account of his unreliability as Mac O' Mac is on account of the absurd and culturally immoral attitudes towards Yalaan. Needless to say that those attitudes could be labelled as racism in a raw condition.

The point about Yalaan's unreliability constitutes a second example. While he pretends to take responsibility only for himself and speak only on his own behalf, he simultaneously does the exact opposite. Earlier he states:

"...la conviction que moi, que moi, élément de cet mosaïque bizarre que les agences de presse nomment les Nord-Africains, je devais, non pas me racheter individuellement vis-a-vis de la société dans laquelle je vis pour que j'ai droit à sa sympathie, mais rachetez les Nord-Africains. Pour eux souffrir dans ma dignité d'homme et dans ma chair d'homme."(Les Boucs, 71)

One can see that he conceives of himself beyond the task of representing(not representative), as some sort of Christ-figure sacrificially offering his dignity and flesh for the sake of a very specific community, that of the North African immigrants.

Even where the tone of protest against racial standardisation is at its sharpest, there is no escape from the "Us"/ the "Other" dichotomy. Examine the following passage. Raus, Yalaan's faithful companion, has just stolen a piece of meat to feed him:

"Il [the butcher] a du appeler Police-secours, donner un signalement précis de son voleur : Nord-Africain, n'importe lequel, le premier qui a débouché du coin de la rue. Et le boucher s'est écrié: pas de doute, c'est bien lui."(Les Boucs, 12)

The same feature was extracted in Down Second Avenue. Esek1 is extremely offended in his sensitivity and pride everytime a white office girl refers to him as John or boy. He feels that such a way of referring to him erodes his individual humanity. With Yalaan, however, there is a qualitative difference. When he protests against the any-North-African-would-do sort of situation, or against being referred to as "noraf", for instance, he does so because he finds it culturally insulting not because it puts his individuality into question. Standardisation is herein seen as a tool of socio-cultural marginalisation. All this to say that Yalaan's representation of his condition as a North African does have a collective touch.

9.3.2. Types of marginalisation:

Having mentioned marginalisation, it could be argued that from his point of view, Yalaan suffers from it on two different levels. I shall mention the first level briefly here as I shall come to it later. He finds Western civilisation unaccommodating. This attitude is both epitomised and confirmed by Mac O' Mac. For the latter, Yalaan seems to imply, it is a greater sin to be a North African intellectual than to be a North African immigrant. The immigrant cannot bring himself to adapt to Western civilisation as he is the product of a totally different and inferior culture. He therefore loses himself in marginality and resigns himself, which takes care of his lot. The case of the intellectual, Yalaan thinks, is perceived along different lines. He is equally marginalised because he comes from a different sum of history but his rejection is amplifiably exacerbated on the grounds that:

"...non seulement il ne se comporte pas en néo-Européen, non seulement il détruit nos conceptions du Bicot standard et a le tort d'oublier que tout ce qu'on lui demande c'est d'être purement et simplement un bicot: mais il a la prétention, l'ambition, la naïveté de vouloir...imposer l'Orient en Europe.(Les Boucs, 76)

The second level of Yalaan's marginalisation bears on his involvement with the Boucs themselves. They consider him, a special case, a stranger. The narrative does not treat this issue as such as the narrative is dominated by two sets of relationships: Yalaan's with Western civilisation and the Boucs' with that same civilisation which is seen through his eyes. The immigrants remain confined to the background and, with the exception of Raus, are not once given a chance to surface on the narrative and speak for themselves. What is supposedly the third set of relationships, Yalaan's to the Boucs remains undefined in any clear fashion,

however. The only thing we know is that he is rejected by them although he is originally one of them. My view is that Yalaan's rejection in this respect could be in part attributed to the immigrant-intellectual division. As far as the Boucs are concerned, the idea that someone was there to write a book about their condition sounds bizarre and totally inconsequential. To them their condition is that they have to survive; not for anything, just for survival's sake. In fact, at one point Yalaan too is drawn into this conception of existence. To the entrepreneur who refuses them jobs on the ground he had nothing to do with the government's policy on "Le Status de l'Algerie", Yalaan says, "Je ne fais pas de politique, j'ai faim." (Les Boucs, 33)

In fact, one can sense that Yalaan's presence amongst them is resented in a certain way. While he tries to open their eyes to the nature of the misery they are subjugated to, he, on the other hand, has no solution to suggest. This impasse generates a feeling of unhappy consciousness in them and pushes them into a more aggravated psychological atmosphere. The tension of the situation consequently finds its translation in violence as they end up murdering the entrepreneur. Yalaan stands accused:

"Parmi les 300 000 Arabes de France, ils étaient les résiduels, les parias. Et ils n'avaient même pas à choisir entre les deux attitudes possibles face au monde: l'amélioration ou le défi. Non, même ce choix ne leur était pas possible: ils ont laissé leurs âmes de l'autre côté de la Méditerranée... mais tu es venu leur dire: vous serez des hommes, vous serez heureux, vous serez libres. Prophète à taille de pygmée, j'ai à t'apprendre que cette nuit ils ont tué... Tué parce qu'ils ont commencé à s'apercevoir que trop lourde était cette âme que tu leur as donnée... ou redonnée... insatisfaite, inemployée, et qu'elle les faisait souffrir." (Les Boucs, 55)

A third reason has to do with the way the immigrants perceive Yalaan's

behaviour. In general terms, what we have in hand is an unusual character who combines cultural pride, a rage for justice, intellectual humanism and exceptional sadistic tendencies which are eventually let loose on himself. Let us argue that the latter trait is the product of his estrangement from his own culture... Yalaan is the conceptual continuity of Driss Ferdi... but also of the fall of what he eventually comes to consider as high fantasies about Europe. Such a trait has developed into suicidal tendencies, hence the use of 'gardenal' overdoses, for instance. We get an idea of how such behavioural patterns are construed by les Boucs. Raus' conception of Yalaan is signalled in the following terms:

"Pendant que Raus criait lui aussi d' en bas, de me taire, que si je ne me taisais pas, il allait m'enfermer à mon tour dans la voiture-ambulance en direction d' un asile d' aliénés..."(Les Boucs, 24)

For les Boucs then, Yalaan is a sort of mentally deranged figure at best. At worst, his behaviour is an impossible aberration. Tired of his ever increasing requests for alcohol, Raus would not supply any more before Yalaan has given him a full account of actions. Setting the condition, Raus bargains:

"Je ne te donnerai cette bouteille que lorsque tu m'auras dit où tu vas, ce que tu fais et quelle catastrophe tu te prépares et nous prépares à tous."(Les Boucs, 166)

The image of a prophet who lacks all seeming sanity remains an irreconcilable contradiction in the eyes of les Boucs.

9.3.3. Representation of les Boucs:

How does Yalaan represent the West? The fact that everything he sees in it is closely related to his experience with les Boucs necessitates that I deal with his representation of them first. As I have already pointed out, Yalaan resents the process of standardisation applied to the immigrants. They have been summed up and reduced to such insulting terms as 'les bicots', 'les malfrats', 'les crouillats', 'les norafs' etc., In practical terms, they have been confined to isolation:

"Notre commerce avec la société s'exprime sous forme d'injures, ou de vols, ou de coups de poing, nous mangions dormions marchions voyions écoutions vivions... avec haine... et ce n'était pas autrement que j'aimais Simone, même mon sperme giclait de haine." (Les Boucs, 20)

One interesting difference between Mphahlele's characters and Chraïbi's is that although both types undergo similar kinds of standardisation and relatively similar degrees of marginalisation, Mphahlele manages to control his characters' anger. Both Eseki of Down Second Avenue and Timi of The Wanderers tend to heavily rationalise situations and, accordingly, their reactions to them. Faced with the choice whether to stay in South Africa and suffer the consequences or reason with his cowardice and leave, Eseki eventually chooses to reason and leave. Timi also reasons with a wide variety of issues including his son's savage death. I would argue that such excessive control on his characters is in part often responsible for the construction of pathetically lethargic characters. Chraïbi, on the other hand, seems to take the other extreme of the spectrum. His characters... and Yalaan is a good case in point... are impulsive and stretch their emotions to the limit. Note in the passage above Yalaan's boundless hatred. However, one aspect the two authors have in common is the great measure of individualism they give to their

characters. Yalaan makes use of every rising occasion to push les Boucs to the background and spotlight himself, thus underlining his narcissistic nature.

Nonetheless, such sharp aggressive perception in Chraïbi does not always flow on the negative side. Yalaan, as opposed to Eseki, does sometimes succeed in pursuing effective representation strategy. While Eseki lapses into mystification of the Marabastadians for instance, thus randomly and unconsciously making them look like some mythical and ahistorical creatures, Yalaan uses mystification in a manner consistent with his objective of showing what civilisation has transformed les Boucs into. The immigrants are represented as the scapegoats sacrificed on the threshold of two civilisations. Alienated from their own culture and marginalised in France, they have been stripped of all humanity and become "simples creatures de Dieu à l'état simple de creatures, hibernant en hivers, renaissant au printemps, volant pour manger...avec un langage-expression de leurs besoin et de leurs instincts..."(Les Boucs, 190)

9.3.4 Les Boucs as cultural scapegoats:

9.3.4.1. Between The West and Islam:

Nowhere is this purpose of presenting les Boucs as a metamorphosed species better achieved than when they have gathered around the sheep they have slaughtered for the Feast of Sacrifice:

"Au milieu des Boucs, il y avaient trois pieux. On les avait à la hâte fichés dans la terre et réunis par le bout avec un fil de fer, puis on y avait suspendu ce qui avait été une bête ou, du moins, ce qu'ils imaginaient être un mouton ecorché...D'un seul coup de rasoir...[le Caporal] avait égorgé le ruminant, face à l'Est : en cela il était expert et c'était comme s'il avait égorgé un homme."(Les Boucs, 186)

What does the passage tell us about les Boucs(emissaires), the scapegoats? There are two mythical levels here. Firstly, the immigrants whose struggle with the sheep is depicted as one taking place "dans une caverne pré-historique, entre une fauve et un homme pré-historique"(Les Boucs, 186). The second level is that of the Feast of Sacrifice, a celebration of Abraham's sacrifice. The situation finds its fullest ironic expression, in fact tragic climax, in the meeting of the two levels. Les Boucs are celebrating the Feast without consciousness of the parallel between their situation and the beast's. This bleak imagery is suggestive of the double critique the narrator is making. The accusing finger is pointing both at Western civilisation and Islam:

"...et, étrangement, la grive était toujours là, qui chantait exactement en temps voulu, comme si Mahomet en personne l'avait placée là pour leur rappeler qu'ils n'étaient et ne seraient jamais que les esclaves de la loi et du livre et que

les civilisations crouleraient-elles, ce livre et cette loi demeureraient...frappant dans leur mains et psalmodiant, avec des voix de machines-outils, de bull-dozers et de perforeuses de chaussées, des versets d'un Koran moderne, ou il était question d'os de la terre transformés par l'homme en ciment et d'hommes transformés en ciment armé..(Les Boucs, 189)

Beyond all the powerful language and compelling imagery, the critique actually makes little sense from a historical point of view. These wretched creatures are suffering because they cannot adapt to Western civilisation. They cannot adapt to Western civilisation because it rejects them. Their suffering is amplified by their cultural background which follows them like damnation. were it not for that background, their situation might have been different.

In this respect, another aspect of difference between Mphahlele's character and Chraibi's is that the former's suspends belief indefinitely as in Down Second Avenue, as a result of the mounting perception of socio-cultural conflict. Mphahlele rejects Christianity in an attempt to distance himself from the expression of a culture he sees as oppressive and unjust. Alternatively, he falls back on ancestral morality for guidance and respite. Alienation from Christianity leads to reconciliation with his own cultural background. In Chraibi, the case is a little more problematic. In Le Passe simple for instance, Driss' sensitivity to tyranny and injustice leads to a categorical rejection of Islam as a societal order based on patriarchal control and a long history of feudal despotism. Western civilisation emerges as the alternative until Yalaan comes to amend this bill of indictment. And yet, the amendment is effected in such a way as to express disillusionment with Western civilisation without in any way showing a more favorable stance towards Islam as the passage above testifies. Islam remains a painful angst and a perspective of stasis. Thus alienation in Chraibi is absolute, a pit his characters can never climb out of because it is a cultural issue of far reaching implications. In

Mphahlele, alienation is associated with lack of control over one's own destiny which is in turn an adjunct of white political power.

9.3.4.2. Migration— uniform concept, different implications:

The problem is that despite his revolt against Western civilisation Yalaan shows a deep fascination for it. As Kadra Hadjadji puts it:

"L'oeuvre de Chraïbi contient des personnages qui au delà de leurs différences, sont liés à la France par une terrible fascination. Qu'il soit maghrébin ou africain, intellectuel ou manoeuvre, le héros chraïbien est un idéaliste, nourri d'illusions et de rêves, avide de chaleur humaine." (*Contestation et Révolte*, 298)

Let us make the following observation. The great urgency with which the issue of the "Us" and the "Other" Chraïbi's work displays, leads to different narrative strategies and especially to different moods depending on whether the standpoint from which it is asserted is one of superiority or inferiority. This platitude would mean that in *King Solomon's Mines* for instance, Allan Quatermain travels to Africa to live the principle of difference at the closest proximity possible and is in a position to make a statement of power over the Africans. He can afford to reach his conclusions about cultural difference without any emotional involvement as a narrator. This strategy is made accessible to him because he can also afford to set off the new cultural climate where he lives against his own cultural self from a position of power and superiority. The bigger the difference, the greater the endorsement his sense of cultural pride receives. Thus he is able to accommodate cultural difference, to appropriate it and to positively render it into an asset and not a hindrance. Representing the civilisation that holds political advantage and power, Quatermain puts himself in the centre of things and watches them evolve around him. Once his mission is over, what has been established is not just the sense of cultural pride but also the ecstasy of acquisition; he has acquired new

experience, new knowledge and therefore extra power. All of these become a source of individual self-gratification and collective self-fulfilment. Migration has thus brought a confirmation of the self and been crowned with success.

By contrast, migration for either Chraïbi's or Mphahlele's characters is a hazardous venture. Hazardous in the sense it is heavily taxing as an experience from the purely psychological point of view. It is almost an occasion of both individual and collective lament. It brings to the surface compelling sentiments of aimlessness, anxiety and abandonment. There is no cultural mission because the migration is not governed by choice or curiosity but by compulsion in the first instance. It is not the search of the self we saw in Haggard and Buchan but the search for bread, as in the case of *Les Boucs*, or for bread and freedom as in the case of both Yalaan and Timi. In the case of the former, the "Other" is negatively reminiscent of the "Us" every step of the way. The result is that it is not the "Other" that is scrutinised as much as it is the self. Yalaan is operating under the objective compulsion of constantly having to assess and reassess himself, mercilessly or simply sadistically. Migration brings back the point about cultural humiliation not pride.

Obviously, the difference between Timi and Yalaan in this regard is that their journey from the country to the city follows a different conceptual itinerary. Yalaan starts out from a world of discomposure. Unlike Nedjma which offers a safe and comforting cultural haven in the shape of the ancestor, *Les Boucs* offers a bleak outlook on that world. The whole cultural heritage represented by the father figure is depicted as exactly the tragic sum of the development of Islamic society. It is a background that problematises existence for both Driss Ferdi and Yalaan Waldik. For Mphahlele, at least initially, The passage from the country to the city is a passage from innocence to stifling experience in a manner reminiscent of Nedjma. However, even within this sphere, the ancestor remains a peripheral notion evoked only fleetingly as if Mphahlele is not really sure about its real value

or cannot really come to grips with it.

9.3.5. Alienation and civilisation:

Chraïbi's device of breaking the chronology of his narrative in Les Boucs is revealing with regard to his disillusionment with French civilisation. He first proceeds to expose the terms of the process of human destruction which his North Africa protagonists undergo in France before he moves on to elucidate what France had represented for both himself and les Boucs. The scene of the French priest drawing a colourful picture of France in front of the little Algerian boy in which hope and ambition vie for the individual gives full meaning to Yalaan's experience. His disappointment is the expression of a consummate condemnation of what he thinks Western civilisation has rendered les Boucs into. Yalaan's ultimate statement is that les Boucs are serving a historical sentence as scapegoats, least of all in the physical sense, which the narrator presents as an anatomy of suffering. Mac O' Mac for instance is represented as displaying an understated wish to have their cultural self fortified and confirmed. Yalaan sees les Boucs' sentence as geared towards this direction. For Mac O' Mac there has to be another side to civilisation_ barbarism_ because, as Danielle Marx-scouras points out in 'Reinterpreting Our Interpreters', civilisation and barbarism "cannot posit themselves without each other"(Celfan, 1986, 28). Les Boucs, in Yalaan's conception, have been chosen to perform the role required of them, namely the fortification and confirmation of Mac O' Mac's cultural pride.

Exasperated by the number of immigrants arriving into France from Algeria, Dupont, the employment officer, sarcastically enquires if there are more to come. Yalaan replies:

"Tous les jeunes qui ont des bras, un ventre et une vie et qui veulent travailler et que la misère chasse et qui ont grandi dans la foie en la France et qui ne veulent pas désespérer et

qui ne veulent pas mourir."(Les Boucs, 122)

What Yalaan implies is that those who are already in France are dead. Hence his two denunciatory statements "Nos ames seignent en France" and "Ils ont laisse leur ame de l'autre cote de la Mediterranee"(Les Boucs, 15 and 55 respectively). He also implies that those who are already in France have lost faith in her... This is where his critique of civilisation comes in. Here again, there are two levels on which such a critique functions.

On the first level, it is a question of the immigrants and their position with regard to Western civilisation. For Yalaan, it is rejective and offers les Boucs little else than racism, injustice and unemployment:

"Des panneaux publicitaires en la bonne vieille ville d' Alger, à l'intention de ces pauvres gourdes d' Arabes et qui proclament en lettres rouges et immenses que la main d'oeuvre manque en France, que la démocratie abonde en France."(Les Boucs, 121)

By this Yalaan registers the discrepancy between France as a lived experience and France as an idea imported to the colonies. He tries to posit two ways of interpreting the civilisation idea. For characters like Mac O' Mac such concepts as democracy and fraternity are real civilisation values to which those who do not have them must be converted. For Yalaan, they are little more than just concepts brandished to justify or maintain the colonial status quo. In this respect, the immigrants are condemned because they are barbarians and because they are barbarians who aspire to civilisation. Yalaan resentfully realises that "le propre d' un homme vivant en Europe meme s' il etait Chinois ou Polak etait de se plier a la logique, a l'ordre et au calme europeens"(Les Boucs, 31). At the same time, the entrepreneur refuses les Boucs jobs on racial and cultural grounds:

"...il dit qu' il a déjà engagé des terrassiers et que même s' il ne l'avait pas fait, il ne voudrait pas de Bicots; et que ce n'est certes pas lui qui a voté cette loi de 1946 sur le statut de l'Algérie et dont une des dispositions accordait la citoyenneté française aux Algériens qui n' étaient pas auparavant sujets."(Les Boucs, 31)

Nonetheless, one also has to say that Yalaan condemns civilisation in a much broader framework firstly as an individual versus the system equation and secondly as a minority-majority conflict. Dupont confides into him:

"Il n'y a pas de travail, pas d' aide, pas de fraternité. Que des plaques de cuivre, des interrogatoires d' identité, des cartes de chômage et des promesses. Rien d' autre. Et moi, je ne suis rien d' autre qu' une outre de graisse et de bière pendue au flanc de l'administration."(Les Boucs, 123)

In this respect, les Boucs are also seen in a broader perspective:

"...de tous les temps, en tout lieu, toujours il y avait un lot d' hommes... et non seulement les Nord Africains en France... promus au sacrifice. Nègres en Amérique, Juifs dans le Proche-Orient, Musulman de l'Inde, esclaves de Rome et de la Grèce antique... inadaptés a une civilisation, quelle qu' elle fut, comme pour prouver qu' aucune création d' hommes n' a jamais été générale ou parfaite."(Les Boucs, 190)

9.3.6. General_ On Yalaan's status as an intellectual:

Most critics agree that Yalaan's mission_ if one can talk in terms of mission in this context_ ends in failure. Kadra Hadjadji sees this failure in terms of perversion. She detects a major paradox between Yalaan's status as a prophet and the consequences of his prophetic message, the murder of the entrepreneur. She notes:

"[s]ur tous les plans, la mission du prophète des Boucs se solde par un échec. L'appel à la dignité, se pervertit en appel au meurtre."(Contestation et révolte, 71)

This is a very fair point. Bernard Urbani is another critic who sees Yalaan's mission as a failure though in a different context:

"La révolte de Chraïbi se solde par un double échec: Oriental d'abord, car, au Maroc, ses frères ont rejeté toutes les possibilités de libération de leurs souffrances, Occidental, en suite, car les Boucs n'ont pas pu se procurer les moyens de vivre dignement et librement. Toutefois, l'échec n'est pas total, car Driss préfère l'exil au royaume: malgré les injustices, les hypocrisies, l'Occident demeure un monde qui correspond à sa façon de penser."("La Révolte de Driss Chraïbi", Celfan, 1986, 34)

However, it could also be argued that Yalaan's failure consists of his defeat on two fronts. Firstly, he negates his intellectualism thus establishing his alienation from les Boucs. Although he considers their cause and his as one and the same, they in the final analysis regard him as a thinking irrelevance, peripheral to their suffering. In the end, they reject him as a fragile figure of bourgeois tendencies:

"Emmenez-le, [says the Caporal] en un souffle. Emmenez-le et donnez-lui des enfants, un foyer, une stabilité d'homme

civilisé : c' est à cela qu'il a toujours envie et rien d' autre."(Les Boucs, 192)

They entrust him to Isabelle who had taken him in after Simone had thrown him out. The irony is that he had initially set out to save them from their misery and that the role of saviour was eventually reversed. He admits to Raus:

"Je ne veux pas aimer...Boire, je dois boire... Boire et tuer tout espoir de rachat et rester un schéma de Bicot."(Les Boucs, 166)

Secondly, Yalaan is defeated by Western civilisation both as an abstract experience and as a lived one. The critical affinity that Driss Ferdi considers as a gift of European education, what he calls "la toute puissante lucidité", operating against an abrogated cultural background, eventually ensues in the dying out of his rebellion. And it is here that alienation in Chraïbi takes its fullest meaning. For if we accept that Yalaan takes up where Driss Ferdi had left off, that he is a logical progression of the hero of Le Passé simple, and keeping in mind that the latter novel is a detraction of things Oriental and that Les Boucs is a detraction of things Western, we reach the ultimate deadlock: what now? The expression of a consciousness in a state of crisis is overcome only through reconciliation, which is in itself but a different way of accepting defeat and humiliation. Driss Ferdi returns in a third novel Succession ouverte(1962) to proclaim his acceptance of traditionalist society. 1962 puts this novel out of the range of the present study. It would suffice to indicate the terms on which Driss Ferdi declares his acceptance. His father has died and he has come back to Morocco for the funeral. Haj Fatmi's wealth has been divided between his children. However, Driss does not get anything really substantial from that legacy, except may be a piece of advice his father had left for him:

"Le puits, Driss. Creuse un puits et descend à la recherche de l'eau. La lumière n'est pas à la surface, elle est au fond, tout au fond. Partout, où que tu sois, et même dans le désert, tu trouveras toujours de l'eau. Il suffit de creuser. Creuse Driss, Creuse."(S.O., 185)

History for Driss Ferdi has come full circle. The father has left his legacy and the patriarchal and traditionalist order he had always stood for. Both the individual and the generation he represents have been contained by Haj ferdi's order and the indication in Succession ouverte is very strong that the future will be closely informed by his powerful shadow. The return to the themes of depth and water could be interpreted in three different ways. Firstly, as a return to the maternal sphere. The mother, we have seen, stands for original culture. Secondly, a return to pastoral celebration. The country, we have seen, is celebrated as a refuge from alienation. Finally, as a return to religion. The Koran states that God has made everything alive from water. In all three cases, the major point is that such a return constitutes a form of reconciliation with Driss' cultural heritage at best, a proclamation of defeat of the individual/intellectual at worst.

This study has presented a tri-dimensional treatment of the phenomenon of alienation. Firstly, it has been argued that the romance genre as a mode of Western cultural practice bearing particularly strong relevance to the colonial enterprise sought to entrench the notions of the Self and Otherness. Strictly speaking, romance perceptions and representations of the Other as essentially 'different' have not been totally abandoned as one would expect from such an appellation as the 'South African novel'. It has been demonstrated that such perceptions and representations have not been made totally redundant as they continue to occupy a subterranean position even in the fictions of the most deconstructive South African authors.

Whether in Paton, Gordimer or Brink, perception of Africa continues to be tinged with images and symbols derived from colonial discourse. This is hardly surprising. Having departed from the Gramscian premise that knowledge and power are closely inter-connected, this study could not have established otherwise. The formula is that despite its serious attempt to deconstruct the tenets of white settler ideology, the white novel still succumbs to the pitfalls of colonial perception because the political environment where it functions remains essentially colonial.

Interestingly enough, the Gramscian principle has been adopted by André Brink himself and, to a more significant extent, by Nadine Gordimer. In *July's People*, she openly expresses her awareness of the crisis to which her fiction has to address itself, using the Gramscian idiom of the interregnum: "The old is dying and the new cannot be born. In this interregnum, a great diversity of morbid symptoms arise" (*July's People*, 1). Besides, both authors' fiction testifies to their sharp awareness of an all-consuming conflict between the private and the public lives of their characters. This stands as a translation of the conflict between the strictly human and the essentially political. It is through the negation of any real delimitation between these two domains, and through acknowledgement of the

condition of their intersection that Brink and Gordimer, using original narrative and linguistic strategies, make some very useful contributions to African writing.

That is not all. Through such contributions, Brink and Gordimer spotlight the real scope of what A. Khatibi's imaginatively refers to as "espace d'enracinement". In other words, using the platform of their own writing, they stress their Africanness in a way that other authors (such as Ezekiel Mphahlele), whose Africanness is usually taken for granted, fail to do.

It could well be argued that Brink's and Gordimer's political perspectives in fiction ensue in the establishment of narrative strategies which powerfully muffle the characters' humanity and assert their status as political or historical beings in the first place. This is a perfectly reasonable argument. On the other hand, in no way does it undermine the healthiness or creativity of such narrative strategies. Mehring's and Mynhardt's respective acts of self-destruction are completed the moment they realise the true meaning and limitations of what they have always considered as an obvious and legitimate claim to private life. They eventually take cognisance of the fact that much of what has passed for private is, in fact, sheer chimera and indulgence sustained at the expense of public responsibility. Especially devastating, however, is their recognition of the full extent of the bankruptcy of their 'fantastic' enterprises. They come to accept that their notions of the fantastic have jeopardised their own 'private' safety. In the end, both protagonists' sense of impotence and tragic cynicism is depicted as being in full swing.

While serving to draw attention to what the political can do to the human if it passes 'unreflected', such an outcome is an acknowledgement of South African reality where the tiniest gesture acquires political relevance. Beyond the pitfalls of colonial discourse, which, this study argues, hark back to the objective conditions of their colonial environment, Brink and Gordimer have adopted authentic narrative strategies which decisively cut them clear of the ambiguous

liberalism of Alan Paton and of the equally ambiguous humanism of Ezekiel Mphahlele.

It is only through a well-reflected recognition of South African specificities, that Brink and Gordimer manage to give their respective fictions a genuine 'human' output. The fact that their characters' private lives are subordinated to their roles as political agents in the enactment of apartheid dramas enriches, rather than impoverishes, the human value of such fictions. It sets up the scene for illustrating apartheid's tragic consequences on its own perpetrators. Thus, the universalism of these two writers presents itself as a measure of the specificity of their own experience in Africa and of the narrative strategies that wield such an experience. Humanity, or what Stephen Gray splendidly refers to as man's most sacred duty to belong and strike roots¹, is achieved on tearing the fabric of the private-life notion, be it the luxury of the perfect pacha in a London hotel room or a hankering to make contact with the land, on rendering explicit the hidden objective mechanisms that bind it and, finally, on establishing the conviction that the South African situation makes such a notion as absurd as perilous. The passage from the private to the public constitutes a major instance of how Brink's and Gordimer's fiction subscribe to historicity.

For all these reasons, I have avoided making analogies between any of the white South African authors and Albert Camus, for instance, in the context of North African francophone literature. Such a stance is not in any way dictated by a wish or tendency to deny Camus his voice in North Africa's modern colonial history. In fact, his salvation from an association with Rider Haggard and John Buchan strongly derives from his constant call for decolonisation. My stance is based purely on the consideration that Algeria never found its way to his oeuvre except as a backdrop...

It would be unjustifiable to hold that the element of the continuity of romance as a cultural practice in Brink and Gordimer conforms to the same pattern as in

¹ Southern African Literature An Introduction Op.cit.

Paton. It has quite emphatically been argued that Cry, The Beloved Country and Too Late The Phalarope are more deeply entrenched in colonial discourse imagery and rationale, even though they enunciate their messages with a strong multi-racial voice. There is a great disparity between what the novels 'say' and what they actually 'think'. Paton, I maintained, was concerned with the novel more as a partisan political forum, in the strictest possible sense of the word. He used it as a platform for announcing his views on race, society and, above all, on who should hold power political and how.

Despite all the pitfalls of colonial discourse to which Brink and Gordimer succumb, their fictions seem to cast Paton's ideas of the cultural Other (as opposed to the political other, or the Afrikaner) and ideas on the sort of society he envisages into obsolescence. Closely corresponding to such obsolescence is that of the liberal structures within which Paton himself was operating. As Paul B. Rich observes in The Dilemmas of South African Liberalism:

"For the most part, white liberals in the colonial periphery continued to act under the guiding light of the Victorian decentralised model, despite the very different configuration of class and political cleavages that confronted them." (D.S.A.L., 15)

This means that the central concern with the Afrikaner as a political rival and the relegation of the question of segregation to a subordinate position in Paton's fiction reflects the real nature and extent of the English-speaking liberal intelligentsia's concern with that question. In Cry, The Beloved Country, John Jarvis seeks to answer the questions of segregation in terms of what is morally permissible and what is not. However, he never even remotely purports to question the legitimacy of segregation in the first instance.

What is more, the novel explicitly defines its own limited range. It stresses Paton's restrained and ambiguous intent of let-us-win-the-elections-first. At the

end of the novel, restoration of the valley is acknowledged as a short-term solution and the novel is rounded off. This ground, which could be extended to the ensemble of the liberal intelligentsia in South Africa, becomes all the more tenable if the 1948 electoral defeat were to be seen as a failure "to control the rise of democratic consciousness amongst the mass of black workers and peasants in the South African towns and villages" (D.S.A.L., 14). This provides an example of the liberals' inadequacies and weaknesses which were successfully cultivated by the Nationalists' more active stance on this front and counter-balanced by an ever-growing policy of state interventionism which ultimately threw liberal ideological thinking into inefficiency.

Such an argument bears its own relevance in so far as it runs counter to Paul Rich's claim that liberal ideology did not act as a form of social control. Without going into exhaustive detail, it would be hard to accept that Paton acquiesced to the basic tenets of segregation and at the same time deny that he provided an aegis for the hegemonic ideological structures of South African society. Even though the extent of the liberals' political alienation seems huge in retrospect, it cannot be overlooked that they took active part in the formulation of ideas of race control and segregation. The case which Paul Rich himself makes about the endeavours of such social anthropologists as Reinalt Jones to establish a pragmatic basis for anthropology and make it more readily accessible to policy-making is a very good case in point.²

Nadine Gordimer's and André Brink's major point of deviation from the Paton-pattern could be seen within this arena. The escalation of violence both within and without South Africa, coupled with the historical failure of the Liberal Party as epitomised in its ultimate demise in 1968 (and perhaps this is more pertinent to Gordimer), means that the moral and ideological basis on which cultural superiority had hitherto rested has been gradually eroded. One consequence of such a process is a deep problematising of the issue of validity. In the fiction, the

² Introduction to his Dilemmas of South African Liberalism Op. cit.

dichotomy of civilisation and barbarity is depicted as loosing tenacity and is therefore being cast into ultimate doubt. As I have demonstrated, violence and civilisation form the thematic platform upon which the two author's respective fictions rest.

There is a stimulating paradox here. While Brink and Gordimer's perspectives have accordingly dramatically radicalised, their use of the novel has followed a different pattern from Paton's (who, it has been said, uses fiction as an extra platform for partisan politics) by increasingly turning to the task of monitoring the dilemmas of life under apartheid and the anxieties of white society. The new pattern is that they problematise that society by problematising its consciousness. It follows that a significant abandonment of the kind of paternalism characterising Paton's writing has taken place. From the type of narrative which posits the black character as one needing representation or as a helpless burden needing attendance, they have come to adopt an essentially different strategy whereby black and white are presented as victims of apartheid.

For Brink and Gordimer then, the novel is undertaken as a cultural enterprise directed towards the examination and questioning of the essential ingredients of the ideological legacy they have inherited and which has shaped white settlerdom's perception of the Other over the centuries. As a matter of fact, there is nothing peculiar about such an important shift. After all, writing in the forties and fifties, hopes for maintaining white power must have seemed fundamentally tenable to Paton. His fiction contains enough hope to suggest that the issues of survival and belonging did not constitute a primary concern. Advocating multi-racialism and maintaining power were the 'stuff' such fiction is made of.

By the seventies, much of the picture had changed. Hopes for maintaining power had run into uncertainty. Consequently, the issues of survival, belonging and alienation had become more self-assertive. It had become more and more uncertain if political power and its violent manifestations could secure continuity. Hence,

the growing concern to elucidate the conflict between civil and political societies and to deconstruct those very modes of cultural perception which political society has relied upon to maintain its hegemony. This explains why Brink's and Gordimer's writing has become more geared towards the exploration of the chaos and prospective apocalypse residing beneath the orderliness and determination of their characters' private lives.

The second dimension of alienation in this study is also related to textual strategy but in the particular case of Ezekiel Mphahlele. There is a significant irony in the fact that this writer shares an essential textual feature with Alan Paton, namely apoliticality. However, where textual apoliticality is a deceptive claim in Alan Paton, it is, strangely enough, a fully-fledged practice in Mphahlele. I submitted that the language of Cry, The beloved Country conceals a hard core of purely local concerns which are defused into a universalist gloss. In Mphahlele, apoliticality and concern with the characters as 'human beings' are taken at face value. Both Esek of Down Second Avenue and Timi of The Wanderers are caught up between a political system that is exceedingly alienating and a narrative strategy that is exceedingly apolitical. The way in which this paradox is resolved generates a style that is as transparent as ambiguous. Such style remains predominantly documentary, which creates a compelling impression that Mphahlele has not made the necessary shift from journalese. Nor does he seem to have broken with the liberal influence and its emphasis on individual mellorism and the conventional hero-type.

Mphahlele's position is understandable. By hammering the black man's blackness, he would have to precariously operate on the edge of Négritude. The last thing a black man wants to do is to justify himself in the eyes of the white man and his power, Esek declares in Down Second Avenue. Similarly, by taking the South African situation as subject-matter, he would be running the risk of producing a protracted cliché.

And yet, the fact remains that in taking such a stand, Mphahlele has produced neither the cultural arrogance of Négritude nor the narrative grit that white writers such as André Brink and Nadine Gordimer produce. The end-product of this state of affairs is an 'escapist' and dejected writing that seems to function on the margin of power and the overwhelming problem it poses for him as a black man.

Instead of discarding politics as a fictional strategy, the author should have paid tribute to it by recognising its relevance. For much of the critical aura surrounding him is attributable to the political circumstances which have launched him into acclaim, thus making him a symbol of the black exile, rather than to his worth as a writer as such.

The third dimension of alienation in this study bears on the cases of the two North African authors examined. An essential common denominator binding South African and North African francophone literature of the type I have examined is the colonial factor. The most outstanding issue treated by Kateb Yacine and Driss Chraïbi is the question of the colonial conquest and the serious challenge it presented to their cultural identity. This issue, I argued, is expressed mainly in the form of a conflict between the two cultural metaphors of the city and the country.

Kateb Yacine's treatment of the crisis of identity operates on a triple axis, namely Berberity, Islam, and the West. This is to say that the colonial challenge was counter-balanced by an assertion of the oriental cultural tradition which had shaped the history and mentality of the region for centuries. This dimension is supported by a parallel resort to the notion of the ancestor which, through a constellation of symbols and allusions, also takes on a geographical character. Hence the Algeria of Nedjma is an idea that extends eastwards to the Orient and southwards towards black Africa to form an Afro-Oriental space. In my chapter on Kateb Yacine, I deliberately invoked an example from Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart as it will allow me to make a few comments later in this conclusion on the implications which such deployment of the ancestor motif involves.

Significantly enough, Driss Chraïbi's strategy in this regard is of a different nature. This is so for two reasons. Firstly, instead of the ancestor, Chraïbi resorts to the father-figure as a gate for analysing Moroccan traditionalist society. Secondly, he resorts to that figure as a gate but not as a protective assertion in the face of the alienating forces of colonialism.

This difference between Kateb and Chraïbi does not so much hark back to the two authors' respective racial origins as to the socio-economic and historical conditions shaping their experience. It is true that Kateb is Berber and Chraïbi Arab. However, it remains to be said that the notion of the ancestor seems to presuppose the predominance of a specific socio-economic formation in pre-colonial society. The emphasis Kateb lays on the two themes of ancestor and tribe could be interpreted as reflective of the predominance of tribal organisation. These two themes are advanced as representing the wholesome body of 'original' cultural identity which was mutilated by colonial conquest. They are cultural symbols acting as reminders of the continuity which has been broken. Kateb's critique of colonialism becomes, at least up to a certain extent, a defence of the tribal structures and of the indigenous referential system preceding the intrusion of an industrial economy.

One has to note the triple character of the critique Nedjma makes of the city as a cultural metaphor. It stands as a subject of much fascination as it symbolically enjoys the same status as *Nejma* herself. Simultaneously, it is rejected as the embodiment of foreign invasion. By contrast, the country becomes symbol of the resistance of an agrarian type of economy in the face of the mounting incorporation into the capitalist market.

This last character is interesting and induces us into formulating a question which it would be useful to pursue in future research. If we can actually criticise Alan Paton for example for his nostalgia for a rural golden age, why not criticise Kateb? Why simply conclude that he is making an authentic statement on the question of identity? We have seen that the city evokes images of the land, the

mother and, above all, childhood throughout most of the literature of this period. The search for identity then becomes the search for an age of innocence, for a closed space that is the tribe, sign of a socio-economic order in a period of irrevocable transition. In other words, why could it not be maintained that Kateb was actually translating a particular type of ideological discourse pertaining to a particular socio-economic formation, in the same way that Paton was reiterating the discourse of the English-speaking liberal intelligentsia?

According to Foucauldian theory, the writer must not be reified. This means that Kateb Yacine must not necessarily be seen simply as a literate ideological translator in the service of this or that socio-economic formation. Is there not a fair chance that he might have indeed felt a genuine and idiosyncratic need to respond to the colonial cultural threat as an intellectual thinking for both himself and for a sphere wider than any individual socio-economic formation?

Let us go back to the parallel with Chinua Achebe. Commenting on the critical reception of Things Fall apart and how it gained merit through its opposition to the image of Africa presented by colonial literature, Landeg White observes:

"The fact remains that the picture Achebe presents of pre-colonial Iboland (Nigeria, Africa) is of a village culture, timeless, pastoral and virtually self-contained, operating within strict geographical limits, fighting wars on a tiny scale, never engaging in any distance trade and never subject to any substantial change until the coming of the white invaders. It is... the image of a culture but no history."('Literature and History In Africa', Journal of African History, 540)

The same picture can be easily identified in Nedjma. Mount Nadhor is represented as the source of a closed and harmonious existence that was disrupted by the arrival of the foreign invaders. It is antiposed to the city whose dynamism is felt to be repelling and is thus shunned in favour of the safety and stasis of a closed space. It is no exaggeration to say that the picture the novel draws of tribal

society has virtually mythical traits.

Such uncertainty about the writers' performance constitutes a real dilemma, especially within a colonial situation, and, again, deserves to be subject to later research: how does the writer defend his own cultural identity without simply translating the ideological discourse of a certain socio-economic formation and how does he/she defend his/her culture without dressing it in the garb of exotica?

These questions are not being formulated without a cause. It is extremely significant that North African francophone literature received particular attention and encouragement from French intellectuals of the left. As Khatibi explains in his introduction to *Le roman maghrébin*, such intellectuals supported demands for a solution to "The North African Problem" but were embarrassed that, on the cultural level, they had nothing to endorse their support with. They needed something tangible to demonstrate that the societies concerned did not emerge from nothing. The end-product of this situation is a literature written in French while at the same time bearing the stamp of its local colour; a literature providing "une vraie planche de salut" for the French left (*Le roman maghrébin*, 9) and responding to the metropolitan demand for the exotic ...

Tribal organisation was not directly available to Driss Chraïbi as a socio-economic or socio-cultural formula. And yet, this is by no means to argue that tribal structures were unknown in Moroccan society prior to 1912. The fact remains that, contrary to Abdelkébir Khatibi's claim that Morocco produced great empire builders but no strong central beurocracy³, class and central government structures had been deeply and strongly entrenched in that society for quite some time. Where tribal organisation did exist, the tribes concerned were substantially absorbed into the jurisdiction of the central government through the leadership of the various religious orders who also performed a fiscal task, levying taxes and tithes. Allegiance and taxation bought these tribes central

³'Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée' Op. cit.

government protection. By and large, and despite recurrent attempts at revolt or secession, state control and ideology enjoyed a great deal of hegemony and efficiency.

In fact, Dahiru Yahia⁴ argues that as early as the sixteenth century, there were all signs of a powerful mercantile economy and of a well established central government which successfully steered Morocco through a period of great turbulence both internally and around the Mediterranean basin where Spanish and Portuguese incursion had begun to reverse the tide of previous Arabo-Berber conquest. Morocco's preservation of its role as a Mediterranean power and of its independence, Dahiru Yahia argues, were a measure of the efficiency of a central government with a competent diplomatic machinery.

This digression serves as a bridge for arguing that Chraïbi's urban background could be used to account for his approach to the dichotomy of the city and the country and for the exclusion of both country and ancestor. However, neither his urban nor his aristocratic background would necessarily serve to explain his stance on Islam in a direct way. This could be the result of the fact that social philosophy cannot be reduced to an exclusively economic analysis.

As has been demonstrated, Haj Fatmi Ferdi, or the Seigneur, represented what Driss Ferdi felt was the crippling strength of patriarchal society, as an aristocratic domain shielded with Islam. What is of particular significance here is that Chraïbi makes his protagonist acutely aware of his incompetence, loss of identity and alienation without making available to him the cultural idiom which Kateb's characters are able to assert in the face of colonial intrusion and alienation. The case so being, Driss Ferdi is represented as the tragic outcome of two orders that grind him into two different directions. The logic is such as to imply that he gets swept away by the current of colonial conquest because Islamic society fails to provide the cultural qualities he yearns for.

⁴Morocco In The Sixteenth Century: Problems and Patterns In African Foreign Policy (Essex, Longman Group Ltd., 1981)

Having mentioned the writer and Ideology above, it is useful to note that the importance of Le Passé Simple in this regard derives partly from a thorough negation of Islam as a counter-ideological discourse. Alternatively, Chraïbi chooses to look at it as a type of social discourse itself and, consequently, to put it into perspective. To account for such a perspective is to reach a closer understanding not only of the reception the book had solicited, whether in Morocco or among French conservatives, but also of why it did not conform to the ideological patterns which gave it birth.

I submitted that Chraïbi dealt with Islam from a psychological and subjective point of view. His reaction to it is, to a great extent, a measure of his reaction against the father and the ethics of an aristocratic family. He describes what the father does to Driss Ferdi and tries to extend that relationship to religion and society at large. For Driss Ferdi, both the father and the religion he embodies are crippling handicaps which did not stand the historical test of colonial conquest.

One clue to his problem resides in the word historical. Chraïbi omitted the historical element from his perspective and treated religion in a positivist light. Another clue resides in his virtually total absence of political vision. Chraïbi was not alert to the nuances of the historical era the nationalist movement was traversing inside Morocco at the time. The book drew the wrath of the nationalists and Chraïbi was considered a traitor who gave the French conservatives a precious card.

But to say this and close the file is to omit the problematic that Chraïbi, like Brink and Gordimer in their own ways, represents. These writers well represent the syndrome of "damned if you do and damned if you don't". Faced with the serious challenge of identity or belonging or survival... one cultural formula or another has to be posited. Whatever the choice, the writer ends up alienated from one or the other camp, sometimes from both.

In Le Passé simple, Western civilisation holds the true riches of morality and

intellect which Driss Ferdi is desperate to possess. Western education, he tells us, injects him with 'la toute puissante lucidité' which Islamic society lacks or resists.

We have to wait the appearance of his other novel, Les Boucs, to get the other half of the critique and to see how alienation takes its fullest toll on his protagonist. Migration to France is fruitful only in the sense it brings the point to Yalaan that after all, he belongs neither in the East nor in the West. Seeing how les Boucs are jettisoned from their own culture and to what extent they are unaccommodated in France, the impact on Yalaan is devastating. Where he joins the ranks of Mehring, Mynhardt and Timi, inadequate as these associations may seem, is in his overwhelming feeling of historical incompetence, impotence and tragic collapse.

There is a tangent cutting through the body of this study of alienation. With the exceptions of Haggard and Buchan, all the other authors who came under examination share a common feature. They are all desperately trying to face up to something superlatively stronger. Treatment of the various conflictual situations in which they operate may differ from one author to another but the magnitude of the political power they have to contend with remains a constant.

Yet the claim that power and knowledge are inseparable is not without its own subtle nuances. It could be said that knowledge of the Other is a statement of power over him as in Haggard and Buchan where the bond between knowledge and empire was not only positively intimate but also one of exchange and mutual support. This process of co-operation between political and civil societies, which could be referred to as the politics of consent, has some 'exceedingly' good effects on the way the character behaves and yields to representation. Both Haggard's and Buchan's characters are resourceful, industrious and, above all, full of a sense of purpose. They are driven by a firm and revitalising belief in the projects they are undertaking on behalf of Empire. Especially significant, however, is the fact that they are free of the anxieties, doubts and internal conflicts that riddle the other

author's characters.

This is where the second nuance comes in. On the Ideological level, functioning within a colonial order which they drastically oppose, Brink and Gordimer make statements which cannot be considered as statements of power over the Other. Where the real problem lies, however, is that such statements are not essentially different from those of colonial discourse either. This (possibly excessive) formulation of the issue at stake must not pass for a detraction or indictment. It is a mere statement of one of two major ironies residing at the heart of the power/knowledge principle. The second irony is that the process of politicisation has to be carried out by the writer simultaneously to his call on political society to depoliticise social life, a call implicit in the concept of 'freedom' to which such writing is dedicated.

A third nuance concerns knowledge, power and migration. Knowledge here varies from a position of power to a position of lack of it. The sense of purpose which the Haggard protagonist displays on the Imperial stage, together with the complacent sense of scrutiny he pours on his subject, are derived from two sources. Firstly, the implicit knowledge that he is serving the cause of Empire. Secondly, whatever statements he makes are endorsed by the fact of empire and liable to translation and deployment. Obviously, what is important here is not empire as such but the cause as a cultural project concerned with the Other. He is observing from a position of power and is accordingly making statements of power.

Such a platform is not available to the Chraïbi character, for example, when he is making statements about the Other. He does not observe the West as a subject of scrutiny. On the contrary, everything about Driss Ferdi and Yalaan Waldick suggests that the West reverses the direction of their scrutiny which is turned on themselves. The detached viewpoint so easily accessible to the Haggard protagonist totally crumbles here because Chraïbi is carrying out his examination from a position of powerlessness. The West in Chraïbi or Kateb or Mphahlele

simulates back the look of scrutiny, making itself hard to understand while forcing the protagonist to sustain the impact of his own venture. Hence the sense of loss, or conflict or unhappy consciousness pervading such characters. This state of affairs, renders it impossible to reverse the process that Edward Said describes as Orientalism. Expressed in the very term itself is a whole power-relationship which announces the Orient as a subject of study.

The Chraïbi character cannot load his statements with similar connotations. Beyond any game of words, 'Westernisation' or 'Occidentalisation' would be simply counter-expressive. It would designate the impact of the West on the character or possible ways in which he acts as a neo-Orientalist. An indication to this phenomenon has already been hinted at above. One of the problematics facing such writers as Kateb and Chraïbi is how to represent their own cultural environment without succumbing to the pitfalls of neo-orientalism?

Obviously, the case is somewhat different in Paton, Gordimer or Brink. In the specific context of Alan Paton, Too Late The Phalarope constitutes the beginnings of problematisation. The implication here is that by 1955, the new configuration of power had forced him to change the tone of his exchange with political society. As I argued on various occasions in this thesis, the consolidation of Afrikaner power meant that the liberals' hitherto partial alienation was gaining in momentum. This called for a corresponding, though only relative, withdrawal of consent on Paton's part. Furthermore, the mounting pressure within the political sphere meant that a handicap on the cultural front was being exacerbated. Paton's stand on cultural issues remained static in its emulation of Haggard or Buchan. The belief in empire was abandoned at the same time as it was substituted for a belief in the cultural tradition it had epitomised and which Haggard and Buchan sought to extend to South Africa.

On the other hand, Gordimer and Brink disclaim white power and its cultural tenets, only from within. This simply means that they write from within white

society and that they are no strangers to the Western cultural tradition. In this sense, they give expression not so much to an extra-cultural conflict but to a rift with political society. However, where they do rejoin the ranks of Mphahlele, Kateb and Chraïbi is where such expression wields a sense of loss of identity and a corresponding sense of cultural protestation against the forces of estrangement. The crisis of cultural identity forms a prime concern of all the authors discussed with one qualitative difference in the case of Brink and Gordimer, however: death and apocalypse become more assertively obsessive.

Finally, the landscape performs a major role in the fiction examined in this thesis and is therefore worth saying a few things about here. Reactions to it could be categorised into three. Firstly, it is feminised and sexualised as in the type of discourse produced by Haggard and Buchan. Their perception of it could be summed up into a few epithets such corrupt, licentious and treacherous. It becomes associated with womanhood and is thus subjected to sexual fantasies. This, it has been submitted, is a function of the characters' male ego and of the male essence of the colonial enterprise. Secondly, it is feminised but sanctified as in Kateb. The landscape here constitutes a merger between domains of femininity and masculinity, the mother and the ancestor. This is reflective of the impact of colonial intrusion on the mentality of the colonised. The father is rejected as a symbol of humiliation and profanity. Alternatively, the mother is asserted as a source of legitimacy, revival and sanctity. However, such reaction is also expressive of paranoia. The merger of the two domains of femininity and masculinity, coupled with rejection of the father, produces a vision undermined by incest as Nedjma testifies. Finally, the landscape is represented in terms of alienation and disruption as in Gordimer and Brink.

In the light of these observations, it could be concluded that colonial conquest generated its own imagery of aggression and defence. While the conqueror vulgarises the landscape, the conquered moralises it. It could also be concluded that colonialism created its own types of mythological orientations. Strictly

speaking, although Muslim and Christian mythologies are basically similar (both of them depict Adam's expulsion from paradise as the ultimate depravity), the Western romantic ideal consists of a search to return to paradise. The encounter with the African landscape embodied such a return. By contrast, in North African literature, the anguish is not produced by the pursuit of a romantic ideal in the first place. The focus is rather on the return to the mother's womb as a symbol of the search for identity and as a political formula of cultural 'resistance' imposed by colonial conquest.

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