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**EQUIVOCATIONS OF POWER: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE
POST-COLONIAL CRISIS OF IDENTITY IN FOUR WINNERS OF
THE CNA LITERARY AWARD**

DINA ELYZA VAN STRAATEN

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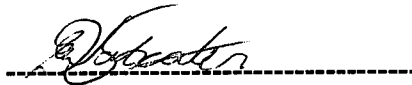
**A thesis submitted to meet the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in the Faculty of the Humanities (Department of English and Classical
Languages) at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein**

Supervisor: Ms M. Lovisa

Date: 3 January 2005

Declaration

**I, Dina Elyza van Straaten, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work
and that it has not been submitted to another university for purposes of
obtaining a postgraduate qualification.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dina Elyza van Straaten', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

Dina Elyza van Straaten

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to investigate the post-colonial crisis of identity in four winners of the CNA Literary Award. Identity is explored from a deconstructive perspective by examining the master/slave, white/black, male/female and parent/child dialectics so as to demonstrate the variability and indeterminacy of the sign and the subsequent destabilizing of hierarchical discourses of power. The examining of identity from a deconstructive angle not only lays bare the instability underpinning positions of power, but also exposes the problematic of identity as a shifting, unfixed and decentred phenomenon. The research is focused on probing the dialectic between subjugator and subjugated, the empowered and the disempowered in order to develop an understanding of how imbalances of power inform and impact on the formulation of identity within the post-colonial context. It questions the decidability implied by binary structuring and challenges precepts of absolutism and totalization imbedded in the discourses pertaining to power relations and power differentials.

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Introduction

In 1961 the chairperson of the Central News Agency, Mr Adrian Berrill, initiated the awarding of an annual literary prize as an incentive to both experienced writers and novices. He launched the award with the following words: "I hope that the award will not only help to consolidate the reputation of our older established writers, but will also encourage our younger writers who are as yet unknown" (Le Roux, 1978:6). This was in part an attempt to lend some recognition to South African authors of English literature alongside their Afrikaans counterparts, given the prominence of the Hertzog prize, which saw its inception in 1915 and which rewarded only writing in Afrikaans. The procedure for the awarding of the prize is as follows: books, including prose, poetry, drama, biographies, historical novels and travel works produced in the relevant year are presented by their publishers. The panel of judges is appointed annually and consists mainly of academics, writers, journalists and editors who work anonymously and in isolation in an attempt to optimize objectivity. The award is then granted to what is regarded as the most original work of the year.

A research study entitled "'This Beacon in our Murky Lives': The CNA Literary Award 1961-81" (Brian Green, 1994) was conducted at the request of CNA management and is currently available at the National Afrikaans Literary Museum. Although Green acknowledges at the outset that literary awards and controversy have become almost synonymous, he contends that an exposition of an award's "original impulse, its operation and development, and its achievement" (1994:2) may serve to remove some of the

cynicism surrounding the award. He characterizes his research as a "descriptive and critical history" and states the purpose as aiming to "inform and enrich the debate by clarifying how the award operates and how the organisers go about choosing the recipients of arguably the most important and prestigious, if no longer the most remunerative, literary award in South Africa" (Green, 1994:2). As the study by Green covers the award only up to 1981, the researcher saw in this an opportunity to provide some continuity in the research process, while at the same time setting up possibilities for future research. Consequently, four novels that received the award after 1981 have been selected for the purposes of the current study in order to ensure manageability of resource material within the designated research scope. By implication the hope would be to use this study as a basis for future research by supplementing and extending the current research to contain a larger body of award-winning novels after 1981.

However, where the Green study sets out to focus on the award itself, its procedures and validity, this research aims to look at the award within the context of its society. As already mentioned, Green states in his introduction that a description of the aims, operation, development and achievement of an award is crucial in establishing its validity. He adds that "this description seems especially important today in South Africa, when the history of the whole country shifts direction and produces pressures for new literary approaches to and evaluations of the world at large and to local culture and society" (Green, 1994:2). It is on this point of the wider societal context within which an award exists, that the researcher would like to pick up. The current research will thus focus on how individual novels reflect the hierarchical societies within which they were created and how the hierarchies and

imbalance of power within dialectical relationships complicate the concept of identity within the post-colonial context. In addition one needs to note how certain novels receiving the CNA Literary Award, while others are rejected, is in its own way reflective of the award's societal context, its inherent priorities, preferences and prejudices.

The question might arise as to why the CNA award was selected in preference to other national and international awards for the purposes of this study. The reason for this is partly an interest in South African English literature and particularly South African literature as post-colonial literature. In The Empire Writes Back (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1989:2) it is stated that, "We use the term 'post-colonial', to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" and that, amongst other countries, the literatures of African countries and implicitly the literature of South Africa, have "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre." It therefore follows that a study of selected texts produced in the South African context will enhance some understanding of the way in which post-colonial literature constitutes an inherent criticism against the process of colonization and the way in which post-colonial literature reflects and explores the consequences of colonial intervention on the colonized society, but also on the agents of colonization.

With the field of research narrowed down to SA English literature, it would seem sensible to select the CNA award, as it rewards only South African published authors, as opposed

to the Booker prize and other international awards where the focus is broader and not necessarily South African ("Extinguishing features", Hitchens in TLS, 1990:1066). Also, compared to other local awards for English literature, like the Sunday Times Fiction Award, the SANLAM Literary Award and the M-Net Book Prize, the award has been of longer standing, dating from 1961 - the year of its inception - to the present day. If the literature created by a society is seen as being, to at least some extent, reflective of that society, the CNA award-winning novels could provide a broader time frame in which to trace some tendencies of post-colonial society, than a range of novels rewarded by a prize which has been in existence for a shorter period of time. Furthermore, the prerequisite for granting the award is simply that the winner must be deemed to be the most original work of the year (Le Roux, 1978:6). Although this is a very broad and even problematic requirement, it places less limitation on the possible outcome of the award than an award like the Olive Schreiner Prize, which was initially granted only to encourage younger writers making their debut (Le Roux, 1978:7), thus excluding the contribution of more established authors. The range of literature endowed with the CNA award could thus be regarded as potentially more representative of the work produced by South African writers, than some other awards that have been mentioned. However, the question is whether the award, claiming to be a national award, can indeed be seen as broadly representative of South African English literature and, if not, what that reveals about the validity of the award and by extension, the society that has been granting the award.

When attempting to establish whether the CNA award-winning novels can be regarded as representative of the body of work offered by all South African writers, one may consider

the following factors: the constitution of the panel of judges and the subjective nature of their individual preferences and requirements; the impact that issues unrelated to literary considerations have on the selection of the winner and the wider political framework, including state control over publication. As already mentioned in relation to the Green study (1994), the awarding of literary prizes is generally surrounded with controversy. Van Gend ("Literary Prizes" in Cape Librarian, 1991:9) states in this regard:

By its very nature, the selection of 'the best' of anything is a very subjective, personal matter, and the judges frequently disagree on the winner, and of course these diasagreements [sic] are seized on by the press... Although one accepts the subjective nature of the decision, it is often difficult to understand how the judges have arrived at the conclusion that a particular title is 'the best' ahead of other, often vastly superior titles on the shortlist.

To complicate matters, Van Gend argues, awards are at times bestowed on the basis of issues totally unrelated to literature. The 1966 debacle surrounding the Afrikaans writer Uys Krige and the Hertzog prize is a case in point. Although the selection committee felt that the award for Drama had to go to Uys Krige, their decision was overruled. Van Gend (1991:10) cites an article by Prof FIJ van Rensburg, published in "Die Vaderland" (1987), which alleges that this happened as a result of Krige's opposition to the forced removals of District Six and the government threatening to halt its financial support of the "Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns" who administered the prize. Where the wider political context is concerned, one may bear in mind that the ANC and PAC were banned in 1960, forcing their activities underground and their leadership into exile and in 1963 the SA Publications and Entertainment Act was instituted under which "anything

deemed to be critical of apartheid policies or to transgress narrow Calvinistic sexual mores was likely to be banned" (Chapman, 1996:247). This, together with the ban imposed on 146 black South African writers already living abroad under the Suppression of Communism Act, lead to the 1960s being "known as the silent decade" (Chapman, 1996:246). As Chapman puts it: "To speak eloquently meant presumably that you were denying your designated status as a non-being" (1996:243). Taking into account that the CNA prize was first awarded in 1961, and that only published work was considered for the award at a time when severe state control was being exercised over what was published, it becomes clear that many voices were either forbidden to speak, or silenced as soon as they had spoken, and that this happened long before any of these voices could contend for any kind of national literary award. Also, the award was bestowed upon a black person for the first time in 1986, more than twenty years after the inception of the award. That speaks for itself.

Thus, the selection of the CNA award as a field of study started out as a search for a body of work that can be regarded as representative of the SA situation, in order to develop an understanding of South African society as a post-colonial reality. However, the body of literary work endowed with this award turned out not to be wholly representative and that in itself proved to be a true reflection of the society from which the award evolved. Thus, not only are the works that are selected for their particular literary merit a reflection of society, but also the names that are left off the shortlists. The study of a national literary award like the CNA award may reveal some interesting trends and tendencies, and in turn, these trends and tendencies reflect the attitudes, biases, preferences and prejudices

of its societal context. As has already been mentioned, this opens up numerous avenues for future investigation.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher intends to examine the selected novels, not as being conclusively representative, but as each being individually reflective of aspects of the South African post-colonial situation. As Ashcroft (1989:83) puts it:

It is not always possible to separate theory and practice in post-colonial literature...creative writers have often offered the most perceptive and influential account of the post-colonial condition. Accordingly, the analysis and exegesis of a specific text may be one of the crucial ways of determining the major theoretical and critical issues at stake. Such analyses are not directed towards totalizing 'interpretations' but towards symptomatic readings which reveal the discursive formations and ideological forces which traverse the text.

Taking into account the required scope of the research, the researcher has further narrowed down the focus of the investigation to the consequences of colonization, particularly the implications for the formulation of an identity in a post-colonial society. In keeping with the original spirit of the award, as intending to serve as encouragement for all authors, established and novices, the researcher has selected works by Nadine Gordimer (My Son's Story, 1990) and J.M. Coetzee (Life & Times of Michael K, 1983), alongside that of Ellen Kuzwayo (Call Me Woman, 1985) and Damon Galgut (The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs, 1991). The choice of four different authors also provides the opportunity to explore four different perspectives on this central theme of identity in the South African situation.

A valid question that could be posed is why a post-colonial society and its authors should continue to engage with the process of colonization, especially if the imperial structure has already been dismantled politically. In other words, is a study of post-colonial literature relevant once the object of its criticism has been subverted in political terms (Ashcroft, 1989:6-7)? It is the researcher's contention that even if political liberation has taken place, the effects of colonial control continue long after the system has been uprooted. Cause for this can be found in the colonizers' assumptions of superiority regarding their own culture and traditions, which lead to the enforcing of their ideas on the colonized (Kirkwood, 1976) and the entrenchment of these ideas within the occupied society. One result of these impositions is a sense of displacement among the colonized. According to Ashcroft (1989:8) it "is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovering of an effective identifying relationship between self and place." According to Ashcroft (1989:8,9) critics like D.E.S. Maxwell have made issues of identity a definitive feature of post-colonial writing. Not only is the alienation experienced by the colonized perpetuated by dislocation, but also by cultural denigration: "the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (Ashcroft, 1989:9).

Furthermore, colonial control does not only affect the establishing of an identity by the colonized, but also impacts on the identity of the colonizer. The ambivalent nature of authority is revealed once the colonizer is faced with his dependence upon the colonized to recognize and confirm his position as master, in order for his authority to be sustained.

Hegel (1977) addresses this inversion of the position of master and slave in Phenomenology of Spirit and Zamora (1986:3) interprets Hegel's discussion as follows, "Hegel proposes the equivocations of power in his outline of the process by which servants become the masters of their masters". It thus follows that the "master's authority is undermined and must ultimately collapse because it depends upon the servant. It is authority founded not upon strength but upon weakness" (Zamora, 1986:10). The identity crisis of the colonized is thus related to displacement, a sense of being alienated from own culture and traditions, as a result of being placed on an opposite, inferior pole in relation to the pole of superior colonizer. The identity crisis of the colonizer, on the other hand, stems from occupying an apparently authoritative position, which is then exposed as one of insecurity and dependence (for recognition at least) upon the colonized. Thus, this research is aimed at investigating the dialectical relationship between subjugator and subjugated, the empowered and disempowered, and how such imbalance of power, in turn, affects the establishing of an identity within the post-colonial situation.

The question arises as to how one defines the self in order to lay claim to an identity or an established sense of self. According to the structuralist view, "the true nature of things may be said to lie not in things themselves, but in the relationships which we construct, and then perceive, *between* them" (Hawkes, 1977:17). Hawkes (88) outlines the Saussurian notion of the signifying role of binary opposition and the epistemological ordering of concepts as follows:

Thus, 'dark' is defined principally by our sense of its opposition to 'light'...The same binary patterning of mutual opposition manifests itself in concepts

such as male: female, vertical: horizontal, human: animal etc...contrastive orderings of this sort form the basis of what Lévi-Strauss has termed the 'socio-logic' of the human mind.

Ashcroft (1989:167) refers to Edward Said who echoes this view of formulating an identity and establishing a sense of self by setting up a comparative relationship with an Other:

Just as the two geographical entities, the Occident and the Orient...'support and to an extent reflect each other', so all post-colonial societies realize their identity in difference rather than in essence. They are constituted by their difference from the metropolitan and it is in this relationship that identity both as distancing from the centre and as a means of self-assertion comes into being.

However, according to Harris (The Empire Writes Back, 1989:49) it is precisely this grid of structured oppositions that lies "at the root of the ceaseless pattern of conquest and domination that has formed the fabric of human history". Fanon affirms this by bringing into play the concept of an imbalance of power within these dialectical relationships. He attributes the colonial dichotomy to "manichaeism delirium" (Fanon, 1967), "the result of which condition is a radical division into paired oppositions such as good-evil; true-false; white-black, in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship" (The Empire Writes Back, 1989:124-5). However, if these dialectical relationships are constructed through language, it follows that they may be dismantled or deconstructed in the same way. It is here that the strategies of deconstruction come into play, particularly the work of its leading proponent, Jacques Derrida. A discussion of some elements of Derrida's work, which the researcher regards as relevant to the exploration of

the post-colonial identity, particularly the way Derrida approaches the structuralist concept of binary opposition, follows in the next chapter. Derrida's deconstructive strategies are of particular relevance to the discussion of the ambivalent and unstable nature of power and position; as well as to the question of equivocation of power within the various dialectical relationships between subjugator and subjugated.

The researcher will thus conduct a symptomatic reading of the selected texts with the aim of fulfilling the following purposes: to explore some of the binary oppositions within the texts, while examining the implications of these binarisms on the establishing or recovery of an identity by both colonizer and colonized; to examine the imbalance of power that divides and hierarchises society into designated categories; and finally to enquire whether these dialectical positions are reversed (or resolved) and the possessors of power subverted in the course of the novels.

The post-colonial import of the study is reflected in its critical stance towards colonialism, particularly the inherent tendency to divide colonial society into imperial, superior center and inferior other; and the exposing and exploration of the effects which such categorising and hierarchising have on the formulation of identity. The researcher intends to utilize the structuralist principle of binary opposition, as an instrument of analysis and this discussion of binarism will be extended to incorporate related deconstructionist features. However, the research methods to be used are primarily focused on textual analysis with reference to relevant theoretical positions. Thus, the primary emphasis will be on the text as a site

for the analysis of these constructs so as to avoid treating this dissertation as an extended application of theoretical positions to texts.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

At a very general level, this chapter looks at a deeply rooted human need for a sense of security and control, often finding expression in the tendency to attempt to establish structure and to lend some order to the environment. More specifically, it looks at the way in which this need for an ordered, explicable reality has found one channel of expression in the form of structuralist thought and practice. However, it also looks at the work of Jacques Derrida, the foundational figure in deconstruction, who questions the conceptual comfort and decidability such structural practices, particularly that of binary positioning, would suggest. In fact, Derrida questions the extensive usage of the either/or principle implied by binary structuring and in doing so he brings into question the whole Western metaphysical and philosophical tradition. This chapter will provide some background on the thought of Jacques Derrida, focusing on those elements relevant to the discussion of binary patterning and identity, particularly the deconstructive way with which he engages with the concept of binary opposition and some resulting implications for the formulation of identity. It is the researcher's contention that a look into the phenomenon of binary structuring will facilitate an understanding of the post-colonial crisis of identity, as the ideology under attack in post-colonial literature is a totalitarian one based on dialectical thinking, such as the master/slave, colonizer/colonized, imperial center/other, state/subject dichotomies. This entails looking at the structuralist sign, Derrida's ideas of *différance*, the trace, the supplement and writing under erasure. Also relevant are Derrida's views on the concept of absolute presence and its relatedness to the Western metaphysical and philosophical tradition. It is against the background of the deconstructive unravelling of

binary categorization that the researcher will, in subsequent chapters, look at the concept of identity as explored in the selected novels.

The attempt to create structure or to formalize almost all spheres of existence is pervasive for several reasons. According to Hahn (2002:3) the concept of structure has been employed in the human sciences as a methodological tool to "compare phenomena of variable content with respect to a formal category...different existing languages might be structurally analogous in some way to allow us to study them". So when discussing identity, one could say that a structure, particularly one consisting of binary oppositions, allows one to define the self by means of comparison or the establishing of similarity to and difference from others. Another reason for the formation of structures, as mentioned above, may be the conceptual comfort, the sense of security and control derived from order, or at least the perception of an ordered, explicable environment. McQuillan (2000:11) says: "The desire for presence is merely the understandable desire for stable and coherent origins." Elsewhere he says that this can be seen as "a desire for what we earlier termed 'presence' (the knowable, the sensible, the single-simple origin)" (2000:19). One may also say that the categories created by binary structuring offer convenient means of identifying and classifying individuals into groups; in short, these categories become the means by which identity is defined and bestowed within a society. Stephenson (1991:80) contends that where individuals come together "they will usually slip into the roles of master and servant, oppressor and oppressed". This involuntary adoption of roles could also reflect man's desire for power through subversion, the need to conquer and master his environment and his fellow man. However, when one reads the

work of Jacques Derrida, one starts to question whether the binary patterning of concepts and the categorization it allows are as clear cut as the structuralist either/or dialectic would suggest them to be.

As a point of departure, let us look at the structuralist sign. In terms of Saussure's linguistics, language is a structure consisting of interrelated elements where meaning is created by means of the production of signs and the creation of differences. The production of these signs depends on the presence of some elements and the absence of others. Thus "peg" exists as a sign because of the absence of all other possibilities, pen, pan, etc. in whose presence totally different images would have been created.

Where the establishing of identity is concerned, structuralist theory would suggest that the identity of an entity is revealed when we look at the entity in relation to other entities, rather than looking at the entity in isolation. Thus an individual may characterize himself as master, powerful and superior, not by mere virtue of being master in isolation, but as a function of being master in relation to a servant, who is in turn subservient and inferior. Identity is thus seen as being constructed in a relational fashion and within the context of a linguistic structure which allows for comparison.

Derrida takes issue with Saussure's argument by disputing the assumption of presence/absence that underpins the theory. According to Derrida, when the word peg is used as a spoken word, the "g" sound is used and may be heard, as opposed to all the other possibilities, which then seem to be absent. However, in using the "g" and in order

for it to be understood and acknowledged as such, the existence of all the other sounds has to be invoked. The sound would not mean what it does if it had nothing to be contrasted against or compared to. Although the other contrasting possibilities are not physically present, they assist in creating meaning by existing as a range of contrasting possibilities and are therefore, at least at a conceptual level, not entirely absent. For example, in the word "big":

.../p/ is not simply absent. *Big*, to be identifiable and meaningful, depends on it, and on all the other sounds from which it differs. Without /p/ and the others, it is lost. So the /p/ is in a way present, though not simply so. It is carried as a *trace* in the /b/, necessarily present in its necessary absence (Collins, 1997:69).

Here Derrida invokes the notion of the undecidable, a trace of possibilities that is neither completely present, nor completely absent at the origin of meaning:

Whether written or spoken, no element can function without relating to another element which itself is not simply present. Each element is constituted on the basis of the trace in it of the other elements of the system. Nothing, in either the elements or the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent (Collins, 1997:70).

The significance of this notion of the trace is that it draws attention to the instabilities within the system of language and in so doing brings into question those totalizing discourses that lay claim to absolute concepts, such as absolute truth and complete presence or absence. The elusive K in J.M. Coetzee's Life & Times of Michael K (1983), which will be discussed in Chapter 2, is dubbed "the narratological figure of the Derridean

trace" (Attwell, 1993:99) due to the narrator's inability to pin him down, to make sense of him. So, the creation of meaning, in Derridean terms, does not involve the absolute decidability implied by the either/or principle, it is not about some element being completely present and others being totally absent. Instead, the creation of meaning involves an interweaving of presence and absence. It is here that Derrida's idea of *différance* becomes relevant. Hahn (2002:85) explains Derrida's *différance* as follows:

An invented hybrid term, that brings together "differing" and "deferring" (signifying spatial and temporal domains) as formal requirements for the production of language: (1) all significative marks signify by their difference from other significative marks rather than by their likeness to or association with phenomena, so that their differing (spacing) is prior to their significative possibilities or functions; and (2) the "presence" of meaning is an always deferred phenomenon as each link in a significative chain, each mark, takes its meaning only in the unfolding of other oppositional marks that never fully explicate themselves but always refer beyond to what is not made present in discourse.

The creation of meaning through the use of language thus has dimensions of both time and space, in that according to Derrida, a word can never be fully present at a specific moment in time, as one word necessarily invokes, and therefore continually displaces itself with, other words with related and contrastive meanings. *Différance* would thus imply that meaning is never absolute, and cannot be completely fixed because words, the carriers of meaning, are never fully present in themselves and they always refer to meanings beyond themselves. Words are not self-contained but always carry with them the trace of difference, a whole signifying chain of contrastive or associated meanings.

Another illustration of the notion that words are not self-contained or self-referential may be found in the example of dictionary entries and in the fact that, in order to find the meaning of a word, one is constantly referred to other words. Caputo (1997:100) says that:

The meaning of a word is defined differentially, relative to the meaning of other words. What you will never find in the dictionary is a word that detaches itself from these internal relationships and sends you sailing right out of the dictionary into a mythical, mystical thing in itself "outside" of language, wistfully called the "transcendental signified"...In classical terms, Derrida is deeply resistant to "essentialism," the notion that there are ideal meanings ("presence") that somehow or another antedate the play of traces to which the play must conform itself (must "represent").

When Derrida questions the notion of absolute presence, he brings into question the whole of Western metaphysical thinking. In its attempt to address questions that seem to lie outside the empirically knowable world, outside the reach of scientific scrutiny, metaphysical questions resemble those of philosophy: "essential truth, being and knowing, mind, presence, time and space, causation, free will, belief in God, human immortality" (Collins, 1997:45). In order to structure and answer these questions, Western metaphysics has looked to principles, fundamentals, foundations, a sense of a center: "This is the drive to ground truth in a single ultimate point, the origin" (Collins, 1997:45).

However, Derrida takes issue with this logocentric principle of center and other. In 1966 he attended a conference at The Johns Hopkins University where the topic of structure,

structuralism and structuralist methodology was discussed (Hahn, 2002:1). He delivered a paper entitled "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (Writing and Difference, 1978), in which he examined the "structurality of structure" (Writing and Difference, 1978:352), in other words, what makes a structure a structure? His answer to this is that a structure normally arranges its elements in terms of a center or fixed origin and subordinate elements. The center functions to orient, to bring into balance and to organize the structure. The idea of the center is paradoxical in that it enables the ordering of the contents of the structure, but it also limits the elements to be included in the structure, by virtue of whether they are at all relatable to the center or not. The center is at once the beginning (origin) of the structure, but also signals the end of the structure, its limits. So the center has an enabling, but also disabling function, it serves to "limit what we might call the play of the structure" (Writing and Difference, 1978:352). What is also characteristic of a structure, such as a circular structure for example, is that it not only organizes its elements into categories, but that is also hierarchizes those elements. By virtue of its being the origin of the structure, the center is normally invested with values such as absolute truth and is regarded as more important, therefore endowed with more authority/power than the peripheral, which is in turn regarded as derivative and removed from the truth by various degrees.

So the center functions as a "point of presence, a fixed origin" (Writing and Difference, 1978:352). According to Derrida (Writing and Difference, 1978:353) this principle of a center that is fully present, lies at the core of metaphysical thought:

It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence – *eidos*, *arché*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *alétheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth.

However, Derrida (Writing and Difference, 1978:354) challenges the assumption of absolute presence of the central reference point by showing that the center is thought and expressed through language and discourse, and can therefore never be fully present of itself, but always inevitably refers to what is other and beyond itself:

This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse - provided we can agree on this word - that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and play of the signification infinitely.

The importance of the center in metaphysical terms, its value and even its power lies in the assumption that it is an absolute, fully present origin and irreplaceable within the opposition. This kind of totalization becomes impossible when one considers what Derrida (Writing and Difference, 1978:365-66) calls "play" within the field of language:

This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions. One could say that this movement of play, permitted by

the lack or absence of a center or origin, is the movement of *supplementarity*. One cannot determine the center and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the center, which supplements it, taking the center's place in its absence - this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*. The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified.

Thus the authority of the center is challenged and undermined, as it is shown not to be an absolute value, and it is therefore incapable of being self-referential. The very signifier with which the center identifies itself is unable to define this center without referring to other concepts, thereby infinitely replacing it. The center is therefore no longer central, but is dependent, for its very definition, on the peripheral, the inferior other. Once its interrelatedness to the other, its dependence on the other for its own definition becomes apparent, the center can no longer be seen as an absolute, superior value.

So Derrida's questioning of Western metaphysical thinking lies in his grappling with what he calls "the old encircling exclusion" (Points...Interviews, 1995:67), and "the form of circular closure it wants to give itself" (Points...Interviews, 1995:72). In his own words: "What has always interested me is the paradoxes of this closure and its margins" (1995: 72).

In his questioning the notion of absolute presence by emphasizing the play of discourse, Derrida demonstrates his resistance to the either/or principle and invokes his notion of the

undecidable. By so doing he not only brings into question some foundational principles of metaphysics, but also those of philosophy. According to Collins (1997:12):

Derrida's writing is a radical critique of philosophy. It questions the usual notions of *truth* and *knowledge*. It disrupts traditional ideas about *procedure* and *presentation*. And it questions the *authority* of philosophy: 'Philosophy is first and foremost **writing**. Therefore it depends crucially on the styles and forms of its language - figures of speech, metaphors, even layout on the page. Just as **literature** does.' Derrida's critique of philosophy puts boundaries between philosophy and literature into question.

Thus Derrida destabilizes boundaries by showing what the two subjects separated by the boundary, in this case literature and philosophy, have in common. Both are expressed through the vehicle of language and both are thus subject to the play of the undecidable. This, in turn, brings into question those philosophical claims to absolute truth, which is supposed to position philosophy in a superior position when compared to literature. The destabilizing and unfixing of borderlines may be extended to racial dichotomies and this will be examined in Chapter 3, which focuses on My Son's Story (Gordimer, 1990), highlighting the coloured identity, and the difficulties presented by attempting to find a space on the continuum between inferior black and superior white.

When we say that Derrida destabilizes boundaries, do we mean that he nullifies them? Is there to be no distinction? And is all to be absorbed in the self-same? When asked about the necessity of making a distinction between literary criticism and literature (Attridge, 1992: 49-52), Derrida responds as follows:

I don't feel at ease either with a rigorous distinction between "literature" and "literary criticism" or with a confusion of the two...At any rate I wouldn't distinguish between "literature" and "literary criticism", but I wouldn't assimilate all forms of writing or reading. These new distinctions ought to give up on the purity and linearity of frontiers. They should have a form that is both rigorous and capable of taking account of the essential possibility of contamination between all these oppositions, those we encountered above and, here, the one between literature and criticism or reading or literary interpretation.

Elsewhere he comments as follows on making mutually exclusive determinations/choices: "I see no reason why we should choose between the two. That is the tension in deconstruction" (Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 1997:11).

In both of the above examples, that of the traditional center/other and the philosophy/literature oppositions, Derrida subverts the authority of the transcendental signified. He does so by disrupting the boundary between the two poles, thereby putting into question the security of the opposition itself. In fact, such binary patterning is shown to be reductive in that it forces a choice between two poles, neither of which are able to contain, fully define or give expression to the constituents of the opposition. In Life & Times of Michael K (Coetzee, 1983) we see an illustration of this when both the medical officer and Michael K find themselves at odds with their designated positions as subjugator and subjugated and the medical officer is faced with the precariousness of his power and mastery when Michael refuses to recognize and submit to his authority. Also, in Damon Galgut's The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs (1991) the plight of having to occupy a polar position - as opposed to and to the exclusion of any other means of self-definition -

is highlighted by Patrick in his grappling with what it means to swear absolute allegiance, to be a man, a soldier, a killer and eventually having to go into oppositional territory to achieve self-definition. Similarly, Ellen in Call Me Woman (1985) will be shown to find it impossible to confine herself to the narrow definition of woman as silent, inferior other and finds herself continually transgressing into male territory.

However, as Critchley points out in Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy (Kearney 1994:448), the paradox surrounding deconstructive strategies

...is that the only language that is available to deconstruction is that of philosophy or logocentrism. Thus to take up a position exterior to logocentrism, if such a thing were possible, would be to risk starving oneself of the very linguistic resources with which one must deconstruct logocentrism...Deconstruction is a double reading that operates within a double bind of both belonging to a tradition, a language and a philosophical discourse, and at the same time being unable to belong to the latter. This ambiguous situation of belonging and not-belonging describes the problem of *closure*.

Derrida's writing is difficult to summarize in that it is not standard critique. "In his terms it has no 'basic' concepts or methods to pick out and explain" (Collins, 1997:15). So we have to scrutinize its process and its effects. In Derrida's own words, his writing can be understood by allusion to a viral matrix consisting of two strands - that of derailed communication and undecidability:

Everything I have done is dominated by the thought of a virus, the virus being many things. Follow two threads. One, the virus introduces disorder

into communication, even in the biological sphere - a derailing of coding and decoding. Two, a virus is not a microbe, it is neither living nor non-living, neither alive nor dead. Follow these threads and you have the matrix of all I have done since I started writing (Collins, 1997:16).

However, if something does not fit into the category of either dead or alive, it eludes traditional classification and categorization. It invokes the horror of the zombie, which was part of seventeenth-century West-African slave cultures in Haiti and featured in numerous Hollywood films of the twentieth century. The zombie, occupying the place between life and death is an uncertainty, a being - or non-being? It is a soulless, mindless body, walking the earth. It is not completely dead, but not completely alive either. Since one term precludes the other, this is an entity that exists across these categories. The zombie escapes the traditional logic of distinction. It is said to possess both states, but as these states normally preclude each other, it possesses neither. From this we may conclude that it does not fit the traditional modes of Western thinking.

In fact, a substantial portion of Western thinking is governed by the either/or principle. The binary oppositions of life/death, male/female, white/black allow for conceptual order. They allow for classification, organization and decision-making. According to Collins (1997:20-1) undecidables disrupt the conceptual comfort offered by secure categories and the security effected by consensus:

They slip across both sides of an opposition but don't properly fit either. They are more than the opposition can allow. And because of that, they question the very principle of "opposition". Like all undecidables, zombies infect the oppositions grouped around them. These **ought** to establish stable, clear

and permanent categories. But what happens to "white/black", "master/servant", and "civilized/primitive", when white colonialists can also be the zombie slaves of a black power?

Is conceptual order to be restored, is this undecidability to be resolved? Is the zombie to be returned to the grave, decided into a category? According to Derrida, this is not possible, and therefore the whole process of categorization, underpinned by the either/or principle is brought into question. Derrida proposes that undecidability is a part of Western philosophy, "but one which philosophy must refuse to recognize - or it will no longer be 'philosophy' as we've known it" (Collins, 1997:25). He detects the play of undecidables as far back as Plato's work, which became foundational for Western philosophy. Plato, one of the inaugural figures of Western philosophy, privileges love of reason and truth above all else and sees Socratic reasoning as the only route to knowledge. Rhetoricians, poets, mythologists, storytellers are seen as merely imitating nature without truly knowing it.

In "Plato's Pharmacy" (Dissemination, 1981:61-171) Derrida looks at the Phaedrus, a fictionalized conversation between two historical characters, Socrates and Phaedrus - a young Athenian who, in Socrates' view, has been corrupted by the rhetoricians. Derrida focuses on the speech and writing dialectic. He examines the section in which Phaedrus is convinced by Socrates that speech is superior to writing. Socrates does so by telling Phaedrus the myth of Theuth, an inventor god who offered his invention of writing (the pharmakon) to the god king Thamus (king Ammon in the Egyptian version). The invention would have no value if the god king did not approve. Theuth presents his pharmakon for enhancing memory and expanding wisdom, saying to the king that it will improve memory

and expand wisdom. However, Derrida points out that the word *pharmakon* in Greek is ambiguous, meaning both cure and poison, much like the English word drug. In the end writing is condemned as it is believed it will cause real memory to decline, education will be corrupted and true wisdom will be replaced by false knowledge. What is undecidable, is decided. Writing is decided to be inferior to speech and in the process it is devalued and rejected. The decision, whether plausible or not, is made by the all-powerful king and so it stands. The role of hierarchy and mastery in this regard cannot be ignored, as Derrida says: "The value of writing – or of the *pharmakon* – has of course been spelled out to the King, but it is the King who will give it its value" ("Plato's Pharmacy" in Dissemination, 1981:76). Plato's argument is shown to depend largely on oppositions, accompanied by judgments: good/evil, inside/outside, true/false, essence/appearance, life/death; however: "Writing as *Pharmakon* cannot be fixed down within Plato's oppositions. The *Pharmakon* has no proper or determinate character. It is the play of possibilities, the movement back and forth, into and out of the opposites" (Collins, 1997:33). Derrida comments as follows on the concept of the *pharmakon* in Points...Interviews (1995:86):

Words of this type situate perhaps better than others the places where discourses can no longer dominate, judge, decide: between the positive and the negative, the good and the bad, the true and the false. And thus the temptation to exclude them from language and from the city, so as to reconstitute the impossible homogeneity of a discourse, a text, a political body.

Once the unfixedness of the *pharmakon* is revealed, the fixity of the oppositions surrounding it is also drawn into question. One may think of oppositions like father/son,

original/derivation, speech/writing. In Of Grammatology (1974), Derrida concerns himself with the status of writing in Western thinking since Plato. He focuses on the work of Rousseau and regards it as significant in that it represents a new model of presence, "one based on the self-presence of a feeling subject...Self-presence is founded on the experience of hearing oneself speak, and requires a particularly insistent rejection of writing" (Attridge, 1992:76). Speech is invested with truth-value and regarded as superior to writing in that the speaker is physically present at the moment of utterance and can therefore warrant the truth of the utterance, as opposed to writing that lends itself to reading (in the absence of the speaker), interpretation and contamination of the original truth by an other. Rousseau's condemnation of writing is paradoxical, in that "he is forced, again and again, to rely on writing in order to make good the imperfections of the 'perfect' speech he elevates. This structure of 'supplementarity' – which undermines the logic of identity, of a clear distinction between A and not-A – can be traced in a number of oppositions in Rousseau's texts" (Attridge, 1992: 76). Of particular interest is Rousseau's shifting use of the word supplement, which can mean an addition to something that is already complete, or the completion of something that is incomplete.

In "Plato's Pharmacy" (Dissemination, 1981:61-171) Derrida again visits this problematic surrounding the supplement by referring to the Egyptian version of the above-mentioned myth, where Thoth, the god of writing, and his father, the sun god Ammon-Ra, feature:

As the god of language second and of linguistic difference, Thoth can become the god of the creative word only by metonymic substitution, by historical displacement, and sometimes by violent subversion.

This type of substitution thus puts Thoth *in Ra's place* as the moon takes the place of the sun. The god of writing thus supplies the place of Ra, supplementing him and supplanting him in his absence and essential disappearance. Such is the origin of the moon as supplement of the sun...And writing as the supplement of speech. "...The Majesty of this god said to Thoth: *'Be in the sky in my place, while I shine over the blessed of the lower regions...You are in my place, my replacement, and you will be called thus: Thoth, he who replaces Ra'*" (1981:89).

Here the ambivalent nature of the concept of the supplement is emphasized: in French the word means addition, but also replacement. Thoth, as his father's predecessor, is both addition and extension (Collins, 1997:35):

The supplement extends by repeating. The king's son has the same blood and is the king's extension. But the supplement opposes by replacing. The king's son will usurp the king, take his place. The declaration, 'The king is dead, long live the king!' must escape the grip of standard logic. It follows the logic of the supplement. The king must be the same but different...So Thoth opposes his father-king, but he opposes what he himself repeats. He opposes himself. Thoth, the demi-god, is undecidable.

In the same way that his term *différance* denotes more than one meaning, Derrida's notion of the supplement (as discussed in "Plato's Pharmacy") shows the polysemic nature of words, that they can convey multiple meanings at the same time. Yet again the sign is shown to mean more than what a restrictive either/or option or any definition that lays claim to completeness, would allow.

In looking at Plato, Derrida does not employ traditional philosophical procedure. He does not confirm or refute, agree or disagree. He does not explain Plato's main concepts by providing their correct meanings. This would be a reproduction of Plato's form of logic, an attempt at mastering undecidability. Instead of approving, countering or modifying Plato's arguments, Derrida finds its instabilities. "Derrida does not so much explain Plato's text as 'unfix' it. He sets its undecidables into unlikely movement" (Collins, 1997:39).

Having looked at Derrida's position on the impossibility of absolute, complete presence it would follow that meaning/truth is not to be pinned down in a single concept, or captured as a center, a self-contained entity with absolute, fixed value. This is due to the inevitable play of words, one always invoking and displacing another, effecting the ceaseless shifting of signifiers from one level of meaning to the other. Furthermore, if the center is unfixed by the play of the signifier, the other is also destabilized and so both center and other are thrust into a crisis of identity where the border between them is obscured, where the other is evoked when center is called by its name, where other is incorporated in the definition of center and binary structuring with its either/or choices starts to show the cracks where other seeps into center and center into other. In fact, the sustainability of the binarism itself is brought into question.

However, binary patterning seems to be the very fabric of human reality and underlies any terms of reference used to organize, categorize, explain and understand this reality. There is no denying that binary structuring is a pervasive part of our lives, sedimented in our thoughts and entrenched in the structures of our society. One way of dealing with binarism

as a construct is to overturn the opposition, thus reversing its hierarchy by privileging the second term over the first. Hegel's illustration of the reversal of the master and slave dialectic (Phenomenology of Spirit, 1977), where the master is revealed to be dependent upon the servant for self-definition and "servants become the masters of their masters" (Zamora, 1986:3), has already been mentioned in the Introduction. Similar reversals may be traced in Life & Times of Michael K (1983), where K's refusal to submit to the servitude of labour camps and his self-imposed starvation renders his captors powerless. Call Me Woman (1985) provides a powerful affirmation and celebration of womanhood despite a repressive white, male-dominated context and in My Son's Story (1990) Will discovers that his father, the family hero, has feet of clay when he learns of his extramarital affair. Also, The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs (1991) illustrates a reversal of allegiances when Patrick is unexpectedly drawn to the opposite side of the political order he used to serve as a soldier. In fact, Derrida regards reversal as a necessary step in political subversion but also points out that mere reversal may succeed in a re-creation of the bind (Points...Interviews, 1995:84):

...the classical inversion or reversal, as I suggested a moment ago, is also unavoidable in the strategy of political struggles: for example, against capitalist, colonialist, sexist violence. We must not consider this to be a moment or just a phase; if from the beginning another logic or another space is not clearly heralded, then the reversal reproduces and confirms through inversion what it has struggled against.

Derrida's strategies thus go one step further than reversal by reverting to undecidability, which displaces the either/or structure of oppositional thinking: "The undecidable plays all

ways, takes no sides. It won't be fixed down. It leaves no certainty of privileged foundational term against subordinated second term. The unfixing of this certainty is the unfixing of metaphysics" (Collins, 1997:48).

By drawing attention to the fact that all discourse, be it that of metaphysics or philosophy, is subject to the play of the undecidable, Derrida not only brings into question the security of boundaries that have for long been accepted as general truths, but also questions those dialectical positions we use to organize our societies and ourselves. By extension, this brings into question the traditional categories that are employed to define the individual within society. Are the categories: black/white, male/female, colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed, subjugator/subjugated valid and adequate ways of establishing, assigning and expressing identity? Can the separate, isolated poles created by binary oppositions contain the individual? By extension, can the self exist as an isolated oppositional pole, as a self-enclosed circle? Derrida says about identity that:

...people who fight for their identity must pay attention to the fact that identity is not the self-identity of a thing, this glass, for instance, this microphone, but implies a difference within identity. That is, the identity of a culture is a way of being different from itself; a culture is different from itself; language is different from itself; the person is different from itself. Once you take into account this inner and other difference, then you pay attention to the other and you understand that fighting for your own identity is not exclusive of another identity, is open to another identity. And this prevents totalitarianism, nationalism, egocentrism, and so on. That is what I tried to demonstrate in the book called *The Other Heading*: in the case of culture, person, nation, language, identity is a self-differentiating identity, an identity different from

itself, having an opening or gap within itself. That totally affects a structure, but it is a duty, an ethical and political duty, to take into account this impossibility of being one with oneself (Caputo, 1997:13-14).

Deconstructive practice is thus aimed at showing/demonstrating that dialectical structuring is a contradictory phenomenon, as oppositional terms are not necessarily separate or oppositional as the term would imply, but are dependent upon each other and in fact have to include each other to create completeness, even if it be an illusory completeness. The very term "oppositional" is shown to be incapable of defining or explaining itself fully without assistance from other terms and therefore no longer does what it says. It has to go beyond itself to refer to itself and is therefore incapable of standing alone as the word oppositional would suggest. Hahn explains deconstruction as follows:

...a strategic demonstration that oppositional terms require each other to create the illusion of fulfillment or completeness while covering over the virtuality of the opposition in which either polar term is already implicated in and by the deployment of the other – what is excluded in the deployment of a term is always implied in its deployment without the appearance of comprehensiveness or complementarity between the two, authorizing us to say that either "state" "really exists" in the disposition described apart from our discourse or language (2002:84).

We may say that when trying to establish and express an identity for ourselves we are, in Hahn's view (2002:84), "always in our use of language trying to achieve a 'finally proper name' (*Speech and Phenomena* 160) or 'total signification' which 'itself always escapes' (*Speech and Phenomena* 104) articulation or determination". Hence, "Deconstruction"

implies a critique of the unity of the sign, speech-as-self-presence, the identity of language and being" (2002:85).

The deconstruction of binary oppositions not only serves to illustrate the instability inherent in signs and discourse, but by extension, also holds implications for the way we think about identity, which finds its definition and articulation through the medium of discourse. In the context of this dissertation, this would imply an enquiry into the effects of destabilized binary categories on the formulation of the post-colonial identity. This would involve an investigation of whether the various characters in the selected novels can be pinned down, fixed and fitted into their designated pigeonholes and whether are they able to align themselves with the definitive constructs of the hierarchical society they find themselves in. Should they find themselves to be at odds with, not quite being able to fit into the identities that are assigned to them, one could perhaps find but one cause for the alienation and isolation that are so extensively discussed within post-colonial discourse. Given the post-colonial context and its interrogation of the entrenchment of racial and gender discrimination, power relations such as the master/servant, black/white and male/female polarities will be interrogated in the selected novels with varying emphasis depending on the specifics within the novels. In addition particular emphasis will be placed on the parent/child dialectic in Life & Times of Michael K (Coetzee, 1983) and My Son's Story (Gordimer, 1990); the I/we dialectic in Call Me Woman (Kuzwayo, 1985) and the ally/enemy dichotomy in Galgut's The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs (1991). The aim of examining these dichotomies would be twofold - partly to show the inadequacy of dialectical thinking in explicating identity, and secondly to show the relation between

dialectical thinking, the politics of segregation and the alienation of both the colonizer and colonized.

It will also be shown that the impossibility of the pure self, the inevitable contamination of the self by the other, not only has implications for the way we think about the construct of identity, but also the way we think about power, given that authority and power are vested in and depend largely on the position we occupy on the dialectical scale. As soon as the traditional categories of identity are shown to be unstable, the dynamics surrounding power relations also start to change and shift and man's continued mastery over his environment and fellow man is no longer warranted. In Collins (1997:117) it is said of Derrida that his work

...turns philosophers, thieves, fathers and families into unstable figures. Their identities are no longer assured, and neither are the usual hierarchies – the sacrosanct writing of "truth", the guaranteed "transmissions" of knowledge.

In *Glas*, the texts of the philosopher have no assured resistance to those of the literary writer, the thief, or others.

One may well ask if Derrida is not perhaps an anti-foundational nihilist and, if that is the case, what purpose his work serves, especially for this study? To a question put to him along these lines by John D. Caputo during the Villanova Roundtable discussion (Caputo, 1997:5-6), Derrida responds that deconstruction

...has never, never opposed institutions as such, philosophy as such, discipline as such...however affirmative deconstruction is, it is affirmative in a way that is not simply positive, not simply conservative, not simply a way of repeating the given institution. I think that the life of an institution implies that we are able to criticize, to transform, to open the institution to its own future. The paradox in the instituting moment of an institution is that, at the same time that it starts something new, it also continues something, is true to the memory of the past, to a heritage, to something we receive from the past, from our predecessors, from culture. If an institution is to be an institution, it must to some extent break with the past, keep the memory of the past, while inaugurating something absolutely new...That is what deconstruction is made of: not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break.

One may thus say that Derrida's deconstruction is not a destructive process, but that it deconstructs in order to bring about reconstruction. Derrida does not attempt to deny the existence of meaning, but he aims strategically to question the inherited assumptions that often underpin the creation of meaning. He questions generalized truths by investigating the premises these so-called truths are founded upon. In her Translator's Introduction to Dissemination (1981:xiv), Barbara Johnson says, "If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another." There is thus a political and ethical implication to the practice of deconstruction in that it challenges the precepts on which absolute power is often founded. It may well have a reforming role to play in politics and institutions as it enables the destabilizing, the equivocation even, of those totalizing discourses that give life to oppressive phenomena such as racism and sexism, by dislocating the so-called

secure categories that act as its foundations: black/white, male/female. Deconstruction may well have a role to play in political and social reconstruction in that, at the very least, it creates awareness about, but also provides a means to desedimenting those hierarchical discourses that form the very fabric of systems of oppression and domination. In that sense it is of particular relevance to the discussion of identity in apartheid society, a society which hierarchizes on the basis of dialectical positions, and in the process also empowers or disempowers and alienates its members accordingly. Caputo (1997:106-7) comments incisively on the so-called politics of difference in Derrida's work:

Indeed, the various nationalisms are for him the almost perfect embodiment of "identity," of identitarianism, of self-affirming, self-protecting, homogenizing identities that make every effort to exclude the different. Such nationalist identitarianism does everything it can to prevent the "other" from crossing over "our" borders, from taking "our" jobs, from enjoying "our" benefits and going to "our" schools, from disturbing "our" language, culture, religion, and public institutions. They could not be more inhospitable to the coming of the other...But he advocates highly heterogeneous, porous, self-differentiating quasi-identities, unstable identities, if that is what they are, that are not identical with themselves, that do not close over and form a seamless web of the selfsame. What Derrida advocates, in a nutshell, is "democracy," which is supposed to be a very generous "receptacle" for every difference imaginable.

However, the term "identity" by its very definition suggests oneness, a unity of the self. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (eighth edition) says identity is "the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing"; "individuality, personality"; "the state of being the same in substance, nature, qualities, etc." and identity crisis is "a phase in which an individual

feels a need to establish an identity in relation to society". By its very essence the word implies that it is possible to provide a definition of the "I"; a neatly wrapped, unique parcel containing all the facts about an individual; with the exclusion of a "you" or "they", who each represent other, separate entities. When one thus says that Derrida "advocates highly heterogeneous, porous, self-differentiating quasi-identities, unstable identities", there seems to be a contradiction in terms. Is the whole point of formulating an identity not to differentiate the "I", to separate and distinguish it from the other? To answer this question one has to look at Derrida's notion of writing under erasure. In her translator's preface to Derrida's Of Grammatology (1974), Spivak (14) explains it as follows:

My predicament is an analogue for a certain philosophical exigency that drives Derrida to writing "sous rature," which I translate as "under erasure." This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible.)

In examining familiar things we come to such unfamiliar conclusions that our very language is twisted and bent even as it guides us. Writing "under erasure" is the mark of this contortion.

The sign thus becomes a site of difference in that even if it is inaccurate and insufficient even if, as the case may be with "identity", it may not always live up to its definition, it is necessary and still used for lack of a better word.

Armed with this simple yet powerful insight – powerful enough to "deconstruct the transcendental signified" – that the sign, phonic as well as graphic, is a structure of difference, Derrida suggests that what opens the

possibility of thought is not merely the question of being, but also the never-annulled difference from "the completely other." Such is the strange "being" of the sign: half of it always "not there" and the other half always "not that." The structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent. This other is of course never to be found in its full being. As even such empirical events as answering a child's question or consulting the dictionary proclaim, one sign leads to another and so on indefinitely (Spivak, 1974:17).

Self-definition or definition of the "I" by isolating it from the second and third person pronouns and by placing it on a separate, oppositional pole to that which is other may thus prove problematic, if not impossible. Butler, as cited in Identity: A Reader (2000:29), talks about "cross-corporeal cohabitations" that:

...unsettle the I; they are the sedimentation of the 'we' in the constitution of any I, the structuring present of alterity in the very formulation of the I. Identifications are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted, and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshalled, consolidated, retrenched, contested and, on occasion, compelled to give way (Butler, 1993:105).

Hence this dissertation seeks to examine the "post-colonial *crisis* of identity" as, on the one hand, a literal *crisis* of the unravelling sign when the "I" in "I-identity" can no longer be thought without incorporation of the other, the "we", "you" and "they". In the chapter on Call Me Woman (Kuzwayo, 1985) the "I" versus "we" dichotomy will be explored and it will be shown that Ellen Kuzwayo's autobiography is, in fact, also the story of her people. However, the *crisis* of identity is also a *crisis* stemming from the colonial and apartheid

contexts and the radical divisions between colonizer/colonized, master/slave and pertinent to South Africa, divisions between white and black.

In his essay entitled "The Colonizer: A Critique of the English South African Culture Theory", Kirkwood (1976) outlines some of the features of the colonizer self. With reference to Memmi's concept of the Nero complex, the colonizer is characterized as a usurper (Nero usurped the birthright of Britannicus), who lays claim to what rightfully belongs to another, and who justifies this invasion through claims of superiority and moral obligation to a 'civilizing mission'. As part of this process the colonizer seizes land, displacing the colonized, often separating them from friends, family and shared cultural practices. The recent past of South African Apartheid (separation, segregation) politics, with its white/black areas and town/township divisions, constitutes only some of the footprints left by conquering Nero's making their way through our history. This geographical isolation, in turn, creates an environment of social distance, resulting in alienation not only between colonizer and colonized, but also amongst the colonized themselves, who often do not have the resources to travel or bridge the divide by any other means. The social divide is not only a function of physical distance and division, but is also structured and maintained through dialectical language. Kirkwood (1976:130), however, contends that the colonizer thrives on an inflated sense of self and, sooner or later, someone has to "prick the bubble" of self-importance. In addition, he points out the exploitative nature of the colonizer/colonized relationship, where in the first phase of colonization the colonizer establishes a rapport with the colonized, and in the second phase the information and experience gathered during the first phase is utilized to

entrench the colonizer's position of power. He concludes by saying, "We can agree with Mannoni, who says that, 'those isolated individuals who learned by means of analysis to study themselves in the context of a colonial situation might prove to be an important agent of change'" (1976:131), and that "'Art for liberation' should indeed be the theme of the colonizer writer, in our view: the liberation of the colonized is the liberation of the colonizer also" (1976:131-2).

The crisis of identity to be examined in this dissertation, is thus not only a crisis of the unravelling sign, where dialectical opposites will be shown to bleed into each other, thus complicating the concept of a pure self; but is also a crisis perpetuated by the hierarchy implied by the colonial dichotomy where there "is a radical division into paired oppositions such as good-evil; true-false; white-black, in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship" (The Empire Writes Back, 1989:124-5). The violent hierarchies created through the privileging of the primary sign (or the center) and the subversion of the other, are often translated into abuse of power, the dispossession and displacement of the colonized mentioned above. This dispossession and displacement and resulting isolation and alienation, will be illustrated through the characters of Michael K (Life & Times of Michael K) and Ellen (Call Me Woman) and Sonny's family as a coloured family (My Son's Story) with a view to investigating these characters' varied responses to their repressive environment and the subversive possibilities contained within these responses. In addition it will be shown, through the characters of Patrick (The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs), and the medical officer (Life & Times of Michael K), that the said social distancing between colonizer and colonized, not

only results in isolation and alienation for the colonized, but also for the colonizer, pointing to the precarious nature of positions of power.

In the Introduction to this dissertation, reference was made to The Empire Writes Back (1989:2) where it is stated that post-colonial literatures "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre." Central to the oppressive regime and ideology under attack in post-colonial writing lies dialectical thinking, such as the superior empire versus the inferior other opposition. The polarization, isolation and displacement of the colonized may be seen as consequences of this center/other dialectic. Consequently, post-colonial writing aims to reflect, protest, interrogate and undermine these politics of superiority and segregation and in so doing to ultimately overthrow the hierarchy which perpetuates the oppression of the inferior other. In this anti-foundational and subversive thinking a link may be found with deconstruction, in that Derrida has sought to question and destabilize boundaries by constantly questioning the decidability implied by either/or oppositions entrenched in dialectical structures. Spivak (Of Grammatology, 1974:lxvii), citing Derrida, explains these subversive strategies as follows:

His method...is reversal and displacement. It is not enough "simply to *neutralize* the binary oppositions of metaphysics." We must recognize that, within the familiar philosophical oppositions, there is always "a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms controls the other (axiomatically, logically, etc.) holds the superior position. To deconstruct the opposition is first...to overthrow [*renverser*] the hierarchy." (Pos F 57, Pos E.I. 36)

Although deconstruction and post-colonialism have each established themselves as distinct discursive fields employing a range of different strategies, commonality between the two may be found in their critical stance toward the dialectical thinking underpinning the politics of segregation and the resultant entrenchment of violent hierarchies. In fact, in Studying Literary Theory the statement is made that "Poststructuralist theories, with their emphases on deconstruction and decentring, have informed the rise of postcolonial theory and this has highlighted further the ethnocentricity of European literature" (1996:119-120). The researcher will thus employ reversal and displacement as tools for deconstructing binary oppositions embedded in the texts, but at the same time also recognizes the post-colonial context of the selected novels and will therefore also explore the possible equivocation of political powers which such reversal and displacement may set in motion.

In Chapter 2: Life & Times of Michael K (Coetzee, 1983) reversal and resultant power shifting will be demonstrated through the parent/child relationship (Part 1) and in Part 2 through Michael's relationship with the medical officer, as representative of state authority. In Chapter 3: My Son's Story (Gordimer, 1990) the parent/child relationship will once more serve as a site of reversed power relations when Sonny has to rely on his son, Will, to guard the secret of his extramarital affair.

Chapter 4: The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs (Galgut, 1991) will focus on the reversal of allegiances when Patrick finds himself sympathizing with the freedom fighters he used to take up arms against.

Chapter 5: Call Me Woman (Kuzwayo, 1985) will examine the shifting use of the personal pronouns "I", "we", and "they"; thereby presenting Kuzwayo's autobiography as a life story, not only of the "I", but also of the "we" and "they".

The research will show that, as a function of the apartheid context, the repressive political environment, the characters within these novels find themselves constantly pushing up against powerful boundaries erected through state control. In terms of formulating an identity the powers that be offer the various characters very restricted means for self-definition. Michael, first as a child, then as a "non-white" man (Life & Times of Michael K, 1983); Ellen, as a black woman (Call Me Woman, 1985); Will, as a son and "non-white" (My Son's Story, 1990); Patrick, as a son and through his allegiance to the inferior other (The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs, 1991) are all faced with rigid either/or options on the dialectical scale. These options designate them to a pre-determined position of inferiority and so each is faced with not only prejudice and discrimination, but also the sense of alienation and isolation that accompany the occupation of an inferior position on the dialectical scale. The researcher will examine the problematic of formulating an identity that is restricted by the either/or dialectics such as master/slave, white/black, male/female, by exploring the polarization of various characters within dialectical relationships, the blurring and shifting of borderlines and eventually the characters' need to transgress, to move into the territory of the other for self-definition, as isolated poles show themselves to be insufficient to contain or to define the self in a satisfactory way.

Chapter 2: Life & Times of Michael K

J.M. Coetzee won the CNA Literary Award for the third time with his novel Life & Times of Michael K (1983). Compared to the previous novels by Coetzee on which the same award was conferred - In the Heart of the Country (1977), dealing with settlement on a farm "in the heart of nowhere" (4) and Waiting for the Barbarians (1980), set on a fictitious Empire frontier - Life & Times of Michael K constitutes a far more direct criticism of the South African apartheid government and its policies of the time. The setting is specifically South African, with numerous references to place and even street names and, with the exception of the civil war, the political context of state control and military intervention is closely related to the political conditions of the time. The novels were published in relatively quick succession at three-year intervals and Attwell (1993:14) detects the following progression: "settlement of uncertain standing and duration in *In the Heart of the Country*. A defensive phase of anticipated revolution is presented in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and in *Life and Times of Michael K* there is a stage of open civil warfare."

Life & Times of Michael K presents the experiences of Michael K, a coloured subject of a racially divided South Africa, in three parts. Part 1 traces the journey Michael undertakes to Prince Albert in an effort to deliver his mother to surroundings that would improve her ever-declining state of health. True to the journey tradition, progress is hampered by several obstacles, tight state control over freedom of movement constituting but one of these. Anna K passes away en route, though, and after doing some forced labour in a railway gang, Michael finally arrives at what he assumes is the farm of his mother's youth.

There is a short period of freedom after which K is captured, escapes and is captured again. In Part 2 K is committed to a rehabilitation camp, the largest part of which he spends in the infirmary. Part 3 sketches the completion of the cycle with his return to Beach Road and the room where his mother had lived.

In the previous chapter the researcher stated that the "post-colonial *crisis* of identity" will be examined along two strands: on the one hand, a crisis experienced by characters to establish an identity for themselves in relation to and in the context of their apartheid societies; but also as a crisis of the unravelling sign when the "I" can no longer be thought without incorporation of and contamination by the other, the "we", "you" and "they". So, in order to understand Michael K's search for an identity one needs to look at two issues. First, the crisis of identity as perpetuated by binary categorization and dialectical thinking and second, the difficulties presented by the post-colonial discourse itself: polarization, isolation, dislocation and severe state control over subjects through administrative and military measures.

The crisis of identity is said to be perpetuated by binary categorization in that it presents the subject with restricted means of self-definition, forcing rigid either/or choices. Some of the dialectical options for self-definition which Michael K is faced with are: white/black, parent/child, state/subject, master/slave, each of these options being mutually exclusive of the other. However, as has been mentioned in the Introduction, according to Harris (The Empire Writes Back, 1989:49) it is this grid of structured oppositions that has formed the foundation for the ceaseless conquest and domination that constitute human history and

Fanon (1967) adds that in this radical division into paired oppositions the primary sign is privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship (The Empire Writes Back, 1989:124-5). The question is whether Michael is able to fit into this pigeonhole of powerlessness (coloured, child, slave) he is relegated to or whether he is able, in some way, not only to construct an identity on his own terms, but also whether he is capable of establishing some sort of equilibrium in a power structure that disadvantages him to begin with. In order to understand K's crisis of identity, one needs to examine the relationships that are constructed around the dialectical terms mentioned above. In this regard three relationships are of crucial importance: that of Michael K and his mother; Michael K and his father (the state) - both structured around the parent/child dialectic (Part 1); and that of the medical officer and Michael K, related to the master/slave dialectic (Part 2).

Marais (1989) and Attwell (1993), inter alia, have noted the significance of the parasite metaphor in the presentation of power relations in Life & Times of Michael K. The parasite metaphor is supported by burden and eating imagery where the host is presented as carrying a burden, or the parasite is seen as feeding on and draining the host. Where the mother/child relationship is concerned, the impression is created that, at different times, K and his mother each represents a burden to the other. The first thing we are told about Anna K's attitude towards her son is that his disfigurement appalled and embarrassed her, "She shivered to think of what had been growing in her" and she kept him away from other children "Because their smiles and whispers hurt her" (3). We are also told that Michael disliked the physical intimacy the nights in her tiny room forced on them, but that "he did not shirk any aspect of what he saw as his duty" (7). Although his taking care of his

mother lends him a sense of purpose (7), Coetzee's image of Michael having to wheel his mother in a makeshift cart to Prince Albert reinforces the sense of her being a burden: "the more his mother slid down the box trying to make herself comfortable, the greater the deadweight he found himself lifting" (21). This is reinforced by phrases such as, "supporting her on one arm, carrying the suitcase" and "enduring day after day the burden of her silence" (25). Later on in the novel, K's position as carrier of the burden shifts as he becomes a burden to the medical officer: "Your bony arms are knotted behind my head, I walk bowed under the weight of you" (146). Anna K is described as "fretting with impatience" (3) when she used to feed her baby and so, in Michael's relationship with his mother, we see an inversion of the parent-child relationship when he finds himself caring for and nurturing the mother, who initially did not provide much nurturing to him. On the farm after his mother's passing, K ponders this dual possibility of being both parent and child at the same time:

When my mother was dying in hospital, he thought, when she knew her end was coming, it was not me she looked to but someone who stood behind me: her mother or the ghost of her mother. To me she was a woman but to herself she was still a child calling to her mother to hold her hand and help her. And her own mother, in the secret life we do not see, was a child too. I come from a line of children without end (117).

In addition to the reversal of the roles between parent and child, pointing to the reversibility and fluidity of positions on the dialectical scale, the neutralization of power relations between parent and child is also set in motion. Anna K is a child in relation to her own parents, but she also becomes dependent on K, a child to her own child. Here

Coetzee effectively destabilizes a hierarchy and with this destabilizing comes an overthrowing of the values of obedience and subservience to the parental authority, values that normally inform the terms of the parent/child binary.

Even though Anna K passes away in Stellenbosch, Michael decides to complete the journey on his own and it becomes a journey of self-discovery for him. Before leaving Cape Town he had earned a living by working as a municipal gardener. When he eventually reaches what he assumes to be the farm of his mother's youth, he scatters her ashes and, as he turns the soil, so begins "his life as a cultivator" (59). He finds some seeds, and planting and tending them fills him with "exultation" (59). Michael's realization of his vocation as a gardener not only provides him with a sense of purpose and fulfilment, but also with an identity of his own: "His deepest pleasure came at sunset when he turned open the cock at the dam wall and watched the stream of water run down its channels to soak the earth, turning it from fawn to deep brown. It is because I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature" (59). The shifting roles of parent and child has been mentioned with regard to Anna K and Michael, and we see it again on the farm when K is transformed into a parent through the sowing and nurturing of seeds in mother earth. He repeatedly refers to the fruits of his labour as his children and when he has to abandon them for fear of discovery by the Visagie grandson he says, "Now when I am most needed... I abandon my children" (63). Also, "There was a cord of tenderness that stretched from him to the patch of earth beside the dam and must be cut. It seemed to him that one could cut a cord like that only so many times before it would not grow again" (65-66).

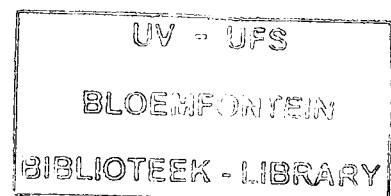
Michael's exultation at "making this deserted farm bloom" (59) is overshadowed by the arrival of the Visagie grandson, who wants to turn him into a servant anew. K realizes, "I let myself believe that this was one of those islands without an owner. Now I am learning the truth. Now I am learning my lesson" (61). K's dispossession is clear: he shares no ownership in the farm and has planted his children in foreign soil, therefore he will have to give them up.

The arrival not only threatens K's crop, but also his new-found freedom and independence. Visagie uses the discourse of the master, immediately assuming authority over Michael, issuing instructions to find a saw (61), find some food (63), go to town (64). These commands seem to smother K; his independence evaporates as he "felt stupidity creep over him like a fog again" (64). The arrival of the Visagie boy is significant in that he represents a colonial voice and the accompanying colonial assumptions of control, subjugation and entitlement. He assumes that his position as "boss Visagie's grandson" (60) entitles him to a heritage of Michael's servitude. Besides issuing commands and instructions his presence means displacement and dispossession to K and the latter "removed his sacks from the kitchen to one of the rooms on the hillside and yielded the house to the new Visagie" (60). In addition Visagie eats hungrily of the supper K had prepared for himself (there "was not enough for both of them" (61)), and expects K to guard the secret of his desertion from the army (61). Michael is thus subjected to another hierarchy and in an attempt to liberate himself once more he flees from the farm and ends up in a cave where he thinks he will not be found:

Now surely I have come as far as a man can come; surely no one will be mad enough to cross these plains, climb these mountains, search these rocks to find me; surely now that in all the world only I know where I am, I can think of myself as lost (66).

However, debilitated by hunger, he returns to Prince Albert, where he is found, taken to Jakkalsdrif resettlement camp and subjected to forced labour at minimum wage. At this point it would prove useful to look at the state/subject dialectic in a politically repressive environment like the one K finds himself in. Here the position of subject of the state may be likened to that of a child in relation to a parent: a position of dependence and obedience to legally binding authority. The novel is set in the context of a civil war and from the outset is littered with references to the power of the current regime. Michael's journey to self-discovery is hampered by numerous obstacles, most of these placed there by state control. Freedom of movement is prohibited through curfews, restrictions on movement between proclaimed districts - K cannot buy train tickets without first obtaining "a permit to leave the proclaimed Cape Peninsula police area" (9) – and difficulty in obtaining travel permits in a maze of bureaucracy. Along the way K is met by influx control checkpoints and roadblocks (22,40), police patrols (27,30,33) and numerous military convoys (35,38,39,45). The frequency, but also the size and sheer exhibitionism of the convoys affirm their purpose of quelling guerrilla activity and insurrection, while at the same time serving to demonstrate the absolute power of the state:

He was roused by a rumbling in the air. At first he thought it was faroff thunder...From their right, from the direction of the city, at deliberate speed,



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came two pairs of uniformed motorcyclists, rifles strapped across their backs, and behind them an armoured car with a gunner standing in the turret. Then followed a long and miscellaneous procession of heavy vehicles, most of them trucks empty of cargo...side by side they sat and watched in a roar of noise that seemed to turn the air solid. The convoy took minutes to pass (21-22).

Although we meet Michael's mother at the beginning of the novel, no reference is made to his biological father. We learn that he spent his childhood in a children's home called Huis Norenius and he says "...my father was Huis Norenius. My father was the list of rules on the door of the dormitory, the twenty-one rules of which the first was 'There will be silence in dormitories at all times'" (105). So early on in his life, the state became K's father and subjected him to its rule. Just as a father educates his son, the state educated K. However, the education that was given to K was not one that empowered him to a life of independence. Instead, at Huis Norenius, K acquired an education that made him fit to be nothing more than a slave: "learning the elements of reading, writing, counting, sweeping, scrubbing, bedmaking, dishwashing, basketweaving, woodwork and digging" (4).

It is the researcher's contention that in Life & Times of Michael K the relationship between state and subject may be examined as a modern translation of the master/slave dialectic, where the subject is inscribed in a system of forced labour with race as the determining factor. Kirkwood (1976:124-5) says the following about the interconnectedness between race and labour relations in South Africa:

The basis of the economic relationship between White and Black South Africa was laid by the discovery of diamonds and then gold. The pattern of labour utilization established in these extractive industries...became the basis on which the full development of South Africa as a modern industrialized country was possible. While the existence of a large urban proletariat came to be a distinctive feature of the South African colonial situation, the recruiting and maintenance of this labour force in its characteristic mode necessitated thorough-going changes in the rural life-style of the South African peasantry. In brief, the modern colonial situation in South Africa creates the colonized as cheap labour in the urban industrial centres and as an uprooted and demoralized peasantry in the rural areas, which are basically labour pools. The migrant labour system and its mechanics of hostels and compounds for single men, influx control, and pass-laws regulates the labour flow and controls the potentially explosive development of a sub-proletariat, shuttling between town and country...It now practises colonialism in one country: there is a rich, White South Africa, and a poor, Black South Africa.

With regard to the issue of white identity, Reckwitz (1993:1) says, "In South Africa the whites posit themselves as the norm by subsuming all other groups, at least in official parlance, under the term 'non-white.' This is exactly where the vicious circle starts in which selfhood and otherness are caught up in every discourse of race, whether colonial or otherwise." Michael K, as a coloured South African, is situated in a position between white and black, not properly fitting either category (the precarious position of the coloured identity will be addressed again in My Son's Story (1990)) and it is here that Derrida's notion of absolute or violent hierarchies is relevant. In a political environment where trade sanctions and failing economic policy place ever-increasing demands on the modes of production, an ever-expanding labour force is required. If being classified as white means

access to privilege and ownership, and being black means being part of the working class, it would be in the state's interest to classify as many individuals as possible in the latter category. Hence, the term non-white. K is not black, but in order to inscribe him in a position where he would be of use to the state his identity is defined negatively, in terms of what he is not, and so K's status as non-white places him in the domain of an exploited working class.

During his journey K is captured on several occasions and on every one of these occasions he is forced to do manual labour, whether his declining health due to severe weight loss allows it or not. After his mother's passing, he is captured outside Worcester for travelling without a permit and is forced to work as part of a railway gang. In Jakkalsdrif K is subjected to manual labour at minimum wage and his fellow inmate, Robert, is quite vocal on how the railways and farmers benefit from having a resettlement camp nearby:

'So I hear you ask who is in favour of the camp? I'll tell you. First, the Railways. The Railways would like to have a Jakkalsdrif every ten miles along the line. Second, the farmers. Because from a gang from Jakkalsdrif a farmer gets a day's work blood cheap, and at the end of the day the truck fetches them and they are gone and he doesn't have to worry about them or their families, they can starve, they can be cold, he knows nothing, it's none of his business' (82).

Here, the parasite metaphor is of relevance once more and again the distinction between parasite and host is blurred. When the cultural history museum in Prince Albert burns to the ground, it is assumed that the captives of Jakkalsdrif are responsible. The camp is raided by police and an enraged Captain Oosthuizen, shouting over a megaphone, calls

the inmates a group of "ungrateful bastards" who do not appreciate anything (91). We know, though, that it is this same group of labourers who had to cut a field of lucerne for Oosthuizen's brother-in-law (87) when the latter's machine had broken down. Back on the farm after his incarceration in Jakkalsdrif, K ponders the dynamics between host and parasite, camp and town:

Parasite was the word the police captain had used: the camp at Jakkalsdrif, a nest of parasites hanging from the neat sunlit town, eating its substance, giving no nourishment back. Yet to K lying idle in his bed, thinking without passion...it was no longer obvious which was host and which parasite, camp or town...Parasites too had flesh and substance; parasites too could be preyed upon. Perhaps in truth whether the camp was declared a parasite on the town or the town a parasite on the camp depended on no more than on who made his voice heard loudest (116).

Marais (1989:32) asserts that the "blurring of the distinction between host and parasite insinuates that, instead of being static, the power relations in the novel are in a constant state of flux." Indeed, in this case it is the host (state) - which claims to be drained of its resources by its "ungrateful" dependent subjects - which is seen to feed and flourish on the labour of its so-called parasites.

After K's escape from Jakkalsdrif and his return to the farm, he again plants some seeds and enjoys a few blissful weeks tending his pumpkins and melons. Guerrillas pass through and he considers joining them, but resolves not to do so on the grounds of his vocation: "...because enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over; whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at

least the idea of gardening; because once that cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children. That was why" (109). Despite his decision not to join the guerrillas he is discovered by soldiers, accused of supplying the enemy and taken into captivity once more.

Hence, in Part 2 K finds himself in the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp where physical training coupled with his prolonged malnutrition land him in the infirmary and this is where he ends up spending most of his stay. The relationship between the medical officer and K bears the marks of the state/subject, master/slave dialectic in that the medical officer, as representative of state power, is faced with the task of rehabilitating K so that he can be incorporated in the system as slave to the state once again. Throughout their involvement, the MO (medical officer) is bent on lending Michael some substance, partly through attempting to feed him, but also in repeatedly wanting him to tell his story, in trying to make sense of him: "Give yourself some substance, man, otherwise you are going to slide through life absolutely unnoticed...Well then, *talk*, make your voice heard, tell your story!" (140). The MO's repeated attempts to feed K, first through a drip (130) and then by preparing him some squash (148) and the continued efforts to puzzle together the pieces of information he gives him all constitute attempts at re-assembling K. It dawns on the medical officer though, that even if he should succeed, it will only be so that Michael can be re-appropriated by the state, in the only way he makes sense to it, as a labourer. The MO articulates this futile cycle of escaping and being re-inscribed in the system as follows:

He needs a graduated diet, gentle exercise, and physiotherapy, so that one day soon he can rejoin camp life and have a chance to march back and forth

across the racetrack and shout slogans and salute the flag and practise digging holes and filling them again (133).

K's discovery of his vocation, his definition of himself as a gardener, and his claim to an independent identity is thus overridden by a system that can only inscribe him in a way that proves useful to the authorities, a slave who digs holes, just to fill them again.

Through his relationship with K, the MO is forced to question the sense of his involvement in the war: "Do any of us believe in what we are doing here? I doubt it" (134). He relates how they are given an old racetrack and some barbed wire to try and effect the changing of men's souls (134). However, the end result of not being able to cultivate mutual trust puts their efforts at so-called rehabilitation in question:

At the end of the process we certify them cleansed and pack them off to the labour battalions to carry water and dig latrines. At the big military parades there is always a company from the labour battalions marching past the cameras among all the tanks and rockets and field artillery to prove that we can turn enemies into friends; but they march with spades on their shoulders, I notice, not guns (134).

Towards the end of Part 2 the grip of state control is tightened even further when the distinction between rehabilitation and internment camps is abolished and Kenilworth has to be converted into an internment camp. "Rehabilitation, it would seem, is an ideal that has failed to prove itself; as for the labour battalions, they can be supplied just as well from the internment camps" (154). Thus "rehabilitation" reveals itself to be just another word for re-shaping the subjects of the state into servile figures of forced labour.

Reference has been made to Marais (1989:32) who interprets the blurring of the distinction between parasite and host as indicative of the instability of power relations in the novel. We see more evidence of these shifting power relations in the MO's increasing awareness of the fallible system he serves. It occurs to him that he is wasting his life (156-7):

What would yield the greater benefit to mankind: if I spent the afternoon taking stock in the dispensary, or if I went to the beach and took off my clothes and lay in my underpants absorbing the benign spring sun...What did Noël ultimately achieve labouring at his desk to balance the bodies out against the bodies in? Would he not be better off taking a nap?

Eventually the MO comes to the conclusion that all of them, captives and captors alike, have become prisoners of the camp and the war itself: "I had in effect given myself up as a prisoner to this war" (157). As pressure increases to upgrade Kenilworth to a high-security facility and there is an overflow of ever-increasing numbers of prisoners the MO finds himself longing for the freedom K has had the courage to claim for himself and thinks wistfully that perhaps Noël and he should follow K's example: "Perhaps now would be a good time...to quit the fortress...Perhaps the two of us should take a leaf out of Michaels' book and go on a trip to one of the quieter parts of the country" (160). The man who was initially K's captor ends up regretting that he did not escape along with his captive and the one deemed superior by the system ends up seeking guidance from his subordinate: "Therefore I have chosen you to show me the way" (163).

The problem of identity in Life and Times of Michael K is thus a problem of violent hierarchies. These hierarchies are said to be violent in that they imply separation of individuals into oppositional categories, causing isolation and alienation at both ends of the divide. Along with the divisional violence comes the violence of imposition in the form of a non-negotiable value system where one term of the opposition is deemed inferior and subordinated to the superior term of the opposition. Michael K finds a vocation and a sense of purpose in being a gardener, but this definition of himself does not serve the need of his white superiors and so he is dislocated from the soil that bears his "children" and displaced to be rehabilitated into something he is not and can never be: "It's not my kind of food" (145). The medical officer, on the other hand, is faced with the precariousness of his position of power when his mastery of K, the superiority of his position as K's helper, his healer, is shown to depend largely on K's recognition of and submission to him as such. In short, the MO can only give help if K is willing to receive it, he can only be a healer in so far as K is willing to submit to his treatment. However, through his silence and non-compliance, Michael withholds recognition, he refuses to submit and so the MO's identity is destabilized. This dependence on the recognition of an other would suggest the necessity to define identity in a relational fashion, the need for the voice of the other to sound in the construction of the self. It would follow that an accurate definition of the self is reliant on an accurate interpretation of the other and this brings us to another problem of identity with which the MO is faced - that of trying to define the self in relation to a misinterpreted other.

Joffe (1990:94) contends that both the MO and the reader are seduced into believing that K has to have some sort of significance, that he has a story to tell. He describes the MO as a "guilt-inflicted bourgeois liberal" who tries to compensate for his forced involvement in the war by attempting to intercede and heal where possible, while holding on to the illusion of some escape into neutrality. This illusion of neutrality is projected onto K, "a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine," (151) and it is for this reason that he selects K to show him the way. Joffe's point about projecting one's own meaning upon an other is echoed by Marais (1991:156), who notes the significance "of the metaphor of the gaze" in Coetzee's writing. Coetzee (White Writing, 1988), in his discussion of early South African landscape poetry, contends that much of this writing is founded on the "imperial gaze" (167) of the poet, where the poet asserts his conquest and dominance over the landscape by imposing his perception and meanings on his subject. So the eye becomes an "organ of penetration and takeover" (172), where the poet attempts to assert his dominance by holding "the landscape in the grip of sight" (173). Marais (1991:157) points out that the metaphor of the gaze, where the eye represents an "organ of mastery" (White Writing, 1988:172) reappears in Life & Times of Michael K in the form of the medical officer whose "glittering eye" (164) attempts to hold K, "rooted where you [K] stood" (164). Through the metaphor of the imperial gaze, Coetzee thus exposes the subject's attempts to master and dominate his object and also suggests that the perception of the other is perpetually tainted by the subjectivity and self-proclaimed superiority of the self.

What becomes obvious as their relationship unfolds, is that the MO and K speak a different language. The MO's diary is a symbol of his attempts to capture K in discourse,

to master him by making sense of him and K, by contrast, longs for "the privilege of so much silence" (47). All the MO's probing and questions provide him no certainty in his quest to know K and he has to ask, "Am I right?...Have I understood you? If I am right, hold up your right hand; if I am wrong, hold up your left!" (167). Due to Michael's refusal to yield his story, the MO is unable to establish reciprocity; he infers what he does not know, projecting his own meaning on K and so ends up misunderstanding him most of the time. Perhaps the most telling indication of the MO's misinterpretation of K is his insistence on calling him "Michaels", despite having been informed otherwise, "He says his name is not Michaels but Michael" (131). This is a repetition of the police captain's insistence that K's name is "Michaels" in Part 1: "'His name is Michaels. What name did he give you?' 'Michael,' said the army officer. 'It's Michaels,' said Captain Oosthuizen" (124). The same way Michael is denied his chosen vocation by being submitted to forced labour, so he is also not heard when he utters his own name, and Michael being called "Michaels" becomes a symbol not only of the misinterpretation of the other, but also of the false identity constructed in relation to a misunderstood other.

The problem of formulating a false identity in relation to a misperceived other, may also be extended to racial identity. It has been mentioned that Michael's identity is defined negatively: he is classified in terms of what he is not, a non-white, and this enables his placement in the labour system. However, Michael's identity has implications for the identity of his dialectical opposite, the white MO. Indeed, the MO's racial identity, his white identity becomes almost impossible to define, as the identity of the other has been negated from the start. With reference to J.M. Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians (1980)

Reckwitz (1993:6) summarizes the problem of white identity as one of attempted insularity, but also relating to false projections of a misinterpreted other: "If...the so-called civilized can only acquire self-definition by shutting themselves off from the putative savages, such an identity becomes highly problematic as soon as the definition of the other is nothing but the projection of prejudices and unconscious desires – the unconscious being the other of the conscious self" .

The relationship between the medical officer and Michael K constitutes an illustration of the blurring of boundaries between master and slave and the equivocation of power to the point of the MO surrendering to his charge. The MO's repeated efforts to make him speak, to make him eat, prompts K to ask "What am I to this man?...What is it to this man if I live or die?" (148) and the MO responds, "As I spoke I thought: Surrender. This is how surrender will feel. 'I might ask the same question of you...What am I to this man?'" (149).

In the previous chapter reference was made to Plato's Phaedrus, where the tendency to value presence over absence comes to the fore. The privileging of speech over writing in the Phaedrus is based on the premise that the speaker is physically present to guarantee the truth-value of the statement, which is not the case with writing and so writing is regarded as inferior. This same principle of valuing presence or substance over absence or emptiness is seen in the MO's attempts to lend K some substance. K is expected to construct an identity for himself in an accumulative mode, he has to pick up weight, he has to fill in the blanks with words. The composition of a so-called "rounded" character is traditionally done in an accumulative mode, more and more information is given to enable

the reader to construct a fuller picture of the character. In much the same way the construction of identity is regarded as an accumulative process: an increase in material wealth leads to more status and increased social affiliations (being a member of a family, friendship group or organization) provide more means for self-definition: "I am heir to..."; "I am a member/the son of..."; "I believe in...". Significant about K as a character, though, is the way in which Coetzee deconstructs, rather than constructs/assembles him.

That which he rids himself of and that which he is stripped of mark K's passage through the novel. The most obvious example in this regard is his severe weight loss, which is introduced by the reference to his deformity and Anna K's resulting difficulties with feeding him (3), and taken to the extreme at the end of the novel where he ponders drawing water from the earth with a teaspoon. His mere thirty-five kilograms compared to Major Van Rensburg who "cannot find a pair of white trousers to fit him" (152) for the cricket match, signifies the privileged position the Major enjoys in the system compared to Michael. K's disfigurement also deprives him of the power that often comes with being physically attractive, leading him to shy away from the opposite sex: "Because of his face K did not have women friends. He was easiest when he was by himself" (4). His isolation, the absence of multiplying relations, creates a void in the formation of his sexual identity and consequently the encounter with the prostitute in Part 3 leaves him with a sense of shame and emptiness (179).

Furthermore, K seems to have no particular allegiance to any specific ideology. In Part 1 he asks "Do I believe in helping people?" and it is concluded "He did not seem to have a

belief, or did not seem to have a belief regarding help. Perhaps I am the stony ground, he thought" (48). During his stay on the farm, he manages to free himself from the constraints of time and even inverts the day-night cycle: "He did not know what month it was, though he guessed it was April. He had kept no tally of the days nor recorded the changes of the moon...He had become so much a creature of twilight and night that daylight hurt his eyes"(115). Also, instead of inhabiting the farmhouse, K is reduced to the simplicity of living in a burrow:

...he was himself, lying in his own house, the rust was merely rust, all that was moving was time, bearing him onward in its flow. Once or twice the other time in which the war had its existence reminded itself to him as the jet fighters whistled high overhead. But for the rest he was living beyond the reach of calendar and clock in a blessedly neglected corner, half awake, half asleep. Like a parasite dozing in the gut, he thought; like a lizard under a stone (116).

K is not only reduced to living "like a beast", but during the course of his journey, he is also systematically stripped of his material possessions. A soldier takes both his mother's purses, thereby depriving him of his inheritance (37); he scatters his mother's ashes, thereby ridding himself of her, and the absence of a biological father and a surname, further deprives him of a heritage and familial relations. The closest K comes to a "normal" family life, is the planting of seed in mother earth, but we know that even these "children" will be taken away from him.

Upon K's return to the farm after his captivity in Jakkalsdrif, there is a suggestion that his life of simplicity is not merely a matter of choice, but that it is also, in part, necessitated by

a political system that threatens to incarcerate him whenever he dares to reveal himself. The more he strips himself, the less substantial he becomes, and the more he is able to elude institutions:

I want to live here, he thought: I want to live here forever, where my mother and my grandmother lived. It is as simple as that. What a pity that to live in times like these a man must be ready to live like a beast. A man who wants to live cannot live in a house with lights in the windows. He must live in a hole and hide by day. A man must live so that he leaves no trace of his living. This is what it has come to (99).

Attwell (1993:89) points out the improbabilities surrounding Michael K, the unlikeliness of a subject moving untouched through a civil war, and he concludes that K's significance is not so much that of a historical being, but rather that of a protagonist with immense symbolic power:

It is because he is so prodigious that a metafictional contest is staged over what K means. To the last, however, K remains his own person: in refusing to be imprisoned in any way, either in the literal camps or in the nets of meaning cast by those who follow after him, he becomes – in the socially symbolic field of the novel's engagement with South Africa, that is, in the field of reading and interpretation – a principle of limited, provisional freedom, a freedom located in the act of writing (1993:92).

Part 2 of the novel ends inconclusively with the medical officer seeking confirmation from K, "Have I understood you?" (167), confirmation which is yet to arrive and one is left to draw the conclusion that the final word about K cannot be spoken. This ties in with

Derrida's concept of *differance*, with its spatial and temporal significance. The idea that the self cannot be conclusively defined in the present, without reference to the past and future; and that the identity of K cannot be thought without "contamination" by the other, by his mother, the medical officer, the state he is subjected to. K's silence, his elusiveness, his dispossessed existence lead him to be perceived more as an absence than a presence. Hence, the difficulty to capture him, physically and in discourse. According to Attwell (1993:99) this is where we enter the terrain of Derridean deconstruction, where "K's meaning will never arrive, for his story is constituted in the play of identity and difference that defines textuality...displace the power of interpretation in such a way that K is left uncontained at the point of closure. This is how one might speak of K as the narratological figure of the Derridean trace."

Attwell (1993:100) comments that K "is an idea floated into a discursive environment that is unprepared to receive it." This open-endedness of writing and identity can be related to the scattering of seed, the dissemination of meaning, rather than its concentration in one central point or the origin of truth referred to in the Theoretical Framework. Derrida's Dissemination (1981) focuses on this notion of dispersal of meaning, the moving away from claims to closure and we see it reflected in the novel in a number of references to Michael's scattering of seed. He plants seeds on the farm, his packet of seeds is carelessly scattered in pine needles (p. 177) and later on he thinks:

The mistake I made...was not to have had plenty of seeds, a different packet of seeds for each pocket...Seeds in my shoes too, and in the lining of my coat, in case of robbers along the way. Then my mistake was to plant all my

seeds together in one patch. I should have planted them one at a time spread out over miles of veld...I could make a tour of the sites to water them. Because if there was one thing I discovered out in the country, it was that there is time enough for everything (182-183).

In the final pages of the novel, possibly also the final stage of his life, K thinks about how he has "become an object of charity," and in return for the charity he was expected to "tell them the story of a life lived in cages" (181). However, storytelling did not make up part of his education at Huis Norenius and so, he realizes, his story never corresponds with their expectations: "Whereas the truth is that I have been a gardener...It excited him, he found, to say, recklessly, *the truth, the truth about me. 'I am a gardener'*"(181).

Michael K's desire is for freedom: "I always wanted to fly" (133). Freedom and a life lived on his own terms, without being a slave so that someone else may define himself as his master, without being a labourer so that someone else may enjoy the fruits: "Perhaps the truth is that it is enough to be out of the camps, out of all the camps at the same time...How many people are there left who are neither locked up nor standing guard at the gate?" (182). His quest for freedom and an independent identity is also reflected in his refusal to become an object of charity. In Part 1, when waiting in vain for a lift along the arduous journey to Prince Albert, K started to think that "it was better when one did not have to rely on other people" (24). In Part 2 he refuses to eat the food of the infirmary and the MO says, "You have never asked for anything, yet you have become an albatross around my neck" (146). When, in Part 3, he encounters some vagrants who offer him their gifts of drink, food and sexual favours, his reluctance to relent to their efforts leads the

stranger to say to K, "It is difficult to be kind ...to a person who wants nothing" (179). K is thus consistent in his resistance to charity, thereby refusing his various benefactors the superior position of bestowing on him their gifts. He says: "I have escaped the camps; perhaps, if I lie low, I will escape the charity too" (182). In fact, the MO calls K "a great escape artist, one of the great escapees" (166). However, in a political dispensation that is so repressive, so recuperative, one gets the impression that in order to slip away, in order to escape being pinned down, K may have reduced himself to such a point of physical insubstantiality that he might not live to enjoy his liberation.

According to Joffe (1990:97) "Michael K's personal history indeed has been characterized by the various state institutions through which he has moved, each seeking to impose on him the roles of gender, race, class by which he is to be identified." K's passage through the state school, Huis Norenius, Jakkalsdrif resettlement camp and the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp provides numerous illustrations of how these institutions try to impose the dominant ideology of the state on K. At Huis Norenius he learns "sweeping, scrubbing...digging" (4), at Jakkalsdrif he gets to apply this education as an exploited labourer and in Kenilworth the objective is to have his "thinking set right" (132). The symbols of state power, in the form of flag and anthem, serve as powerful reminders of these attempts to enforce the identity of the regime on the captives. The MO relates how, upon leaving Noël's office after receiving instructions "to speed up the turnaround" (131) in his infirmary:

...it was to behold a corporal raising the orange, white and blue on a flagpole in the middle of the track, a five-piece band playing 'Uit die blou,' the cornet

out of key, and six hundred sullen men standing to attention, barefoot, in their tenth-hand khakis, having their thinking set right. A year ago we were still trying to make them sing; but we have given up on that (132).

However, K's resistance to his designated identity is illustrated through his tendency to a life of reduction and simplicity, rather than accumulation, and his persistent refusal of charity. When the MO offers to arrange for an operation to correct his disfigurement he says: "I am what I am. I was never a great one for the girls" (130).

Michael's quest for freedom is only partly a struggle to avoid and escape incarceration in the various institutions of state control. It is also a struggle to escape the discourse of state control, a discourse that attempts to inscribe him as the polar opposite of those who are powerful and superior by virtue of rank and possession. In the same way that Michael is characterized more by what he is not, by dispossession, than by what he is and what he accumulates through the course of the novel, so we also learn more about him through his silence, his lack of participation in discourse. Although the silencing of the other may be seen as a symptom of repression, a point that will be returned to in references to censorship in Chapter 3 – Michael's silence may be looked at as an effective mode of offering resistance.

In his paper "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Shades of Post-Colonialism in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee", Marais (1991:158-9) makes a compelling argument for viewing K's silence more as a form of resistance than a sign of defeat. He acknowledges at the outset that post-colonial discourse recognizes the interrelatedness of language, power and

oppression and also "the crucial role that language plays in impeding the ability of the other to express self (Ashcroft et al. 1989:7-9, 38-39)". Referring to Hutcheon (1988) and Slemon (1989) he gives recognition to the need to give a voice to the silenced other of oppressive discourses, given the restorative and liberating potential of language. However, he asserts that in the case of Michael K, the silence is not an indication of submission, but an empowering strategy of passive resistance to the language of imperialism. "Since it is the oppositional structure of language which enables one to posit oneself as subject in relation to an object, an opposition which is a precondition for the master-servant relationship in all its various manifestations, K's silence and absence enable him to resist linguistic reification by denying his interrogators their position of mastery" (Marais, 1991:159). When one considers that the main objective of interrogation is to engage the subject so as to let him implicate himself, the merit of Marais's argument is further underscored.

From the outset of the novel, K is relegated to, one may even say predisposed to, a position of silence and powerlessness. In the first words of the novel we are told that K had a hare lip, implying impaired speech and this together with his education shape him into a figure of silence. We are told that "Year after year Michael K sat on a blanket watching his mother polish other people's floors, learning to be quiet" (3-4). His father, on the other hand, "was the list of rules on the door of the dormitory, the twenty-one rules of which the first was 'There will be silence in the dormitories at all times'" (104-5). However, as the novel progresses, he seems to appropriate this "predisposition" to his advantage in

refusing to partake in the discourse that relegates him to a position of weakness and subordination.

K's silence as a form of resistance acquires particular significance in the episodes of interrogation in Parts 1 and 2, but it also serves to illustrate yet another form of violence and imposition perpetuated by the agents of state power, that of enforcing a story and an identity on K. At the end of Part 1 when K is discovered on the farm and is interrogated, he says: "I'm not what you think...I was sleeping and you woke me, that's all" (123). Because their questions do not yield the expected answers, the officers however, "gave no sign of understanding" (123) and because they do not understand him or his story, they construct their own story around him. They read his burrow and pumpkins as evidence of their own convictions and despite the fact that no other evidence is found he is labelled an "Opgaarder" (137), an enemy. In Part 2 the MO relates the story constructed around K: "The story is that he was picked up all by himself in the middle of nowhere in the Karoo, running a staging post for guerrillas operating out of the mountains, caching arms and growing food, though obviously not eating it" (129). Even when the MO approaches Major Van Rensburg to try to convince him that K does not belong in a rehabilitation camp (131), Noël retorts by pulling out the register and citing the so-called official version of K's story: "'According to this,' he said, 'Michaels is an arsonist. He is also an escapee from a labour camp. He was running a flourishing garden on an abandoned farm and feeding the local guerrilla population when he was captured. That is the story of Michaels'" (131). This story of Michael, his categorization as a supplier to the enemy, leads the police to believe that he may be implicated in the attack on the water supply in Prince Albert that takes place

while he is in hospital (Part 2) and they demand another interrogation. During the subsequent interrogation, K is urged by the MO to "Tell us the truth, tell us the whole truth... we won't bother you any more" (138). Michael's silence stands in stark contrast to the MO's verbosity, who finds it easy to "fill this room with words" (140). Once again however, K's simple response, "I am not in the war" (138), does not meet with their expectations and so the MO urges Major van Rensburg to fabricate another story and to put it in a report "to keep them off our backs, so that we can get on with our jobs" (141). When one considers that the discourse of military control requires a saluting subordinate for every rank to be confirmed and that during an interrogation the talking subject often succeeds only in implicating him/herself even more, it becomes clear that Michael's silence assists him in avoiding these snares of subordination and facilitates the avoidance of entanglement in interrogative word-play.

The MO's descriptions of K seem to center around images of obscurity, but also reveal his perception of K as being in need of rescue, as a figure of weakness: "No papers, no money; no family, no friends, no sense of who you are. The obscurest of the obscure, so obscure as to be a prodigy" (142), also, "keeping you alive is keeping the weakest pet duckling alive, or the runt of the cat's litter, or a fledgling expelled from the nest" (142). However, there is power to be detected in K's silence, in that it aids his elusiveness and so the MO has to adjust his view of K to that of a survivor: "A hard little stone, barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life. He passes through these institutions and camps and hospitals and God knows what else like a stone. Through the intestines of war" (135).

Where the naming of J.M. Coetzee's Michael K is concerned, some critics have speculated about a possible connection to Kafka's character K in The Trial (1977). Indeed, some similarities may be found between Kafka's bank clerk and Michael K, particularly in that both characters find themselves in a maze of bureaucracy, where possession of papers is crucial in the confirming of identity. In Life & Times of Michael K, Coetzee's omission of a surname serves to illustrate K's elusiveness and increases the difficulty of classifying and capturing him in a bureaucratic system. K's trips to Caledon Square, the long queues and endless forms (9, 19-20) mirror the experiences of Kafka's K and reflect the anonymity the state forces on its citizens through increased bureaucracy. However, Joffe (1990:95) points out that Coetzee's K may have no bearing on Kafka's K and that the K may well be an indication of his racial identity and stand for "Kleurling" (coloured), which would appear on his official identity document. Nadine Gordimer speculates that K "probably stands for Kotze or Koekemoer and has no reference, nor need it have, to Kafka". Indeed, Attwell (1993:100) astutely remarks that "In a frenzied culture such as South Africa's ... every sign, no matter how innocent, becomes a signifier at another level, pointing to the larger conflict." Whether Michael K is relateable to Kafka's K or not, the unspecified K leaves his identity open to speculation and once more he is presented as a character embodying open-endedness, a character that resists the act of mastery and being fully and finally grasped.

In addition to it being a reference to his elusiveness, the unspecified K may also be an indication of K's insignificance in the eyes of the state, his being just another "digit in the

units column" (140). His initial struggle to make an impression on the system, his inability to make his request for a permit heard in a bureaucratic world where only papers speak, emphasize the bleak fact that, in the eyes of the system, he is a nobody, just another face in the queue: "The policewoman slapped the counter to still him. 'Don't waste my time. I am telling you for the last time, *if the permit is granted the permit will come!* Don't you see all these people waiting?'" (20). It is significant to note, though, that the MO is also surrounded by a sense of anonymity. He is referred to only as the medical officer, and one never learns his real name despite the fact that major Noël van Rensburg, his superior officer is specifically identified. This omission of the basic unit of identity, could be seen as a way of deflecting the responsibility of involvement in the war, but it may also be reflective of the MO's alienation from himself, that he has been absorbed by the system to such an extent that he is defined only by his rank. Both K and the MO are thus, in a sense, dispossessed by the system. However, the difference between Michael's being denied an identity formulated on his own terms, and the alienation of the medical officer, is that in relation to K, the MO, by virtue of his rank, still enjoys a position of privilege within the system.

When looking at the issue of identity in Life & Times of Michael K, it becomes clear that the South African apartheid context presents the characters with numerous obstacles and challenges. Michael's journey of self-discovery is hampered by police and military intervention limiting his freedom of movement, and administrative procedures that misname him, assign him identities of slavery and service that are irreconcilable with his own definition of himself. The medical officer, on the other hand, although privileged by

the system compared to K, is absorbed by the system, subsumed by his rank to the extent of becoming a nobody in a uniform, a prisoner of war himself. These issues of identity are a function of the dialectical discourses involved in the formulation of identity, discourses that are not only dialectical, but also hierarchical discourses of power. First there is the issue of race, where the white identity is one of entitlement and privilege and the non-white identity is one of subservience and exploited labour. The white identity is not without its problems, though, as shown by the medical officer's discovery of the limits of his power when faced by an other that refuses to submit to his ministrations. Another quandary surrounding white identity is that of formulating a false identity in relation to a misunderstood or misinterpreted other, the false sense of superior self that sooner or later, has to be deflated. The medical officer's "surrender" (149) to K is a telling example of a deflated ego, which initially was constructed on the premises of rank and racial superiority. The hierarchical violence of making K fit into a system of racial division by defining his identity negatively, as a non-white, just so that he may serve the ends of the state, shows the interrelatedness of race and labour relations, but also re-emphasizes the exploitative nature of the political order and discriminatory discourses, where the primary sign is one of self-elevation through the degradation and exploitation of the other.

However, the positions of power created through the subordination of the other and the entrenchment of power in dialectical discourses are neither secure nor irreversible. In Life & Times of Michael K the reversal, equivocation even, of power relations is illustrated through the use of parasite imagery, where the line between host and parasite is blurred and positions of dependence repeatedly reversed. The shifting roles of parent and child,

accompanied by shifts in responsibility and dependence are shown in the relationship between K and his mother and the relationship between the MO and Michael K shows similar reversals of power. In the same way that, in Hegelian terms, the identity of the master cannot be realized without confirmation from the slave, the MO is faced with the limitations of his position of power over K, his dependence, for recognition at least, on his inferior other. Where the state/subject dichotomy is concerned, it is also not clear whether the host drains the parasite, or the parasite is draining the host and this blurring of the distinction between the two serves to illustrate the reversed dependence of the state on its so-called parasitic labour force.

Furthermore, the blurring of borderlines, the shifting positions of power and dependence, points to the instability inherent in signs and discourse, the mutability of terms, definitions and positions of power that are often regarded as stable, secure and definitive. Where identity is concerned it may point to the necessity to incorporate the other in the definition of the self. In fact, both Michael K and the medical officer come up against the limitations of dialectical structures of self-definition, the all too frequent impossibility of making either/or choices. Michael K is content to define himself simply as a gardener, someone who plants and tends seeds in the middle of nowhere. He is neither black nor white, and so does not fit either side of the racial dichotomy. However, the state classifies him as non-white, assigns him to a category and so he is deprived of the freedom to define his own identity and choose his own vocation. He is appropriated by the system as an exploited labourer of the state instead, he has to be either master or slave, and the latter position serves the ends of the system. K is expected to be someone of substance, by

fleshing himself out physically and by supplying information about himself, but because he finds himself at odds with these expectations, he does exactly the opposite. He fades away physically and avoids telling his story, so that he will leave no trace for others to follow and so capture him again. These attempts to elude classification and incarceration, however, will most likely cost him his life.

The MO finds himself at the other end of the spectrum. He represents the state, but also finds himself at odds with the system he serves, questioning the cause he is supposed to advance. His rank places him in a position of power over K, but also polarizes him to such an extent that he cannot engage K on his own terms. His view is tainted by his own frame of reference and so he ends up isolated, unable to establish the rapport required for developing a true understanding of K. He tries to capture K in the discourse of his diary, in his history, but ends up being captive to the camp, the cause, the war itself and so he is ambiguously positioned as both master and slave, captor and captive, perhaps wanting to be neither.

Hence, the crisis of identity is said to be partly a crisis of the unravelling sign, but also a crisis arising from the apartheid context in which the characters find themselves. The polarized sign - in the given examples: white or black, parent or child, master or slave - is unable to contain and give full expression to the individual. Michael K' s dislocation, his prolonged flight from the institutional identities of non-white and slave which the state tries to force on him, the MO's grappling with the system that made him white master, his sense of isolation from K and alienation from himself, put the politics of segregation into

question. It also problematizes the self as an enclosed circle, and the so-called pure, essentialist identities that rise from segregationist ideology. In Derridean terms, it brings into question "the old encircling exclusion" (Points...Interviews, 1995:67), and "the form of circular closure it wants to give itself" (Points...Interviews, 1995:72). The prevalence of state intervention, the impact of military and administrative procedures on state subjects and the resultant dislocation and alienation experienced by both K and the medical officer suggest that the formulation of an identity is impacted upon greatly by the political context and that the definition of the self is inevitably "contaminated" by the other.

Chapter 3: My Son's Story

In 1991 My Son's Story (1990) became Nadine Gordimer's fourth novel, following The Conservationist (1974), Burger's Daughter (1979) and July's People (1981) to receive the CNA Literary Award. During the same year in which she received the CNA prize for My Son's Story, she also became the first South African author to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. A staunch and fierce opponent of the Nationalist Government and apartheid, "that final and most inhuman entrenchment of colonialism" (Gordimer, cited in Driver, 1983:1), she gained first-hand experience of its restrictive policies of information control through censorship regulations. In 1966 her book The Late Bourgeois World was banned, in 1974 The Conservationist was embargoed and in 1979 Burger's Daughter was also deemed undesirable by the Publications Control Board (Leeman, 1991:11). During her acceptance speech at the CNA awards ceremony for 1979, she launched a scathing attack on the censorship system and was quoted in The Citizen (1980-04-22) as having made the following statement on this occasion:

Censorship is the weapon of information control, thought control, idea control and, above all, the control of healthy doubt and questioning, and as much part of the armoury of apartheid as the hippo cars that went through the streets of Soweto in '76.

Censorship is necessary for the daily maintenance of racism – and the laws of our country are still racist whatever fancy names we give them.

In the previous chapter it was argued that it is Michael K's silence that enables him to avoid entrapment in interrogation and it is his refusal to tell his story that makes him elusive and difficult to capture as a slave in the dialectical discourse of the master state. However, it was also mentioned that many commentators (Ashcroft, 1989; Hutcheon, 1988; Slemon 1989; as cited in Marais, 1991) view silence as a mode of repression and consequently a large portion of post-colonial writing has as its aim the lending of a voice to the silenced other. Gordimer's outspoken opposition to censorship laws, but also her fiction, speak of her attempts to give a voice to the silenced other. My Son's Story is no exception and through the novel we see Sonny, Aila and Will all becoming more verbally responsive to their repressive environment. Sonny moves from the classroom to the public platform; Aila evolves from silent housewife to a character of strength and decisiveness, capable of making and defending her own decisions, "The whole business is my affair. It's not for the lawyers to defend me in any way they like. It's my right to instruct them" (253); and Will finds a voice in writing, "I've begun a project – call it that – that needs solitude. I've found a use for the state, compromised and deserted, he dumped me in when he walked off so calmly with his blonde after an afternoon at the cinema" (196).

Gordimer's preoccupation with the connection between the political environment and the individual's private life is widely recognized as one of the central features of her writing (Driver, 1983; Van Wyk Smith, 1991; Wagner, 1991; Pearsall, 2000). Part of the individual's private life would be the formulation of an identity and in My Son's Story the formulation of an identity has to take place in the context of a political environment that continually seeks to relegate Sonny and his family to a position of silenced other. It has

been mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation that the issue of identity will be discussed as a crisis of the unravelling sign, where various characters are unable to reconcile themselves with the polarized positions they are relegated to through dialectical discourse; while at the same time recognizing the extent to which the apartheid context perpetuates and aggravates this crisis of identity through the imposition of hierarchies and imbalance of power.

As was the case with Michael K, the state attempts to impose the hierarchies of race segregation on Sonny and his family, and they are faced with the precarious position of defining a racial identity in terms of the white/black dialectic, when they do not properly fit either position. In addition to their grappling with racial identity, the characters of Gordimer's novel also find themselves grappling with the gender dichotomy. This comes to the fore in Sonny and Aila's relationship, where Sonny is relegated from a position of political prominence, being served by a silent Aila (34), to a position where he finds himself serving her tea (239) and admitting to his having difficulties with "accepting Aila as a comrade" (257) towards the end of the novel.

In order to investigate the crisis of race and gender identity in My Son's Story, the researcher will in this chapter focus on the white/black, male/female dichotomies, by - as was the case with Life & Times of Michael K - examining the relationships constructed around these dichotomies. This entails looking at the problem of the coloured identity by examining the relationship between Sonny's family and both the black and white communities; it also entails examining the male/female dichotomy through the relationship

between Sonny and Aila as husband and wife. Also relevant in this regard is the role of the children born from the union between Sonny and Aila. Hence, the parent/child dialectic will also be discussed. The theme of loyalty versus betrayal emerges through, and becomes a prominent part of, the parent-child relationship and this theme will be visited again in Chapter 4, where loyalty/betrayal will be discussed with reference to Patrick's various and shifting allegiances which occur in the process of formulating his identity. As has been shown in Life & Times of Michael K, the primary sign of a dichotomy is normally regarded as superior to, and invested with more power than its dialectical opposite and so, once more, an investigation of the dichotomies would also have to involve an examining of the power relations contained within them.

The impact of the political on the personal comes to the fore quite prominently when one looks back at the struggles of Sonny's coloured family to formulate a racial identity in terms of the white/black dialectic and finds that they are "Halfway between" (21), not properly fitting in on either side of the spectrum. The said impact of the political environment on the personal is emphasized even further when looking at the consequences that increased political involvement holds not only for the members of Sonny's family as individuals, but also for the family as a whole.

By Will's account, his early childhood was relatively secure and happy. Although they were aware of certain limitations imposed on them due to their skin colour, his parents compensated for these limitations by providing a range of alternative experiences that created a stable environment for the children to grow up in:

We didn't have any particular sense of what we were - my sister and I. I mean, my father made of the circumscription of our life within the areas open to us a charmed circle. Of a kind.

We couldn't afford hotels, anyway...and we picnicked in the no-man's-land of veld between the minedumps, where in the summer a spruit ran between the reeds and my father showed us how the weaver birds make their hanging nests. There, on our rug, overseen by nobody, safe from everybody, the drunks next door and the municipality in the town, my father would lay his head in my mother's lap and we children would lie against their sides, under the warmth of their arms. A happy childhood (20, 21).

Even though Sonny and Aila did their utmost to provide for their children "a youth less stunted by the limits of an empty pocket than they had" (3), the reality of their situation was that they were doing so from a position of limited means that they were relegated to. In the South African context where being white meant access to a life of privilege, and being black meant being denied this life of privilege, they found themselves somewhere in-between, leading a life of very limited means. As a coloured teacher Sonny earned substantially less than his white counterparts, forcing them to buy furniture on hire purchase and shopping at the O.K. Bazaars, "wage-earners who had to buy in the cheapest store" (10). We are told that Sonny had a desire to improve himself, but also that the "lover of Shakespeare never had the right to enter the municipal library" (12); that he "could not afford to buy many books"; "could not belong to whatever political debate there was in the town"; "could not belong to whatever cultural circles the town had"; "could not belong to the Sunday bird-watchers' group"; "could not belong to the chess club" (16).

Where the issue of racial identity is concerned, Jacobs (1993) argues that Gordimer's choice of focusing on a coloured family in My Son's Story brings to the fore the problematics surrounding a life that "has been inserted into the interstices between the respective texts of white and black South Africa, in both of which 'people of their kind' find themselves reflected in a problematic relationship of affiliation and alienation" (41). Indeed, their life in the township outside Benoni was a life lived "Halfway between...with the municipal council seated under its coat-of-arms on the one side of the veld, and the real blacks – more, many more of them than the whites, 'coloureds' and Indians counted together – on the other" (21). On Saturdays Sonny and his family took outings to the "white town" (11) to do their weekly shopping, but then returned "to the areas set aside for them outside the town" (11), much the same way the "real blacks" (21) visited Sonny's community, selling their merchandise, doing manual labour and then returning to their own areas, "removed from the community as the community was from the white town" (22). The relationship between Sonny's community and both the black and white communities, is thus characterized by physical as well as social isolation. Even in terms of political affiliation Sonny initially felt that political action was more a black affair (23) and had he "been really black...he might have joined, waved a fist. Admiring the real blacks from this sort of distancing, he left it to them." We are told that he was not alone in his "spectator status", but that the members of his community also had mixed feelings about the struggle, some had hope, others were sceptical. Even their discussions about political matters took place in an intermediate space, in the form of "fervent stoep and yard talk" (23).

However, there came a time when the "distinction between black and real black" (25) started to fade for Sonny. During the early years of their marriage, both Sonny and Aila, having rejected religious beliefs, realized that the meaning of life for them had to be found elsewhere. Although they were not yet sure exactly what it was, they knew "it had to do with responsibility to a community" (9). This early notion initially finds expression in Sonny's involvement with his students and own community, but is later translated into political involvement in the movement towards liberation. Jacobs (1993:41) points out that Sonny's "in-between" position is not limited to their earlier life in the Benoni township. In his political career he functions in the space between the leadership and its following: "He took part in policy decisions somewhere below the highest level and thereafter, in a group where he himself participated in allocation of the activities of others, was in turn given his orders" (97). As part of the subversive strategies of Sonny's political involvement he moves his family into a "grey area" of Johannesburg and in addition to Will's earlier realization that Baby and he did not have a particular sense of what they were (20), "Will is again to register his own life as an inserted text when he buys mealies from a black vendor" (Jacobs, 1993:41). He is filled with a sense of alienation from her:

...her black face has no recognition for me, my half-blackness and this half-white man's street we live in as one of my father's political acts. She doesn't know I have anything to do with her. So much for his solidarity with the people (145).

The move to the so-called white suburb also earns them the wrath of the white residents, which seems to grow in intensity to a point later on in the novel where Will and Aila return from a walk to find a strangled cat hanging on their gate, with a notice around its neck:

"BLACK COMMUNIST BITCH GET OUT OF HERE" (255). When this warning is not heeded the house is petrol-bombed and burns to the ground (273). Will says, however, that he "was glad to see it go" (273).

Sonny and his family thus suffer a sense of displacement: at first they are relegated to a so-called coloured township, isolated from the privileges of the white area, but also segregated from the black community where they may find the strength of allegiance and the power of co-operative political action. Even when Sonny's growing political awareness is finally translated into involvement in the struggle, his political actions – such as the move to a "grey area" – do little to alleviate the sense of alienation and displacement, particularly for his son, Will.

Despite the sense of displacement and alienation, perhaps because of it, the movement through the novel is characterized by increased political involvement by all the members of Sonny's family. Indeed it would seem as if Gordimer's own political convictions – expressed through her fiction, suppressed by censorship regulations, and then reinforced by increased outspokenness – her refusal to be silenced, are mirrored by the characters in My Son's Story.

Although Sonny is initially presented as a studious schoolteacher, who thought "political action was more a black affair" (23), the lines "between black and real black" (25) gradually start to fade for him and, through his involvement with his students, he is prompted into political action. He becomes an accomplished public speaker, uproots his

family and moves into a "grey area" as a form of resistance to segregation (41), and suffers trial and imprisonment. Will summarizes this as his father's "transformation from contemplative privacy to public activity" (13). Aila realizes the extent of her husband's political involvement when they are discussing the move from the Reef town and for the first time he refers to their home as a "ghetto...A changing vocabulary was accompanying the transformation of Sonny to 'Sonny' the political personality defined by a middle, nickname" (39).

Like Sonny, Aila's development as a character is also accompanied by increased political involvement. Initially she is presented as a silent woman, who is supportive of her husband without expecting explanations from him, despite his frequent absences from home: "my mother respected the fact that a man doing underground political work cannot reveal his movements without involving and endangering his family" (57). Despite Sonny's assumptions about her inability to comprehend political matters – "Aila didn't seem to catch on" (48), his telling her that "Those kinds of games are not for you" (148) – she evolves into "Aila the comrade" (243), whose political actions not only lead to arrest, but also earn her recognition and esteem in the association, "My father's comrades were frequent visitors again – to see her, to give her reassurance of their support" (236). Through the course of the novel we also see Sonny and Aila's children grow from childhood involvement in Junior Red Cross and Scout Cubs (25) to Baby's eventual exile and Will's finding his vocation as a writer. When the young girl visits Will and his father to deliver news about Aila's departure from the country, a proud Will expresses his need to break the silence, tell the story of his people and their commitment to the struggle:

In the midst of the strain and tension of those moments there was an incongruous aside, in my feelings; pride in the fact of the unguessed-at commitment of our people to the struggle, hidden under this cheap appearance. Whites don't know what they're seeing when they look at us...I want to tell them (261).

The increased political involvement, however, holds inevitable consequences for the members of Sonny's family. The move to one of Johannesburg's southern suburbs (41), however justified as a subversive strategy, places distance between them and their family, and contact is limited to "occasional big teas for the aunties and cousins and the two grannies from our old place outside Benoni" (132). On these occasions, despite the shared family bonds and "coarse harmless laughter" (133), Will is aware of a sense of distance, of isolation from them:

He's a teacher – although they know he's been to prison for his political activities most no doubt believe he still practices the profession they respect as the height of intellectual achievement – and his remark opens up before them, sightseers at the gates, the broad receding avenues of the grand vista they will never enter...They don't speak the way we do...They are our people, they are what we might have been: our parents who bettered themselves; Baby and I...it's the hazard of an entirely different attitude to the meaning of living. I see that, when the relatives are among us – or rather when we're among them (133-134).

This idea of familial disintegration perpetuated by the political environment is revisited when Aila returns from Lusaka with the news that Baby has been married while in exile.

"There should have been kisses, handclasps, a Saturday tea-party with beer for the uncles, Aila with her shining coil of hair" (168), but due to security concerns the family could not be informed.

Not only is the wider familial network affected by the politics of the time, but the consequences of political involvement also impact greatly on the members of Sonny and Aila's household. We see increased periods of separation, accompanied by isolation, even alienation from one another. Sonny's political work requires him to spend more and more time away from home and his inability to share details of his activities with his family for the sake of their own safety contributes to the growing distance between them. It is also through his political involvement that Sonny's path crosses with that of Hannah Plowman, the woman with whom he has an extramarital affair. Political activity then becomes a convenient excuse for spending time with Hannah, "He had such good alibis" (74), and this alienates Sonny from his family even more. Towards the end of the novel the family is fragmented, Sonny is in jail, Aila finds herself in Sweden, Baby is still in Lusaka and it is said of Sonny:

He lived like so many others of his kind whose families are fragmented in the diaspora of exile, code names, underground activity, people for whom a real home and attachments are something for others who will come after (265).

Thus, when examining the issue of racial identity in My Son's Story, one is once more confronted with a crisis of the sign, where neither side of the white/black dualism is able to give full and final definition to the coloured individual. Once more, however, as was the

case with Life & Times of Michael K, Sonny and his family find themselves categorized, forcefully inscribed into a position where their identity is defined negatively, by what they are not – non-whites – in a system of segregation that protects the privileges of the white minority through exclusion. Van Wyk Smith (1991) says, “it may be helpful to think of apartheid as a kind of bizarre structuralism, a malignant outgrowth of the categorising thrust of that social theory. It was a social text that tried to write us all into a particular scenario” (93). This compartmentalization, together with Sonny’s growing sense of identification with the so-called black cause, “Although no family was losing its home as yet in his community it was obvious he was the kind of man who would realize that all communities of his kind were in fact one” (32), contributes to Sonny’s decision to commit himself to the struggle for liberation. Van Wyk Smith (1991:93) argues that it is in the context of such social categorizing that the disruptive and deconstructive strategies of poststructuralism and postmodernism hold procedural and thematic attractions for the oppositional writer in that these strategies constitute “a discursive mode that fundamentally resists all master myths” (93).

The idea of resistance to master myths brings into play the center/other dualism that was discussed in Chapter 1. According to Derrida, Western thought since Plato and Aristotle has been structured through binary oppositions. Conceptual material is divided into categories consisting of binary terms, such as white/black, man/woman, speech/writing, voice/silence, where the first term is privileged over the other. The privileging of these terms is called logocentrism, as “logos” is the Greek for “word”. McQuillan (2000:10) explains the functioning of logocentric structuring as follows:

These representations of women and the non-Western world are not accurate descriptions of the lived experience of those who occupy these positions. However, the function of such descriptions is not to reflect lived reality but to construct the identity of the privileged term. In order to retain his privileged position Man must represent (and so convince himself) that this relation of inequality is the true or natural condition of human beings...The history of Western thought is the history of logocentrism in which the inequality of binary oppositions depends upon the representation of such inequality within discourse. The success of logocentrism or patriarchy (phallo-logocentrism) as a system of thought and real privilege depends upon the 'unreadability' of these discourses. The moment we recognise the inequality we are bound to question this way of thinking and so endanger the privileges of those who benefit by it. Fortunately for patriarchy and the *Logos* these conceptual orders, which predicate the non-conceptual orders of lived reality, find their expression in language and users of language can be 'trained' into accepting these circumstances through its habitual use.

Binary structuring, underpinned by the logocentric thinking of the center/other dialectic, thus functions as a particularly effective organizing principle, giving rise to the discriminatory practices and violent hierarchies of racism, sexism and other master discourses. Hence:

DECONSTRUCTIVE criticism is directed towards freeing structures from the tyranny of whatever centre or centres to which they are seen to be subject...When such critics talk of decentering the SUBJECT they should be understood to be extending this argument to the human subject. The human subject is thereby denied a unity underwritten and orchestrated by a controlling centre which, like an all-powerful micro-chip in a super-computer,

brings the whole system into synchrony with and through its all-pervasive PRESENCE and discipline. In the light of such an approach the human subject becomes a SITE rather than a point of origin, and a site, moreover, on which unrelated campers come and go (and sometimes fight) rather than one united by an all-powerful scout-master (A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory, Hawthorn, 1992).

If logocentrism involves the assigning of central importance to a word, while relegating another word to the position of inferior other, deconstructive criticism may be seen as a way of decentering the center, or as McQuillan puts it: "an act of reading which allows the other to speak" (2000:6). This has echoes of the post-colonial preoccupation with giving a voice to the silenced other and in My Son's Story we see Gordimer not only giving a voice to the non-white other, which is Sonny and his family; but we also see desedimenting of the center where the male/female dialectic is concerned.

In the initial stages of My Son's Story, Sonny and Aila each occupy the roles expected of them as husband and father, wife and mother, within the family structure. Sonny is the man of the house, the leader and responsible provider, and Aila is the silent wife, the supportive partner. Sonny is painted as a figure of distinction, "Everything he was and did evidenced distinction" (6). Initially he distinguishes himself through his education, and later through his political work (5,25, 27) and Will says, "It's more that having been in prison for the cause of freedom has made him someone elect, not to be followed in his private thoughts by ordinary people. Like herself. Like us" (45). Aila, on the other hand, characterized by her silence (7,33,34,57,137), is referred to in terms of – to an extent defined by – her being the wife of Sonny, often disappearing in his shadow. "It was proper,

it was his *right* in the fitness of all he did and attracted to him, that he should marry a girl who seemed to have been set apart, for him" (7); "And my mother shows the women her kitchen; they're full of admiring envy, they can see how lucky she is, always was, so refined, a real lady, and deserving, chosen by Sonny, marked out to go far with him" (135). Also, "He did not want a bed-and-board wife and she wanted to become what he wanted" (10). Another point to note is the way in which Gordimer portrays male and female sexuality in the novel. Sonny's virility is emphasized – just about every meeting between him and his mistress is also an occasion for physical love (67, 70, 74, 95, 125). By contrast it is said about Aila that it "was not possible to have thoughts about what her small body was like under her clothes. Her lovely lips and teeth formed a smile that greeted a man exactly as it did an old woman or a child" (7).

According to Driver (1983:9), Gordimer often employs inequality in male/female relationships as a means of defining female growth. This happens through the women becoming more politically involved, accompanied by more independence and self-sufficiency within their marriages. This is also the case with My Son's Story, where Sonny, initially a man of distinction and esteem (18), the head of his household, comes to a fall "he's come down with this; to this" (14); while his wife – who is told patronizingly that, "Those kinds of games are not for you" (148) – comes to life as the one who keeps the household together while her husband is in prison, who later is jailed herself for revolutionary activity and whose "name would be honoured, from now on, in the movement inside and outside the country" (262).

Will comments as follows on the relationship between his father and his mother:

I am right in attributing the drawing of the safe circle of our lives, then, to him. It was always as if he knew what she wanted, for him and us, and that she knew he would find the way to articulate the components of daily life accordingly. For what she wanted was, in essence, always what he wanted; and that is not as simple or purely submissive as it sounds (21).

Even though Aila cannot be said to have been "purely submissive" and Sonny can hardly be described as an oppressive or abusive husband, he does occupy the inherited role of man of the house, and Aila, as his wife, fulfills the role of his supporter, his other. She is said to have been "chosen by Sonny, marked out to go far with him" (135). Sonny is the one whose distinction is admired by family members and whose social consciousness wins him the respect of his community, "It wasn't only self-respect my father had; people respected him, not even a drunk would curse him" (18); he is the one who is lifted onto the public platform, his name appearing on posters (32). Aila, by contrast, initially fulfills a far less public, a quieter role. Her occupations centre around domestic tasks, keeping the household together while Sonny is in prison, handing him his dry-cleaning during his hearing (52), packing his carryall in case he is captured again (100). Indeed, Sonny could be seen as the center of their household, "We settled into an uncanny sort of normality, an acceptance of the re-arrangement of our lives to *his* convenience" (81).

However, Sonny is brought to a fall through his involvement with Hannah Plowman, and his affair with Hannah not only alienates him from his family, but also has a detrimental effect on his political career. Although Sonny's political work initially necessitates frequent

absences from home, it later becomes a front for stolen hours with his mistress. "Sonny told the necessary lies" (209) and the man for whom self-respect is said to have "been his religion, his godhead" (13) suffers the loss of one of his greatest definitive characteristics, his self-respect, "What he wanted, from her, was what no-one could give him back; his trust in himself" (201).

Sonny's liaisons with Hannah cause him to be absent from home during times when his family need him most, first when Baby tries to commit suicide and later when Aila is arrested. After Baby's attempted suicide his isolation from Will and Aila is clear when Will says, "The three of us were in the kitchen together, and he was alone" (77). These absences cause his family to rely on him less and less. Aila is the one to be taken into Baby's confidence about her plans to go to Lusaka (122) and she is also the one to bring tidings of Baby's marriage, "Aila had met the man, Aila thought he was nice, steady, good enough for their – Sonny's – daughter, his Baby; he had not been asked. On the contrary, the fact was accomplished without him and now he was the one humbly to put questions" (168). Sonny, who is initially depicted as a man of distinction, a provider for his family, a man who gave to his community, "He did things for other people the way he did things for us – his family. That was it; to give came to him naturally, as it came to them to take" (18-19), is later depicted increasingly in terms of dependence. Sonny's "Needing Hannah" (53, 57, 68, 84, 124, 171, 183) becomes a pervasive refrain that resounds through the novel and that dominates all spheres of his life.

Indeed, it is this need of Hannah that leads to the loss of his political credibility and subsequent demotion in the organization:

He began to discern a shadow cast from Hannah. His needing Hannah. He had not told his peers – who had shown their confidence vested in him – about the man he had found sleeping on her stoep...And they knew about it; that was the explanation. He had lent himself to an action – some sort of mission that his movement had not authorized, about which it had not been informed. Some - the disaffected – knew, and that was why they thought it possible to approach him. And others knew about it, as well as that the approach of the disaffected had taken place. So why not a triple life? If a man of his old and proven integrity could withhold information from the movement to which total dedication was due, loyalty was the letter of faith, he also might be vulnerable – open, like a wound – to disaffection (189-90).

Due to the fact that his loyalty to his comrades is brought into question he is relegated from the public platform, a capable speaker, to “Sonny a backroom boy” (263), writing speeches for others. At the end of the novel we see that he continues to work for the cause, but that he does so away from the crowds “Living with his son in a house emptied of its life – two silent men, unable to sustain it” (264-5). Will comments, “‘Sonny is not the man he was’; someone has said that to me: his comrades think it’s because Aila’s gone” (276).

Where previously Sonny was the center of the household, a reversal of roles takes place and Sonny’s movement from power becomes Aila’s movement to power. Will now says, “The house, our life, was centred round Aila...Not only the life of our house centred round

Aila, the attention of the leadership focused on her now" (236). Even though it seems initially as if Aila's sole contribution to the cause is to support her husband's activities, and she is portrayed in terms of domestic tasks, we learn that her contribution is not limited to that. She uses the same fabric she used to sew curtains for her son's room to wrap the weapons she stows for the armed struggle (217) and so Aila, in her predisposition to action instead of words, becomes the one to respond to the call to action, spelled out by the "Carpe diem" (12, 199) motto repeated through the novel. While we learn about Aila becoming more than a wife and mother, we see Sonny learning more about so-called female occupations when, before Hannah's return from Lesotho, he prepares the house for her arrival, "He had never cleaned house before – in his kind of family women cooked and cleaned, only his son, wanting to differentiate himself in every way, helped out in the kitchen – but he stripped the bed, swept the room, found the product with which to wash the bath" (163-4).

We see a similar shifting of roles when Aila is preparing for her defence, and she finds herself sitting across the table from Sonny, as they did when they were newly-weds and he was correcting papers and she was doing correspondence courses, "But if she looked up to ask something of him now, it was seeking the advice of a comrade" (238). The same Aila about whom it is said patronizingly that Sonny "could visit friends with...and have her sitting there talking trivialities in the usual corner with the women while he was in a discussion at the other end of the room, a discussion Hannah would have been taking part in" (72), is the picture of composure and self-sufficiency during Hannah's visit to the house while Sonny is in prison. This leads Hannah to "feel not intrusive but unnecessary...she

politely made it perfectly clear they wanted no-one to enter the arrangements they themselves had made to manage without the father of the family" (91). Aila's getting her passport (146) and cutting her hair (165) may be seen as declarations of her growing independence and after her return from Lusaka Will says: "She never came back. Cut loose. She was gone for good: my mother" (168). Will also notices that she now wears "pants and flat shoes" (177), that she has more friends "friends of her own, not my father's with whom she was always on the fringe" (178) and that she returns from her trips without asking how they managed without her (177).

Not only does Aila show increasing independence and self-sufficiency, she seems to have been transformed into a powerful presence. When Sonny and Will go to see her before her hearing:

She was standing there smiling to greet them, husband, son, lawyer. The wardress stood back from her, the policeman at a desk was scarcely a presence in contrast to Aila's presence. She wore one of her home-tailored jackets and there were the reassuring touches of her makeup but through the familiar beauty there was a vivid strangeness. Boldly drawn. It was as if some chosen experience had seen in her, as a painter will in his subject, what she was, what was there to be discovered. In Lusaka, in secret, in prison – who knows where – she had sat for her hidden face. They had to recognize her (229-230).

The Aila of old whose smile "greeted a man exactly as it did an old woman or a child" (7), now kisses her husband passionately, "like a young woman – I've never known my mother could be that way", needing no comfort, "there were no fears for him to still or tears for him

to wipe" (232). Not only does Aila show no need for comfort from her husband, but even for her bail Dr Jasood's cheque is ready, "as the doctor's bandages had been there, in my father's absence, to bind up Baby's slashed wrists" (234). Despite his best efforts, Sonny is unable to convince Aila to let Will testify in her defence. She is adamant that Will not be involved, "I can't part with you, Will" (255) and so the "lawyers tacitly understood it was no use depending on Sonny to influence Aila" (258). Sonny is also excluded from the decision for Aila to leave the country, and he concludes, "She did not need him, even for that" (262). Sonny feels the isolation that "took him up from his hands and feet through the core of his being" (241) and realizes that the old categories are of no use to him, that he would have to redefine his relationship with Aila:

If he had been the one with the right to judge her. As her husband? As a comrade? The construction he had skillfully made of his life was uninhabitable, his categories were useless, nothing fitted his need. Needing Hannah..In this freak displacement, the biological drive of his life, which belonged with his wife and the children he's begotten, was diverted to his lover. He and Hannah begot no child; the revolutionary movement was to be their survivor. The excitement of their mating was for that. But Aila was the revolutionary, now (241-242).

Sonny and Aila's marriage becomes a site for the reversal of roles in the male/female dichotomy where Sonny, the man of the house becomes "Aila's side-kick, Aila's entourage" (237) and the silent wife starts to speak through her (political) actions. She transcends the definitive borders of being wife and mother to enter "male territory", and so becomes "Aila the hero, now" (237).

According to Driver (1983), Gordimer's concern with women in colonial, racist society is revealed not only in the way she explores female sexuality, but also in the way she utilizes sexual development in her presentation of political development. Her aim "seems to be to retain for women the right to be sexually attractive and vital beings" (Driver, 1983:12), she "puts power into sex and, by implication, sex into power" (Driver, 1983:18). This is seen in Gordimer's portrayal of Aila, who is initially portrayed in terms of a lack of sexuality (7), as not being prone to public displays of affection (52). Later on, however, when she greets Sonny before he takes up his term of sentence, "She put her arms round her husband and kissed him on the mouth, in front of the warders" (55), and so the farewell becomes an affirmation, a statement of power in the face of intimidation. As Aila's increasing strength is revealed through her unfolding sexuality, so Sonny's fall from grace is reflected through increased impotence:

And he knew – now with his greater experience of what women can feel, in love – that she faked her pleasure. She was thinking of something else...and if a man can't drive out everything but consciousness of ecstasy in a woman when he is inside her, he is no man (242).

The destabilizing of hierarchies, the decentering of the center, may be traced not only through the male/female, but also the parent/child dialectic. In the previous chapter it was shown that there is a reversal of roles between parent and child, where K becomes the caregiver and his mother becomes increasingly dependent on him. In My Son's Story we also see a reversal of roles between parent and child, accompanied by shifts in the power relations between them. In the case of Will's relationship with his father, the shift in power takes place when Will stumbles upon his father's extramarital affair and discovers that his

keeping the secret from his mother gives him leverage over Sonny. Even though Will is visiting the cinema while he is supposed to be studying, he says that the moment he saw his father "it was I who had discovered him, not he me" (3). This starts a cycle of deception for both of them, where Will is caught between his loyalty for his father and his love for his mother, "But he knows I can't speak – to my mother; I can't refuse to be in the know, with him" (46). Will attempts to protect his mother from the truth, but at the same time is guilty of deceiving her himself. Although he defers to his father's authority in this regard, "because he was my father how could I resist, how could I dare refuse him?" (31); he simultaneously acquires the power to expose him at any time and so feels he has acquired a hold over him. Will says, "But it works both ways. I can play hooky whenever I like; he can't ask where I'm going, where I've been. Because I know where he's going, where he's been" (46). The position that Will is placed in by his father's infidelity alienates them even more, and slowly but surely his respect for his father is eroded: "one doesn't betray. The only thing he left me to find out for myself was his own contradictions" (121). Sonny thus not only loses "his trust in himself" (201), but also loses the respect of his son. Where Will previously looked up to him as the man who taught him to read (36), the father who found treasures for him in the veld (38), he now feels that his father's teaching him to deceive, "What face did he make me wear" (37), is his sole contribution to his later education:

There are reports in the newspapers speculating about changes and realignments in the organizations, including his, that make up the movement. That's his business; he doesn't need any complicity with me, beyond warning me to keep my eyes closed and my mouth shut. Which is already

what he has taught me to do for other reasons. That's ended up being his only contribution to my further education (152).

Will's alienation from his father has several dimensions. There is the fact that Sonny can no longer be relied upon by the family because of his absence during times of crisis; there is Sonny's betrayal of Will's mother, his betrayal of the values he taught his children: "one doesn't betray" (121); but there is also the fact of Sonny's engaging with the other, the white enemy in the form of Hannah. This affects Will's sense of himself, as he discovers that his father and role-model, the hero, has feet of clay. Where previously Will's relation to his father was something to be proud of and provided him with status, "The little girl is proud of being the girl-friend of someone in our family. I know she tells everybody I'm the famous Sonny's son" (185); he now increasingly disassociates himself from his father's actions.

Where the relationship between Aila and Will is concerned, Aila, in Sonny's absence, relies increasingly on her son. At times there is the sense that Will has supplanted his father. During Sonny's detention Will says, "I always went to the door, then, the schoolboy was the man of the house for my mother and sister, now that he was not there" (14). After learning about Baby's attempted suicide, Aila turns to her son as an equal, the way she would turn to another adult in a time of crisis:

She sat on the edge of her chair and looked at me as if she had known me her whole life, not just the span of mine which had begun in her body. As if I were her son and not her son...She said to me: - What can we do for her? - The slight emphasis on 'we' gave away, all at once, that my mother knew

about my father. That she knew - without knowing how – I knew. She discounted him - couldn't count on him, couldn't call on Sonny, now, wherever he was, even if he were to be hidden from her only round the corner, he was too far away. I understood (61).

When Will's girlfriend suggests that they move in together, he declines, citing his sense of obligation to both parents as a reason, "But I can't leave my mother alone, and because my mother counts on me to be there with him when she's away, I can't leave him" (185).

Once more, as was the case with Michael K, we see the child parenting the parent. The son's role as his mother's protector is driven to a climax when the police arrive to arrest Aila and Will, unaware of her political involvement, immediately assumes that the arrest is on account of his father:

I shouted, at last, at last: *The bastard! That bastard, what has he done now!...* I flung back the broken screen door and beat upon the wooden one with both fists. I didn't call on my father; Sonny, I bellowed, Sonny. Sonny. Sonny. Sonny. There was no-one there... For the second time, first as a youth with a breaking voice, now as a man, I wept (206).

Will thus finds himself in crisis, having to reconcile his anger towards his father, with his love for him, "I love him – again; forget everything" (134); also having to deal with the impossible either/or choice of loyalty to his father and betrayal of his mother. He is a child faced with adult issues, the contradictions of living a life in "a country where conflict breaks up all consistency of character" (193). Greet (1991:69) says that the title of My Son's Story bears a double-barrelled irony:

Will narrates many of the proceedings as he has come across them, and this is another champion portrayal – an adolescent's disillusionment on discovering adult truths; the bitter iconoclastic experience of finding out about his hero-father. So the title points not only to the son's narrating of specific events of significance to him, the story about his father and his father's lover; it also suggests that these events shaped his own life, and that what he innocently reveals in his narration is his *own* story, the story of his loss of innocence. The father's story, which takes up most of the pages, *is* the son's story.

The title thus bears the implication of a heritage passed on from father to son. In a patriarchal society sons are taught to respect their fathers, fostering pride in their line of ancestry, adding to their status and increasing their self-worth. It follows that disillusionment with the father, also affects the perception of the self and so Will is faced with having to define who he is on his own terms, apart from his being "Sonny's boy" (135), and "the famous Sonny's son" (185). Due to his mother's political involvement, Will also becomes aware of a heritage from her, an increase in stature attributable to his relation to her, "Aila's mark was awesome on me: the little girl I sleep with treated me like an invalid, when fellow-students saw me, they saw the headlines in the papers: HAND-GRENADES IN GARAGE HOUSEWIFE LIVING ILLEGALLY IN WHITE SUBURB ALLEGED HARBOURED TERROR CACHE" (237). Will says about his family:

My father the famous Sonny, Baby the revolutionary exile, Aila the accomplice of Umkhonto weSizwe: they are our family's sacrifice for the people, there's no need of me, who needs someone like me? They are the heroes (251).

So despite the status derived from his relation to each of his family members, there is the sense that Will needs to carve a niche for himself, that he needs to define an identity of his own, so that he will not disappear in the shadow of his family members. He says at the conclusion of the novel that "What he did – my father – made me a writer" (277) and so the father's contribution to his finding his vocation is undeniable. Indeed, in grappling with the contradictions of his life, Will finds his vocation, a sense of purpose:

"But I'm young and it's my time that's come, with women. My time that's coming with politics. I was excluded from that...but I'm going to be the one to record, someday, what he and my mother/Aila and Baby and the others did, what it really was like to live a life determined by the struggle to be free" (276).

He adds, however, "I am a writer and this is my first book – that I can never publish" (277), perhaps suggesting that the time for freedom of expression is yet to arrive. Will's discovery of his vocation, his finding his voice as a writer, but then being silenced by state power because it is not in their interest for him to practice this vocation, is reminiscent of Michael K's finding his vocation as a gardener, but being denied the freedom to practice his discovery because it suits state interest better to inscribe him as a labourer. Van Wyk Smith (1991:98) states that My Son's Story is "an allegory of the writer's enforced silence in late – 1980s South Africa", suggesting that the story of Will's genesis as a writer, but also his being silenced by state control, may contain an autobiographical element of Gordimer's own struggle with the freedom of printed matter, or lack of it, in apartheid South Africa.

In Chapter 2 it was stated that Coetzee's naming of his central protagonist is significant in that the minimalist "K" serves as a symbol of K's elusiveness, his gradual stripping himself - even of that basic unit of identity - in order to be free. In My Son's Story we see that the naming of both father and son bear some significance as well. Sonny is an ardent reader of Shakespeare and so names his son after his favourite writer. The name later turns out to have prophetic significance, in that Will does indeed turn out to be a writer. In the case of Sonny we are told that he "was the pride of the old people and the generic diminutive by which they had celebrated him as *the* son, the first-born male, was to stay with him in the changing identities a man passes through, for the rest of his life" (5-6). Even though Sonny retains his name as part of the heritage passed on to him, we see that it comes to take on different meanings during the various stages of his life:

Sonny had to change his mind about so many things, as his life changed, as the very meaning of his ridiculous name changed – first a hangover from sentimental parents, then a nickname to reassure the crowds at rallies that he was one of them, then an addendum to his full names in a prison dossier: 'also known as "Sonny"'. A common criminal with aliases (50).

The name given as an expression of pride and love for the firstborn, is changed to bear an almost sinister overtone, imbued with suggestions of criminality, in the hands of a police force desperately trying to maintain state control at all cost. After Sonny's term in prison, the posters advertising that he would be the speaker at an event, can significantly no longer carry his name, "he was billed anonymously as a 'prominent educationist'" (97), so that the police would not be alerted to this presence. In order to retain his freedom and continue his work for the cause, Sonny's name has to be sacrificed, it can no longer be

the sign of his distinction, but has become a tainted mark instead and so has to be discarded.

In My Son's Story, as was the case with Life & Times of Michael K, the crisis of identity reveals itself to be relateable to dialectical thinking and its entrenchment in discourse. We encounter the isolation of a coloured family that does not really fit in on either side of the race dialectic. Where the father of the family is concerned, Sonza (1994:108) points out that without his knowing it Sonny's identity "has been constructed by a system operating within white identity categories." As a result he displays a predisposition to the dominant (white) culture. He is an ardent reader of Shakespeare, even names his son after him and buys his children publications from England, stories about King Arthur and romantic fables (20). Sonza (1994:108) contends that Sonny replaces his indigenous culture with a different worldview and so "he undergoes a crisis as the paradigms of his identity are destabilized". Not only is the father deprived of his own cultural heritage, but this lack is passed on to his children, leading Will to state: "We didn't have any particular sense of what we were" (20). Not only do they not know who they are, they also do not know where they belong, they are "Halfway between" (21). Kirkwood (1976) refers to this "halfway between" position as the South African no-man's land with its Manichaeian structure where "There is no way of being in it but to be White or Black in the world" (107-8).

Where the issue of gender identity is concerned, both Sonny and Aila show themselves to be more than the restrictive either/or choice of the male/female dualism would allow. Each has to go into the territory of the other in order to define the self. Sonny learns that his wife

is now also his comrade and that the categories he previously relied on to organize his life no longer apply, he has "to rid himself of an outworn perception of Aila" (257). He learns to perform those domestic tasks, such as making tea and cleaning house, that were previously performed to serve him. Aila evolves into more than Sonny's wife and Will and Baby's mother. She finds a political path of her own, which is independent of Sonny's, and when he visits her while she is in custody, she tells him "My turn, now" (233). As the borders of the male/female dichotomy are transgressed, so the power relations are destabilized. Sonny finds his position of protector and provider being eroded as the members of his family no longer rely on him to be there, particularly during times of crisis. Even Baby, "his Baby" (168), no longer takes him into her confidence. When important decisions have to be taken, she turns to her mother instead. Aila, often referred to as "poor Aila" (136, 168, 224, 250), turns into powerful Aila, "Aila the comrade" (243). The mother and nurturer of life turns to the military wing of the struggle (233) and would thus become instrumental in the destruction of life in order to ensure that the heritage she passes on, is that of freedom.

Even the poles of parent/child seem insufficient to contain and define the individual in a satisfactory way. The authority of the father is undermined when he has to rely on his son for discretion about his affair, resulting in a shift of power between the two. In the father's frequent absence Will even takes over the role of his father, supporting his mother during Baby's attempted suicide and on the occasion of Aila's arrest, and so the son becomes the father. In Aila's depending on her son, we see another reversal of roles, similar to that of Anna and Michael K in Life & Times of Michael K. The said reversal of roles between

parent and child, master and slave (as illustrated through the medical officer and Michael K), accompanied by the shifting of power brought on by the reversal, suggest that the dialectical positions occupied by these characters are by no means inviolable or fixed. Aila's breaking out of the narrow definition of her female role as wife and mother to assume male roles and perform politically subversive tasks, normally regarded as being male territory, illustrate the need to go into oppositional territory for self-definition. The instability of dialectical terms and the need to break into oppositional territory for self-definition reinforce Hawthorn's (1992) statement about the human subject as a site, rather than a point of origin, cited earlier in the chapter. A site "on which unrelated campers come and go (and sometimes fight) rather than one united by an all-powerful scout-master" (A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory, 1992). The idea of the subject as a site would also imply that identity can no longer be thought of as self-delineating, that the self can no longer be seen as a self-enclosed circle and suggests the need for an openness to the other, for allowing the other to speak. This problematizes the purity of identity implied by totalitarian, separationist ideology, like that of apartheid, and McQuillan (2000:22) explains this essential "contamination" of the self by an other as follows:

Even the most 'rigorously pure' identity cannot help but be hybrid because all identity depends upon the construction of limits which must, by their nature, be permeable. Thus, any identity is always already haunted by the other it seeks to exclude.

The suggested permeability of identity categories brings into play the idea of transgression, or the venturing into the territory of the other through the adopting of roles

normally associated with the other, already alluded to through the character of Aila. In Chapters 4 and 5 the notion of transgression will be explored further by its examination from two vastly different perspectives. In Chapter 4, which deals with The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs, transgression will be explored from the perspective of a white South African male, often regarded as the most privileged by apartheid ideology, and in Chapter 5, which focuses on Call Me Woman, transgression will be examined from the perspective of a black South African female, widely regarded as, arguably, the most discriminated against in the South African apartheid context. This will be done with the aim of reaffirming the conclusion that dialectical poles are insufficient in the explicating of identity for the various characters, and to illustrate transgression as a necessary step in the formulation of identity for these characters.

Chapter 4: The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs

Hegel's discussion on the equivocation of power in the master-slave relationship in his essay "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" (Phenomenology of Spirit, 1977:111-119) has been referred to in the Introduction. The said neutralization of power relations takes place when the master is confronted with his dependence on the slave for recognition and confirmation of his position as master. Zamora (1986:10) says that the master's authority is undermined and will collapse because it is dependent on the servant and so "servants become the masters of their masters" (1986:3). This reversal of the position of master and slave was illustrated in Chapter 2 through the relationship between the medical officer and Michael K, where K refuses to submit to the MO's attempts to rehabilitate him so that he can be re-inscribed into the system of forced labour. The master is undermined through a slave who refuses to submit and to recognize him as such. In Chapter 1 reference has also been made to Kirkwood's views (1976) and what he terms the worst features of the colonizer self. One of these is the creation of a social divide between colonizer and colonized, which takes place partly through physical distancing, but this divide is also structured and maintained through dialectical discourse. Kirkwood (1976:130) contends, however, that the colonizer thrives on an inflated sense of self and that sooner or later, this bubble of self-importance has to be pricked. Similar reversals of dialectical relations, accompanied by the destabilizing of power relations were illustrated through the parent/child dialectic (Anna and Michael K in Chapter 2, Sonny and Will in Chapter 3), and also the male/female dialectic (Sonny and Aila in Chapter 3). In The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs (1991) we are

presented with subversion of the white male master myth, but this time the subversion takes place from within – in the form of the psychological and moral conflict of a young white man who finds himself at odds with the tradition of white male dominance. Patrick Winter, a young soldier discharged from his military duties, is unable to reconcile himself with the value system implied by his position on the dialectical scale and so finds himself constantly pushing up against borders, eventually transgressing into the territory of the other in order to achieve an authentic definition of the self. Hence, the theme of loyalty versus betrayal, previously discussed in Chapter 3 in the context of the parent/child dialectic, emerges once more and will in this chapter be discussed in relation to both the white/black and male/female dialectic.

Damon Galgut's third book The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs was the 1992 recipient of the CNA prize for literature. At age twenty nine, Galgut became – as far as could be established (Diamond Fields Advertiser, 1992-08-18) – the youngest ever recipient of the award. In an interview pursuant to his winning the award (Weekly Mail, Rosenthal, 1992-08-20), Galgut stated that he writes to exorcise himself and this involves coming to terms with mortality, but also with the institutions one moves through as part of life, i.e. the family, the school situation and the South African Defence Force. His first three novels thus all portray the concerns relevant to a particular age or phase of life, against the background of the institution he would find himself in at the time. His first novel, A Sinless Season, published at the age of 19, "is a book about adolescence by an adolescent" (Rosenthal, 1992:34); his second book, Small Circle of Beings, deals with what he calls the "very imploded, incredibly claustrophobic relationships that can exist just between

people in an intimate family circle" (Rosenthal, 1992:34). For Galgut, the family is "the microcosm of everything that happens in the country...What's happening in the state has got *everything* to do with what happens in the family" (Rosenthal, 1992:34). Hence, in The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs he again focuses on the family, but does so by placing it "in its social context of South African violence" (Rosenthal, 1992:34). In this concern with the interplay between the personal, the familial and the public, Galgut echoes Nadine Gordimer's preoccupation with the relation between private and political contexts, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Galgut contends that "the values that made apartheid possible are extremely male values" and that, in his view, apartheid can be described as an essentially male mythology which gives rise to institutions that embody these male values (Rosenthal, 1992:34). This statement suggests an interrelatedness between the assumptions of racial superiority (racism) and assumptions of gender superiority (sexism) in the apartheid context. Indeed, in the context of the novel Galgut takes pains to reveal and explode male mythology as another translation of the center/other dialectic, where the quality of (white) maleness is centralized and presumed to be superior to the inferior (black) female other. In terms of this ideology of male superiority, maleness would imply certain ideals, certain characteristics, one of them being the ideal of strength. This ideal of male strength is manifested and displayed in the novel mainly through physical activity and outward-directed energy; the prohibition of display of emotional vulnerability and dominance over the inferior other – whether it be the black other, exemplified by the border war against SWAPO; the female other, exemplified by Howard's dominance over his wife; or the

animal other, exemplified by the hunting expeditions. Activities like hunting and playing rugby – which generally revolve around externally-directed, physical expenditure of energy, and are therefore more driven to action and less prone to introspection and reflection – are presented in the novel as typifying these values of male strength and dominance. These activities become a metonym for maleness and qualities like compassion and sensitivity are relegated to the realm of the feminine and equated with weakness.

In The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs the main protagonist, Patrick Winter, is faced with the problem of formulating an identity for himself, within the context of a heritage of white male dominance while being unable to align himself with the precepts of this heritage. He is faced with the question of what it means to be a man in his South African context and so is faced with a number of male characters against whom he can measure himself. Amongst these are his father, his brother, Commandant Schutte, Godfrey, a SWAPO supporter and Andrew Lovell, a political activist. Although it does not occupy a central role in the novel, the sexual encounter with a fellow soldier, Lappies, also brings into play the question of sexual orientation and so, by extension, the novel also encapsulates the question of what it means to be a homosexual man in South Africa. What has to be borne in mind in this regard, is the novel's publication prior to the 1994 elections, thus prior to the adoption of the Bill of Rights and Constitution that outlawed discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (Gevisser, 1994:4). In the light of these considerations, The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs is also a novel about transgression. However, transgression would normally imply a going "beyond the bounds or limits set by (a commandment, law, etc.)", a

violation or infringement into new territory (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, eighth edition), where the violation or infringement would be punishable by law. Galgut, however, explores transgression in this novel as a positive and necessary step in the evolution of the self. Instead of heeding the negative connotation of the word, he explores transgression as an action that could yield positive results or effects, in this case the effect of constructing an authentic identity, as opposed to accepting the identity that is imposed by the structures and institutions of society. Gevisser (1994:5) contends that:

Apartheid legislated who we were, what work we could do, where we could live, who we could associate with, what we could read and see and what kind of sex we could have. Apartheid even tried to dictate to us our self-conception and our self-regard. Asserting a lesbian or gay identity in South Africa is thus more than a necessary act of self-expression. It is a defiance of the fixed identities – of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality – that the apartheid system attempted to impose upon all of us.

The importance of transgression as a reconstructive and regenerative gesture can be seen in the frequent references to borders and boundaries and the crossing of these in the novel. Patrick, a South African soldier, fights on the Namibian border to secure his country against SWAPO insurgents. After his discharge from the defence force due to his mental breakdown (a transgression of the borders of sanity), he revisits Namibia with his mother and as he crosses the frontier he is filled “with a sense of definite unease” (28). This sense of unease recurs when he leaves the town of Windhoek and enters the township during his visit to Windhoek and his mother attempts to reassure him: “There was a clear dividing line where Windhoek came to an end and Katatura began...Then, sensing my

trepidation, she smiled. 'You don't have to worry, Patrick' (38). He goes on to relate how he had only visited townships a few times when his father dropped off labourers. Thus the unease that he experiences is also a reflection of the social divide in South Africa, where these townships later became war zones. Patrick says that the soldiers who were not sent to the border were sent to the townships. There "they waged an alternative battle" against children whose "fury was ancient and strong" (38). Regarding the issue of social division, the alienation between town and township, Patrick says:

We tried to forget them by hiding their shame, but always they crept into view... In the papers at night, we read of their sagas: their crimes, desperations and death. With perfidious style, we'd made them what they were; then despised them for all that they weren't. Shadowy, huge, creeping close to the ground, they were a negative print of our cities (38).

It is in the township, however – not in the house of his affluent father – that Patrick meets Godfrey – his mother's lover and a dedicated SWAPO supporter – who exposes him to the life and work of Andrew Lovell – an ex-South African fighting for black liberation on the side of SWAPO – and it is through his exposure to the sense of purpose brought about by their dedication to their cause that Patrick is lead to a clearer understanding of himself and who he wants to be.

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation it was stated that the examining of binary oppositions is also, by extension, an examination of violent hierarchies. Violent, not only because they force individuals into the poles of center and other, thus causing alienation through isolation, but also because they imply an inherent value system of the superior center

versus the inferior other, where the primary term is invested with the power of superiority, and the secondary term is marginalized on the grounds of its presumed inferiority. In this chapter the researcher will thus again focus on the parent/child, male/female, white/black dialectics by examining the relationships constructed around these structures. This will entail looking at the relationships between Patrick and his father, and the authority figures who replace his father, i.e. Commandant Schutte (representing the state); the relationship between Patrick and his mother; and the relationship between Patrick and his mother's black lover, Godfrey. This will be done with a view to examining Galgut's statement about apartheid as a male-dominated system, and also with the purpose of interrogating the values implied by the occupation of a specific position on the dialectical scale - in this case the white, male, heterosexual values with which Patrick is confronted.

The hierarchies that are under attack in The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs are first and foremost those of the colonial and apartheid systems which are viewed by Galgut as patriarchal systems. During the interview published in Weekly Mail ("An extended cry against male mythology", Rosenthal, 1992:34) mentioned earlier in the chapter, Galgut stated that he not only views apartheid as a male mythology, but that he also sees the institutions of its society, such as family and the SADF, as being ruled by "inherently male values", adding that he is "deeply suspicious of any established ideology...simply because it sets down rules and precepts that one is not supposed to question". He also stated that he views the family as a microcosm of the political environment and that what happens in the family is relateable to the wider political framework. We see these views reflected in the novel, where Patrick's experiences in the family environment are mirrored by his later

experiences during his military service. He grows up in a home where his father, Howard, is the authority figure who attempts to school him in the typical, defining pursuits of his gender, such as playing rugby and hunting. When he leaves school and enters military service, his father is replaced by Commandant Schutte and once more he is forced to partake in the above-mentioned activities, with the difference that the killing now involves human beings instead of animals. Through his relationship with the male members of his family, his father and brother, and later his relationship with Commandant Schutte, Patrick comes to question the values that seem to accompany what he terms the "brotherhood of men" (49), values of exhibited strength and dominance, often finding expression in violence. Part of Patrick's heritage as a white male in South Africa would be that of being the possessor of power, of occupying the position of master in relation to a black labour force. In order to protect this political and economic power, man must be prepared to defend and hold his position on various battlefields, hence the emphasis on killing in the novel. Patrick narrates hunting expeditions, undertaken by his father and brother, Malcolm (10-11). The hunting of animals on these expeditions would seem to serve as preparation for the bloody rites of passage into the world of a soldier and the eventual slaying of fellow-man. We see, however, that Patrick, despite his early childhood fascination at the slaughtering of farm animals, recoils from becoming a hunter like his father and Malcolm. The latter's stories about their hunting experiences fill him with distaste and unease: "'I shot an impala. It didn't die so quick, it was kicking on the ground...Dad killed it with a knife. Saves a bullet, y'check.' 'Yes,' I said; agreeing. The knife was at my throat" (11). Later, when Patrick returns to the farm of his grandparents, after his breakdown following

his killing of a SWAPO soldier, and the loss of his friend Lappies, his resistance to killing is intensified:

I woke to the sound of a pig being killed. I sat up in bed...Animals are killed in different ways...Sheep are generally docile...Pigs scream...When I was younger, I have to confess, their screams were beautiful to me...But now the noise was hideous (19-20).

Not only does Patrick's resistance to the taking of life separate him from the company of men, but his ineptness at playing rugby isolates him from the brotherhood even more. His childhood failure to learn the skills of the game from his father, with his brother as a scornful observer (8-9) is repeated later during his military service. His commander, Commandant Schutte, described as an "utterly terrible, splendid and mean" man (47), believes that "sport makes men out of monkeys" (48). He lets the soldiers engage in frequent rugby games in an attempt to foster camaraderie and promote teamwork as preparation for their later patrols and skirmishes with the enemy. Instead of incorporating Patrick and his friend Lappies into the group, their lack of skill on the playing field isolates them even more:

Our segregation confirmed what had always been sensed; and the others withdrew from our company...We suffered our isolation without much complaint. We had always contained it within us. There was, you see, a brotherhood of men, to which we could never belong. My father, my brother, the boys at my school: they knew things that I didn't know. There was that in their hands that helped them catch balls; that helped them see objects in flight. Lacking this vision I felt myself blind...They laughed with assurance. They made bawdy jokes. They stood about fires, holding beers in their

hands; and tugged at their growing moustaches...I would never be part of their club. Excluded forever from their strange fraternity, I watched from outside in my shame (49-50).

Patrick's narration of what constitutes the brotherhood of men, typifies maleness as implying certain qualities. The quality of external physical strength, displayed through physical activity and an external expenditure of energy, in this case playing rugby; but also maintaining the appearance of psychological strength, displayed through self-confident behaviour and laughing "with assurance". There is the sense though, that the laughter is filled with bravado, in an attempt to avoid the display of any emotion that would indicate emotional vulnerability or insecurity, which would be seen as weakness and belonging to the realm of the feminine. When Patrick thus says that he failed at playing rugby, it constitutes more than a failure to learn the skills of the game. Rugby is, in this context, symbolic of male power, skill and instinct. It is not simply about the game, but about the game as an index of male qualities, such as the display of strength and the achieving of dominance through beating the opposition. What Patrick is effectively saying, is that he has failed to achieve the status of manhood in the eyes of men who see the display of strength and dominance as the measure of maleness, hence his feelings of isolation and shame.

In an article entitled "Versions of Transgression: Recent Southern African Writing" (in Current Writing, 1992, 4(1)) Byrne contends that Patrick is caught between remaining loyal to his own non-violent nature and the demands of the fraternity of men from which he is excluded. In response he transgresses not only his own, but also the army's

prescriptions. He kills a SWAPO soldier by shooting him in the back (52), and engages in sexual contact with another man, Lappies (53), in contravention of the defence force's credo of heterosexuality. De Waal (in Defiant desire, 1994:239) suggests that:

Here desire is an instinctive challenge to the patriarchal law; the transgression is enacted out of a traumatised state as an act of rebellion against the violent heterosexual male order...Homosexuality may or may not be the hidden signifier underneath this figuration, but it emerges strongly as a transgression that resists the imposition of that order and the enactment of that power. It is turned back on the law that has first defined it then sought to confine and limit it.

According to Byrne (1992:145) the "incident with Lappies metonymically reveals the ethics of the novel: social transgression is mitigated by the oppressive and fragmenting domination of the Apartheid ideology". Patrick is the one who suffers most from the conflicting demands of his various allegiances – his allegiance to his mother, his race, the South African defence force and government. When he is denied leave of absence from his border camp by Commandant Schutte and forced to handle the corpse of his recently deceased friend, he seems to have little choice but to transgress the bonds of sanity altogether and he suffers a mental breakdown. It is this breakdown, this failure to function in the world of men, that leads to his discharge from military service.

About a year after Patrick's discharge he finds himself returning to Namibia with his mother to visit her lover, Godfrey, a SWAPO supporter. Having distanced himself from the identity and values prescribed for him by his paternal heritage, Patrick's journey is in part

a quest for an identity of his own, similar to the journey undertaken by Michael K discussed in Chapter 2. What differentiates Michael K's journey from that of Patrick, is the relative freedom of movement the latter enjoys compared to the numerous administrative and military measures that encumber K on his journey. Patrick only carries a passport, but Michael K has to apply for a travel permit just to leave his magisterial district, is subjected to curfews, checkpoints, forced labour and several internment camps. Although less hampered by physical obstacles, Patrick still has to contend with many psychological impediments and Boehmer (1993:8-9) states the following about Patrick's quest for an independent identity :

Patrick Winter's obsessions point to a fundamental question regarding identity in a new or rapidly changing society: how does one set about being, or about making a self, when the available models are defunct or fake or no more than creations of fantasy? How is one to express oneself as a man (and specifically here a man – a man loving men) when the examples are limited to one's muscular, testosterone-driven father or brother?

This brings us back to Byrne's (1992:145) statement about transgression, cited earlier in the chapter. The idea is that a system as rigidly prescriptive as that of apartheid leaves the individual with no choice but to transgress the borders of enforced segregation, be it the borders of race, gender or sexual preference. When Patrick thus crosses the border into Namibia, it is symbolic of his transgressing into the territory of the other to find a sense of self. As has been mentioned, Patrick's heritage as a white, South African male would imply several allegiances. He would have to be loyal to his skincolour, his fellow-men, his fellow-soldiers and the system of apartheid to which his government subscribes. However,

he finds no camaraderie in that which he serves, only isolation, and so he journeys into the territory of the other, in this case the Namibian territory of his previous enemy, SWAPO. His visit takes place during the week of Namibia's first free elections and Patrick witnesses the country that he defended to the detriment of his own sanity being given away to his previous black enemy: "The arbitrary nature of politics" (53). When he thus meets Godfrey, helps him with the arrangements for the SWAPO rally and the burial of a fallen SWAPO comrade, he does so in contravention of all his previous allegiances. It is ironic that it is on this foreign territory that he finds much of what his own father and fellow-soldiers could not give him. Even though Godfrey is also an authority figure within his environment and in many ways could be said to resemble both Patrick's father and Commandant Schutte in his "imperious" (95) appearance and command over his people, "Satellites caught in his gravity, other people circled about" (93); he does lead Patrick to a better understanding of the purpose of political involvement. Godfrey attempts to convince Patrick of the necessity to shift the focus away from the individual and the self in order to become part of a larger whole. When asked about his feelings after Andrew Lovell's killing, he says: "When you work in politics...you do not care too much for people. Not individual people. You care for *all* the people, what happens to them. I belong to a movement...He is not the first one to die" (59). On another occasion Godfrey says the following about white people:

'You make me laugh.' ...'You're so...concerned with yourselves. Your own little lives. You have no nation. Just people. You're so...so...' He fumbled in the air with his hands. 'Narcissistic?' 'Ja. Introspective. Neurotic – you're neurotic' (92).

Some of this rings true with Patrick when, at the rally, and for a brief moment, he sees how things could be: "part of a mass, of a singing congregation, the family to which I'd never belonged. I stamped hard on the earth, treading my past" (106). At the conclusion of the novel he confronts his mother about her self-centredness and at the same time expresses the desire to be redeemed of his own (110):

I was full, suddenly, of immeasurable disgust: at my life, at how little it meant. My pain, neurosis, onanistic caresses: a vortex of introspective lust. 'You're so selfish,' I shouted. I banged on the table. 'You're so full of love for yourself!'

Not only does Godfrey assist Patrick to gain some insight into himself, he also brings Patrick in touch with a role model in the form of the slain SWAPO supporter, Andrew Lovell. In Defiant desire (1994:238), De Waal contends that in Lovell, Patrick is seeking an example of someone who was able to resist the violent patriarchal order, in which repression and oppression are exemplified by white supremacy and apartheid. It is significant that he chooses someone who has already been punished by paying the ultimate price for his rebellion. Lovell, a white fellow-South African, was at the time of his death sought by the South African government on charges of refusal to do military service for his country (57). In this Patrick finds an expression of what he desired, but failed to do. When he meets Lovell's grieving girlfriend, he is filled with the need to comfort her with his admiration for this slain man:

Your lover who died,...was all that I'll never be. I'm sealed into myself by a terrible wall: a transparent, tenuous membrane. Though I strain and I beat, my efforts are muffled, my cries are eaten by silence. I have longed for a way to vent my country from me, to bawl it out of my flesh. Andrew Lovell,...was my other, impossible self (96-97).

The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs is thus Patrick Winter's "beautiful scream, an extended cry" (Rosenthal, 1992:34) against stereotyping male mythology. He attempts to subvert the ideology of white male dominance by distancing himself from the values of their fraternity. He rejects the violence, whether it be on the field of play or battle, and also the sexual orientation that is imposed on him. Mostly he subverts the "brotherhood of men" by betraying the racist, nationalist values of his government and by sympathizing with the black enemy. Galgut insists throughout on the link between the violent pursuits of men, and a regime whose machinations can only end in bloodshed. Patrick says to Lappies: "I can't help feeling as if...as if men were responsible for this. I mean,' I ended lamely, 'women couldn't have made things like this'" (51).

Another form of subversion which the narrative explores in a familial context, is Patrick's loyalty to his mother. This echoes Will's sympathy with his mother during his father's frequent absences from home (My Son's Story). Patrick aligns himself with his mother when both of them are excluded from Howard and Malcolm's hunting expeditions. Patrick not only aligns himself with his mother, but also identifies with her in several ways. In the absence of the male members of the family they dine out together, watch films together, walk through Sea Point eating ice-creams, enjoying common interests that Patrick's father and mother never shared (11-12). Ellen thus becomes Patrick's ally in his isolation from

his father and brother. He speaks of his fear of losing her as follows: "I couldn't speak the horror of her death: a house in which I would be trapped with Malcolm, and with Dad" (12). A similar allegiance is later shared between Patrick and Lappies and after Lappies's death, Patrick's desolation is clear: "But now that he had been taken from me, I had never felt more alone. I had no protection against what I most feared: these men, who played rugby with ease" (77).

Patrick relates incidents from his childhood where Malcolm's teasing brought him to tears and his mother's reaction did not discourage him from expressing himself this way, "If I cried too often, it was because it brought her to me. She had consoling hands" (13). Under his mother's influence, Patrick not only learns how to cry, but also learns how to give comfort and, as he grows up, he often finds himself in the position of being her comforter and confidante. He arrives home one day to find her naked, drugged and crying on the floor and he attempts to comfort her: "Remembering my mother, I went to her. But it was I who consoled her now: I gathered her up in my arms. As if she was the child, she clung to me and wept" (16). He supports her through several failed relationships and after a violent argument with Godfrey he is there as her ally once more: "'Oh, Patrick,' she said. 'Men are such bastards.' 'I know,' I said. 'Don't I know'" (74).

In the same way that Patrick sides with his mother against his father, he sides with her when the relationship between her and Godfrey becomes violent. In one of the few incidents in the novel where he enters conflict willingly, he confronts Godfrey about his treatment of Ellen. When the latter defends it as part of his culture that women should not

answer back, Patrick retorts: "It's part of your culture you should think about changing" (92). Once more, as was seen in Life & Times of Michael K and My Son's Story, the child becomes the parent's nurturer and protector. There is the sense, however, that Patrick's care of his mother is not always reciprocated. While in hospital in Pretoria after his breakdown, he receives a visit from his father, but his mother is involved in a play and only sends flowers and letters (84). After his transfer to 2 Military Hospital in Cape Town she does visit him, but seems more pre-occupied with sharing details of her love life than showing concern for his well-being (85). Not only is there a reversal in the mother-child relationship, but Patrick's respect for his mother is increasingly undermined:

I had been subjected, long before Godfrey, to graphic descriptions of her liaisons. I was my mother's best friend: she shared with me her speculations, insecurities, delights. She had ceased to regard me, upon leaving my father, as progeny deserving of protection. We discussed topics from menstruation to masturbation. (She forfeited, in the process, any claim to my respect.) (33)

Patrick comes to the realization that Ellen's involvement with Godfrey is just another attempt at embracing a cause, just another attempt to escape her pain. According to Heyns (in Attridge, 1998:116) Ellen "drifts from lover to lover and from self-image to self-image. Her involvement with Godfrey is thus a self-conscious attempt to identify with Africa rather than an appreciation of any quality of the man himself". She leaves Godfrey for Dirk Blaauw, and in the "web of white words" (115) passing between them, together with Blaauw's statement that "Man is a hunter by instinct. A killer" (116), Patrick sees a betrayal of the non-violent, anti-racist values he thought he shared with his mother. His disillusionment with this "distorted white woman, lost on her way" who "was part of nothing

at all" (109) leads to his decision to distance himself from her and to move in the direction of independence by finding a flat of his own (116).

The relationship between Patrick and his mother changes as they are each shaped and changed by their various experiences. Indeed, Ellen is seen to change frequently and fleetingly, adopting various identities, depending on and in accordance with the variety of relationships she becomes involved in through the course of the novel. She starts out as an Afrikaans girl, Elsa de Bruin, studying to be an actress. When she marries Howard, who is said to despise her background (6), she betrays her language, culture and acting aspirations to become Ellen Winter, a silent, dominated wife and mother (6-7). Patrick says that she remoulded herself in the image his father desired (6) so that there remained "no evidence of this other, earlier self" (3). When the marriage fails, she embraces a life of escapism, perhaps attempting to assuage the pain of having lost a son (15) and a failed marriage, and so adopts a lifestyle of drugs (16) and multiple, casual relationships (18). This lifestyle and adopted persona is abandoned when she becomes involved with Godfrey, a committed SWAPO supporter and her energy is re-directed to a life of commitment. For a while she gets involved in Godfrey's cause and shows superficial concern for the plight of Africa: "Sleeping with Godfrey, she would have me believe, 'was a kind of political act'" (36). In Namibia she abandons the relationship with Godfrey, together with the cause for black liberation, when she changes allegiance again to become involved with Dirk Blaauw, whose overt racism (115) stands in sharp contrast with the cause of liberation she professed so recently to have supported. In terms of the center/other dialectic, it would seem as if Ellen affiliates herself with the other to the

detriment of the self so that her identity disintegrates increasingly as the novel progresses. This is in contrast with Patrick's search for identity, where transgression into the territory of the other is seen to emerge as a constructive process, a way of establishing self, instead of a destructive process where self is obliterated in the face of, and for the sake of the other. As Ellen adopts different personas, so her relationship with her son changes until it is eventually eroded. The relationship sees movement from Patrick's childhood allegiance to and dependence on his mother, to a reversal of dependency as her increasing demands for emotional support seem to become burdensome to him, much like Michael K's mother became a physical burden to him. The relationship eventually deteriorates into an adversarial one, as Ellen's involvement with the racist Dirk Blaauw constitutes a betrayal of the values that Patrick, through his relationship with Godfrey, has come to embrace.

Patrick's dilemma in the formulating of an identity is thus one perpetuated by dialectical thinking, having to make mutually exclusive determinations, either/or choices in the definition of the self. He is male, but also embraces many so-called female values; he is white master by birth, but affiliates with the cause of black freedom, attempting to do penance for his killing of a SWAPO soldier by helping to bury Andrew Lovell. This reminds us of Derrida's comment on either/or choices cited in Chapter 1: "I see no reason why we should choose between the two. That is the tension in deconstruction" (Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 1997:11). This also reinforces the notion of the human subject as a site, the convergence and necessary contamination of many identifying characteristics, mentioned in Chapter 3. It also points to the insufficiency of the sign, that the terms "white" and

"male" do not offer sufficient explication of Patrick's identity and that the purity and linearity of his inherited identity cannot be sustained.

Patrick's dilemma is not only a crisis of the sign, but also a crisis perpetuated by the patriarchal, racist society he finds himself in. He confronts a system that encourages the formulating of an identity based on the elevation of the center, while diminishing the value of the other. He is raised in a political environment where his sense of himself and his worth depends on the subversion of the other:

...the concept of identity invariably invokes the "trace" or imprint of otherness...Positing one's own social (psychological, etc.) identity always involves a process of self-simplification based on the blocking off of a host of other possibilities that are discarded. Every sense-making operation, every yes, is therefore nothing but a selection from alternative meanings that implies several *nos*, thus relegating what is excluded to the vast realm of non-sense. The identity system constructed after this fashion is not only contingent upon the formless 'outside' mass of what it is not, but, more or less explicitly, its very own quality is dependant on denigrating the worth of the competing alternatives which surround the insularity of its chosen sense. The self-referentiality, its inward-looking preoccupation with itself, is thus offset by a certain degree of outward-looking world-referentiality. Put otherwise, oneself is only as good as the others are felt to be bad (Reckwitz, 1993:1-2).

This elevation of the self to the detriment of the other is seen in the treatment of the servants on the farm of Patrick's grandmother, where they are expected to confirm their servility by using hierarchical forms of address and through submissive behaviour. When

one of the servants greets Patrick, he is unable to address him by his first name and engage him as an equal. The misunderstanding that takes place between them is a reflection of their lack of rapport and it is clear that Patrick is uncomfortable with the situation: "He bobbed when I saw him. '*Môre, Baas,*' he said. I gestured abruptly, dashing away his servility. Mistaking my move, he looked scared" (20). When they are sitting at the table, his grandmother at the head, ringing the bell to be served, a servant enters and Patrick relates how she is unable to reciprocate his mother's greeting, as she is not allowed to meet her gaze the way she would with an equal: "But the black woman didn't reply. Avoiding the gaze of my mother, keeping her face turned away, she tended our needs" (2). The lack of equality in the relationship is reflected through the lack of reciprocity between mistress and servant and Patrick's discomfort reflects his resistance to this negation of and dominance over the other.

When Patrick meets a German man who came to Namibia to vote "for us. For *us*" (64), he hurriedly walks away from him "but also from that terrible *us*. I wanted no part in what it presumed. I wanted to leave it behind". He thus finds himself identifying with the black, female, inferior other and so the parameters of the identity that the brotherhood of men try to impose on him are destabilized. The authority of his superiors in the patriarchal apartheid order, represented by his father and Commandant Schutte, is undermined when their assumptions of supremacy start to crumble in the face of his own life experiences. He learns more about commitment to a cause, the communal working towards a common goal, from his previous enemies, SWAPO supporters, than from Commandant Schutte and his fellow-soldiers in the SADF.

In Chapter 2 it was stated that according to Joffe (1990:97) "Michael K's personal history indeed has been characterized by the various state institutions through which he has moved, each seeking to impose on him the roles of gender, race, class by which he is to be identified." K's passage through the state school, resettlement and rehabilitation camps provides numerous illustrations of how these institutions try to impose the dominant ideology of the state on him. When he shows resistance to these attempts to identify and classify him, the state starts to view him as someone in need of rehabilitation. Of particular significance are the symbols of state power, in the form of flag and anthem, which serve as powerful reminders of these attempts to enforce the identity of the regime on the captives of the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp. The medical officer in Life & Times of Michael K narrates how he had to:

... behold a corporal raising the orange, white and blue on a flagpole in the middle of the track, a five-piece band playing 'Uit die blou,' the cornet out of key, and six hundred sullen men standing to attention, barefoot, in their tenth-hand khakis, having their thinking set right (132).

In The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs we again see the state trying to impose its identity on individuals, and once more the institution plays a crucial role in this regard. Even though Patrick finds himself at the other, privileged end of the political spectrum compared to K, we see similar attempts to "set his thinking right". At school a petrified Patrick is forced by his father to play rugby, as this is the measure of success for a boy. He relates how his brother could not spell and failed at arithmetic, but that he was captain of his team and so "he was that other, more desirable type" (9). In the army Commandant Schutte tries to turn

so-called monkeys into men through sport and in the rows of soldiers singing the anthem, we see a reflection of the men in the Kenilworth rehabilitation camp, cited above:

In the morning, at dawn, we assembled in rows. We stood in this way, our rifles before us, as the flag was raised on its pole. Then at attention, we sang out the anthem, glorifying this strange piece of cloth (The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs, 1991:48).

It is notable that loyalty to the nationalist apartheid ideal is enforced and expected, without reciprocation in the form of concern over the well-being of the soldiers. It is said of Commandant Schutte that he did not take well to the losses of his men, but that it was due to military, and not personal reasons (77). He meets Patrick's grief at the loss of Lappies with cold comfort: "We're men here, not girls" (77) and forces him to handle the corpse of his deceased friend. Patrick says, "I turned to the next one, my chest feeling hollow; and choked down the girl that I was" (78). During one of the panic attacks that precedes his breakdown, he drops his tray while queuing for dinner and once more the commander's best solution is physical activity, "One hundred push-ups" (79). This constitutes yet another attempt at trying to mould him into the man patriarchal society thinks he should be - a man who never displays emotional vulnerability, as this is perceived as belonging to the sphere of the weak female other.

It would thus seem that not only the colonized, but also the colonizer, suffers a sense of isolation and alienation as a consequence of the politics of segregation. The medical officer in Coetzee's Life & Times of Michael K (1983:157) comes to the conclusion that all of them, both captors and captives have become prisoners of war and Patrick has to

betray his own non-violent values to the detriment of his own sanity in order to be loyal to and serve his country. Galgut's insistence that he does not want to be perceived as a flagbearer for gay liberation, but that he is "concerned with tracing other areas of damage that apartheid has managed to inflict on individuals in the country" (Rosenthal, 1992:34), is reflected in the way he presents suffering, and attempts to alleviate suffering through various characters in the novel.

On the very first page of the novel there is a reference to the pills that Patrick has to take to relieve the anxiety that still remains with him almost one year after leaving the border. The other members of his family are also seen to each medicate their private pain in their individual ways. After the divorce of his parents, the father takes to liquor, with "wines and sherries, brandies and vodka, he warded off the ache in his heart" (15). The closest he comes to revealing his pain to Patrick is in the "tiny glottal cry" (45) he utters at the news of his ex-wife's reunion with her lover in Namibia. Ellen seeks refuge in endless activity and causes, "Like a creature in pain, she couldn't lie down" (15) and eventually resorts to the use of drugs (16). Patrick comments that "Valium comes in a variety of shapes" (76), that it makes the muscles relax and "Thought becomes easier to handle" (76). Byrne (1992:145) contends that Patrick's dependence on Valium bears testimony "to Galgut's sense of the profound damage inflicted by South African ideology on human beings". Thus, each of these characters attempt to ease the pain by suppressing it - as Schutte says, "We mustn't give in to ourselves" (77). For Patrick, however, the attempts at choking down the girl that he was (78) culminates in a breakdown over which he has no control. After losing Lappies and killing a soldier himself, Patrick encounters a slaughtered

elephant while on patrol. Although he says that "the murder of animals was common up here" (81), the sight of the festering flesh, killed "for cruelty or fun" (80), triggers the realization of the senselessness of it all, leading him to the conclusion: "Life, I saw clearly, was pain" (81). Finally the years of suppressing the tears leads to a flood that can no longer be contained and it spills over in an overwhelming primal scream:

I sank to the ground. I couldn't stand up. Then I started to cry. I beat with my fists on the ground. 'Winter's gone *bossies*,' somebody said. I opened my mouth. I gave vent to a scream. A terrifying noise, it rose from my chest; it soared up over the tent. It was a sound, I now realize, that came from my life; composed from the nineteen years past (81-82).

Patrick's primal scream alerts us to the significance of the title of the novel. Reference has already been made to his childhood visits to the farm of his grandparents and his observing the regular slaughtering of farm animals. He contrasts the docile submission of sheep with the screaming of pigs, the protesting of their fate to the very end:

Pigs scream...From the moment they are seized, they know what is to happen. They bellow. They squeal. They defecate in terror. Like men, they protest their doom; and finish their lives with a shriek. When I was younger, I have to confess, their screams were beautiful to me...But now the noise was hideous (20).

When viewed against the background of Patrick's aversion to killing, the insertion of the word "beautiful" in the title seems problematic. It can be argued that as a child with little life experience, the slaughtering of animals held a fascination for him, but that later - after he was brought into close contact with death, suffered the loss of a friend and killed a

soldier himself - the gravity of the spilling of blood became so vividly clear to him that he now recoils from the screams, which are no longer beautiful. Also of significance in this regard is Patrick's reference to the pigs protesting against their doom, their screams attesting to the fact that they do not simply submit to man's exercising his ultimate power over them by depriving them of their lives. The scream thus becomes their final cry, their last desperate assertion of life. The parallel between the beautiful screaming of pigs, as their collective assertion of life, and Patrick's primal scream thus becomes clear. Both animal and human cries constitute a joint assertion of life. For Patrick, this is an assertion of his right to live life on his own terms, define himself on his own terms, without having a system of male domination prescribing who he should be, whom he should affiliate with and whom he should love. When Patrick takes his leave of Godfrey, the latter suggests that he should stay in Namibia until his country is free, to which he responds: "There are other kinds of exile" (114). Patrick's scream is against death, and against the certain death implicit in living someone else's life, like his mother, who never seems to live her own life and who allows others to define who she has to be.

In The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs Galgut places emphasis on borders in various forms and manifestations – i.e. frontiers between countries, lines of division between communities (town and township) and individual people (race and gender segregation). Due to the fact that Patrick finds the pole of white male master insular and insufficient to give expression to his inner self and his non-violent values, he transgresses these lines of division through the shifting of various allegiances. These transgressions are an attempt to interact with the so-called inferior black, female, homosexual other so as to incorporate

the other in his definition of himself. By transgressing into the territory of the other he illustrates that the laws of segregation and structures of dialectical opposition, contain within themselves the necessary condition of their own transgression and eventual subversion. The transgression into the territory of the other is, for Patrick, a constructive process which provides him with alternative ways of self-expression and self-definition - a different way of being in the world - as opposed to the violent, patriarchal and heterosexual identity represented by his father and the military commander. In the following chapter, the notion of transgression will be elaborated by showing that for Ellen Kuzwayo, transgression also becomes a necessary step towards breaking out of the restrictive role of the silenced female other, as it was for Aila; but in addition it will be shown that transgression becomes a way of contending with the unjust laws of apartheid ideology imposed on Ellen Kuzwayo and her community.

Chapter 5: Call Me Woman

In the Introduction it was stated that the choice of the CNA Literary Award as a field of study was initially motivated by the need for a body of work that could be regarded as representative of the work offered by South African authors in order to facilitate the studying of identity in the South African post-colonial context. Perusal of the list of winners since the inception of the award revealed, however, that it was conferred on a black author for the first time in 1986, no less than 25 years after the inception of the award. It became evident that the body of CNA award-winning novels could not be regarded as representative of the work offered by all South African writers. This bias revealed by the list of winners is reflective of the inherent bias of the society of the time, the logocentric thinking that divided society into the dialectical categories of superior white and inferior black underpinning the system of racial segregation, but also the set of values, i.e. white superiority over black inferiority, accompanying the segregation of the South African apartheid context. Where the CNA award is concerned it became clear that the names left off the shortlists for this award, but also the absence of rewarded black authors before 1986, together with the severe state control exercised over publication at the time, may be seen as more ways in which the black other was marginalized and silenced in apartheid South Africa.

When a black female author thus won the award for 1985, she had to do so against the odds of not only racial, but also gender discrimination, while facing the values of white colonial superiority head on. Kuzwayo did just that with a novel that is affirmative from its

very title. Call Me Woman (1985) is a defiant celebration of what it means to be black and female despite being born in a racist, sexist society. The novel's affirmation comes in the form of Kuzwayo's pride in her people but also in her determined efforts to dissolve myths, overturn the stereotypes surrounding black people, so counteracting the value system that underpinned their marginalization in the first place.

In Chapter 1 the center/other dialectic was discussed and reference was made to The Empire Writes Back (1989:2) where it is stated that post-colonial literatures "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre." Central to the oppressive regime and ideology under attack in post-colonial literature is the imperial center versus the inferior other dialectic, which gives rise to other conceptual categories, such as colonizer/colonized, master/slave, white/black, and male/female. These categories not only form the basis on which identity is formulated, but also act as a structuring principle in human relationships and so in order to investigate the crisis of identity in the post-colonial context, the researcher has, in the preceding chapters, examined the various dialectical relationships which characters find themselves in, as these dialectical relationships are often the sites of oppression, through a value system that empowers the privileged center over its inferior other. The violent hierarchies that are created through this logocentric thinking manifest in various ways, but in the context of the South African apartheid system, they are manifested mainly through the white/black, male/female dialectic. Also of relevance are the master/slave and parent/child dialectics, as the apartheid system also

dominated labour relations through the unequal distribution of ownership and means of production, and entrenched the minority status of the black population through legislation, thus reducing them to the status of children in the eyes of the law. Due to Ellen Kuzwayo's position as a black woman, both the race and gender dialectics will be examined in this chapter in order to form an understanding of her struggle to formulate an identity and develop a sense of self-worth in the face of both race and gender discrimination. Reference will be made to the parent-child dialectic, as it is relevant to the minority status of black women under law and due to the book's classification as an autobiography, the researcher will, in addition, look at the I/we dialectic, with a view to showing that Ellen Kuzwayo's autobiography is not only the story of an individual, but also the story of her people.

In Chapter 2 the race dialectic was discussed with specific reference to the issue of forced labour, where Michael's classification as non-white enables his forceful inscription into the pool of black, exploited labour. Despite his discovery of his vocation as a gardener, an occupation that provides him with fulfillment and an identity of his own, state interest demands that he be denied this freedom of self-definition and self-fulfillment. The agents of state control continually re-capture him and his capture always goes hand-in-hand with forced labour. Michael's inferior position on the dialectical scale of race segregation also means that he is inscribed as a slave of white state power. Similarly, Chapter 3 discussed how Will finds his vocation as a writer, but the allusion to his first book not being published (*My Son's Story*, 1990:277) is a suggestion that it is not in state interest for him to speak out, and so he is silenced. Stephenson (1991:80), cited in Chapter 1, says that where

there is the coming together of individuals “they will usually slip into the roles of master and servant, oppressor and oppressed”. Although the terms “master” and “servant” may seem like outdated terminology in modern times, such terminology is still relevant today in that it is translated, perhaps disguised even, into conditions of employment that are exploitative and dehumanizing, hence the emphasis on labour in this dissertation. Kirkwood (1976:123) argues that cheap labour is a pervasive residue of colonization and its forced labour systems:

The economic system of the colonized – usually predominantly pastoral but including the mining and smelting of iron and other minerals, as well as a number of handicrafts, and capable overall of generating a surplus sufficient to maintain full-time specialist workers, smiths, doctors and others – is destroyed by the conquest of land and even more sophisticated techniques for placing the resource of cheap labour – perhaps the most definitive characteristic of a colonial system – at the disposal of the colonizer.

Kirkwood contends that the terms master/slave, colonizer/colonized are simply translated into modern-day equivalents and that dialectical discourse not only secures, but also perpetuates political and economic power. As was shown in the discussion of forced labour in Life & Times of Michael K, in apartheid South Africa the race dialectic became embroiled with the master/slave dialectic, so that being white became synonymous with ownership and mastery, and being black effectively meant slavery to white power. Kuzwayo addresses the issue of black, exploited labour along various strands. She addresses the migratory labour system – where whoever is classified as non-white is forcefully inscribed into a position of dispossession and exploitation – and its detrimental

social effects, but she also uses the issue of labour to dispel the myths of laziness and lack of innovation that surround the black community.

In Part 1 Kuzwayo deals with the exploitative practice of migratory labour and its detrimental effects on the family structure and moral values of the community. She describes the plight of black men who, due to the dispossession entailed by the Native Land Act and increased pressure of having to pay poll-tax, are forced to leave their rural homes to work on the mines, leaving the women behind to fend for their families (11-12). Many women have little choice but to follow the men into urban areas (14), but are then faced with "influx control legislation which makes it illegal for the children and wives of migrant labourers to be with their fathers and husbands in the cities" (17). Again the women are left destitute, having to fend for themselves in a foreign urban environment, with limited skills and limited means at their disposal. Due to their lack of education, many of them are predisposed to employment conditions that are degrading and exploitative. Kuzwayo refers to inferior education that "has created a community of poorly educated and ill-trained blacks to maintain the relationship of master to servant between whites and blacks" (91). Consequently many of the black women streaming to urban areas are utilized as domestic workers and nannies, earning meagre wages, just to be discarded in transit camps after a lifetime of service:

Many women remained with their employers for 20 years or more. Some, even now, have served one family for generations, moving on to the son's or daughter's new family. Some of these workers grew old in one job, earning

low wages equivalent to R5 to R10 a month with no provision for a pension at retirement (22).

The plight of being exploited and then discarded is reminiscent of the picture painted by Michael K in Part 3 of Life & Times of Michael K (136):

"My mother worked all her life long," he said. "She scrubbed other people's floors, she cooked food for them, she washed their dishes. She washed their dirty clothes. She scrubbed the bath after them. She went on her knees and cleaned the toilet. But when she was old and sick they forgot her. They put her away out of sight. When she died they threw her in the fire. They gave me an old box of ash and told me, 'Here is your mother, take her away, she is no good to us.'"

It is significant that these black women who act as surrogate mothers for white children have to do so to the detriment of their own children, often leaving them unattended, hoping that they will adhere to the instructions and guidance they were left with (8). Kuzwayo says of these mothers:

...These are some examples of the sufferings and endless struggle borne by some of these great mothers of South Africa who have brought up and nurtured children of all communities, sometimes at the sacrifice of their own children. I quote one such mother: 'Struth God, the children I brought up, some of them are doctors today, yes; but not one of them thinks of me today.' (23)

Kuzwayo herself has to endure long periods of separation from her children. She has to flee from an abusive marriage (Chapter 9) and, due to influx control regulations, her

children are prohibited from living with her. She reflects on the plight of being separated from her children, depriving them of her care and guidance as follows:

Think of it. A young child denied by the state his right to receive his mother's tender loving care – care which would help him grow and mature into a worthy citizen of the community (18-19).

It is the very inhuman nature of such laws that leads to Kuzwayo's decision to let her younger son come and live with her in Johannesburg "illegally, 'influx control' or no 'influx control'" (18). She has to make the impossible choice between being a good mother and a law-abiding citizen and in the end her longing for her children wins out. In Life & Times of Michael K the relationship between Anna and Michael K is pervaded by parasite and burden imagery to convey the fact that each of them, at various times, presented a burden to the other. In Call Me Woman this burden of motherhood is clearly one Kuzwayo is not resentful about. Gqola (1996:48) comments in this regard:

The longing for the freedom to be a mother therefore is exacerbated by the ever looming threat of disruption that apartheid has on black families...Black women in South Africa are thus unable to share with many feminists the world over the fight for liberation from the shackles of parenting. Motherhood cannot be perceived as a burden when it is effectively something you are prohibited from participating in.

Kuzwayo's forced choice to transgress the law in order to re-unite her family points to the inevitable transgression implied by inhuman laws. In her Preface to Call Me Woman, Nadine Gordimer comments that Kuzwayo "is not afraid to reveal an aspect of racism not

often admitted by its victims: the moral ambiguity oppression brings" (xii). Kuzwayo confesses that ghetto life has not only changed her own convictions about crime, but has also affected the moral fibre of her community. She relates how the struggle for survival has forced many women into degrading and dangerous occupations, such as the brewing of beer (24), participation in the *timiti* and *famo* dancing (30-31), which in turn leads to social problems such as abuse of alcohol and family violence:

It was a common occurrence to hear a woman's shriek in the middle of the night, pleading for help, whilst the sound of either a stick or *sjambok* rhythmically landed on her body... This punishment would be administered by a husband or lover (30).

In Chapters 2 and 3, entitled "Hunger Knows No Laws" and "Violence in the Community" respectively, Kuzwayo examines the escalating crime and violence in her community, attributing both to the desperation and frustration brought about by laws and conditions that are repressive, exploitative and dehumanizing: "Legislation which separates communities, categorises huge numbers of people as underdogs and dispossesses citizens has terrible effects on the mores and values of the disadvantaged communities" (19). Perhaps her most telling indictment of this system of deprivation, is Ellen's admission of the detrimental effect it has had on her, "a child from a Christian home" (72) and her own value system:

I am shocked that, as I have become older, and much as I would never take anybody's belongings without their permission, I find that my attitude towards these offenders, some of them committing very serious offences, has been gradually changing. Now when I hear, or read in the press, about a

big burglary or the theft of thousands of rands by blacks, young or old, men or women, I often express the desire that they will not be caught...It is a change forced on me, certainly not chosen, and it is one I bitterly resent. In the South African situation, I have often had cause to halt and reflect: Who is robbing whom in this country? (19)

The Native Land Act, which meant the expropriation of property held by black people for generations, including the farm of her childhood, is cited by Kuzwayo as one of the reasons for black people streaming into urban areas in search of employment. However, the labour conditions encountered by the people who have already been impoverished by the dispossession of their land and poll-tax, are hardly conducive to alleviating their poverty. On the contrary, these exploitative labour conditions, which in many instances are tantamount to slavery, lead to escalating impoverishment and ever-declining living conditions. Kuzwayo relates the appalling living conditions of the urban slum areas in Part 1 entitled, "Soweto". She starts her narrative with the question: "Where is home for a black person in South Africa?" (4), indicating the central role that displacement, through dispossession and forced removals, will play in her book. She relates the beginnings of Soweto, its taxing living conditions, in the following way:

Orlando East, established in 1930, was the beginning and foundation of the present Soweto. This township marked the introduction of the systematic implementation of the 'Group Areas' legislation – legislation which defined 'no-go' areas for black and coloured people and so cemented the system of apartheid. From its failure to provide basic community needs, such as proper electrification, adequate sewerage and rainstorm drainage, as well as well-built, tarmacadamed streets, the residents of that community have always looked on it as a permanent camp and overnight dormitory for the

supposedly 'temporary' labour force for the ever-growing city of Johannesburg (7).

The impact of Group Areas legislation was dealt with in Chapter 3, with reference to Nadine Gordimer's My Son's Story. Here the black/white dialectic was discussed with reference to the coloured family's in-between position, their not fitting in on either side of the white/black spectrum. Their move to a new area to make a political statement does little to alleviate their displacement. In fact, it leaves Sonny's family not only alienated from their own community and traditions, but also sees them isolated in the new community they find themselves in. Will says that the black woman selling mealies shows no recognition of him and their white neighbours destroy their home with a petrol bomb. The themes of displacement and homelessness also play a central role in Ellen Kuzwayo's Call Me Woman. Driven from the family farm by her aunt Blanche, drifting between the homes of various family members, eventually marrying in the hope of establishing a stable home of her own, her movement through the book, and through her life, is marked by the search for a home, a place of belonging and stability.

Part 2 of Call Me Woman, entitled "My Road to Soweto" traces Ellen's journey in search of a home. It would seem that from early childhood her sense of where she belongs, has had an effect on her sense of who she is and so issues of place become embroiled with issues of identity. As the only child with the surname "Merafe" on her grandfather's farm, she is often teased as the odd one out by her cousins and this fills her with questions about who she is and where she belongs:

Yet, like children everywhere in the world, we would pick arguments with each other, and sometimes I was clearly the odd one out. One of my cousins would count her sisters and brother... 'One, two, three Setlogelos'... and would go on to count the Makgothi adults. When it came to me, however, I was alone. I was 'One Merafe'. They would laugh, leaving me alone staring into empty space, with no defence or explanation (65).

When she is evicted from the family farm near Thaba'Nchu by her aunt Blanche, she is told: "There is no home for you any more here. You should go and look for your father and your people in Johannesburg" (105), leaving her feeling "utterly rejected and an outcast" (105). This same farm is disowned by the government in 1974, when it is declared a 'black spot', enabling white farmers to assume ownership. Ellen comments:

My maternal grandparents owned the farm in the 1880s; it was home to my parents and to us children. There had been close to 100 years of legitimate freehold ownership; it had been earned and maintained with hard work and toil by our elders for the benefit and welfare of their children and their families. Through iniquitous and inhuman legislation, my family was rendered homeless and wanderers in the land of our birth (56).

Not only does her eviction off the family farm leave her homeless, but the later dispossession of the farm by the government deprives her of her heritage. Her eviction off the farm by her aunt leaves her feeling isolated and also affects her sense of self-worth, she says that she "felt pushed out like pus from inflamed tissues" (110). She leaves to stay with her father, but due to their long separation following the divorce of her parents when she was very young, the relationship lacks warmth and familiarity. Ellen relates her reunion with her father at the station as follows:

We shook hands and kissed without embracing, both radiating an awkward joy and happiness – awkward because neither of us was acting naturally. We both lacked to a very large extent father/daughter natural love, longing and joy on our reunion (111).

In addition to her alienation from her biological father, there is no warmth and support offered by her new stepmother. Ellen recalls how she was in need of someone to take her hand and say "Welcome home" (112), but that her stepmother was neutral and non-committal (112). It is this void, the lack of warmth and parental support that eventually drives her away from her father's home as well. When she meets Ernest Moloto (120) on a trip to visit her sister in Saulspoor, she is filled with the hope that a life with him will provide her with the home she has longed for:

I yearned for a home where there was peace and love. A home where I would have a family I would love and care for. A home my friends and relatives would visit and relax in. A home which would help me forget some of the problems I had suffered as a child. This was my dream (122).

Her dream is crushed, however, as the marriage brings her "both physical and mental sufferings" (124). Although she does not enter into much detail about it, the exposure to her husband's abuse, coupled with his neglect of her following her miscarriage, leads to her decision to leave him (124-5). She says that her experiences in the home of her first husband left her no choice but to return to the home of her father: "That is when I decided to save myself for myself, and for my two sons" (125). By this time, however, Ellen's dream of finding a home had vanished before her eyes "like vapour into air" (125). Once

more she is evicted from her home, and even though the decision to leave is her own, she does feel that she "was pushed out psychologically" (131). Despite the scars her previous marriage left her with, she accepts Godfrey Kuzwayo's marriage proposal, citing her desire for a home as her main reason for doing so: "My childhood longing for a home I could see and refer to as mine, even if I shared it with someone, was still unfulfilled, and remained a burning issue within me" (144).

It would seem that Ellen's early feelings of isolation from her cousins, exacerbated by her eviction from the family farm and unfulfilling stay with her father, prompt her into two marriages, the last of which finally provides her with the opportunity to establish a home and find self-expression through motherhood. Although her marriage to Godfrey Kuzwayo is blessed with a son, "an opportunity to express my motherhood, deep-seated emotions of love and care, and the sheer satisfaction of living with and for one's offspring" (180), it is marred by her longing for the two sons she had to leave behind when she left her first marriage (180). Both sons come to stay with her eventually. Her eldest, Matshwene Everington Moloto, is influxed into Johannesburg successfully due to the fact that he was born there (183), and even though efforts to register Bakone (Justice) as a resident of Soweto fail (184), Ellen decides to defy the laws of Influx Control and so the family is reunited.

Ellen's reunion with her sons and their time of living a normal family life - taken for granted by so many families - is, sadly, short-lived. Ellen says that after Bakone came to live with them, they "happily settled down, permission or no permission...in the normal way families

do all over the world" (185). Before long, however, the political intrudes on the personal and Ellen speculates as follows about Bakone's blossoming political involvement, "Who knows to what extent this refusal of permission to live with his mother pushed Justice towards his involvement in the black political movements?" (185). Justice's involvement with the UCM and promotion of literacy among black people leads to his three-year ban to Mafikeng (189), where he is not allowed to be in the company of more than one person at a time (191). The banishment of her son strengthens Ellen's resolve "to be committed to the struggle of the black man for as long as I live" (189). Her own life is marked by increased political activity which eventually culminates in her arrest by the security police for her membership of the Committee of Ten (199). She spends five months in detention at the Johannesburg Fort and is released without being charged (198). Once more Ellen is separated from her children and she is fraught with worry about her youngest son who is left alone at home, as by this time Godfrey Kuzwayo had passed away (205). Again the impact of the political on the personal comes to the fore as Ellen's longed-for family union is shattered due to the prosecution of their political activity, as Sonny's family was increasingly fragmented and separated as a result of their political involvement.

When looking at the life of Ellen Kuzwayo, we see significant parallels arising between her and the fictional characters discussed in preceding chapters. Michael K's journey is marked by his being stripped of earthly possessions, his eviction off the farm where he discovered his vocation as a gardener. Sonny and his family are displaced and isolated, they struggle to find a place of belonging on either side of the racial divide, not only in terms of physical residence, but also in terms of affiliation and they attempt at resolving

this by aligning with the struggle for black liberation, only to pay the price of the fragmentation of their family. Similarly Ellen finds herself displaced by her eviction and the eventual dispossession of the family farm and struggles to find a home and a place of belonging. When she does finally succeed in re-uniting her family, they are torn apart by the consequences of their political involvement. Ellen's life, like that of Michael K and Sonny's family, is thus marked by dispossession and displacement. What is significant, however, is her response to her repressive environment compared to that of the aforementioned characters.

Michael K is oppressed by the hierarchies imposed on him by a system that classifies him as the inferior other of the white master. He is non-white and so has to serve the state under labour conditions that deny him the freedom of self-definition and self-fulfilment. Through the course of the novel state control denies him many forms of freedom, freedom of movement, the freedom to live in the place of his choice through repeated incarcerations, the freedom to practice the occupation of his choice by being subjected to forced labour, and the freedom to define himself. He is repeatedly called "Michaels" instead of Michael, signifying the state's attempts at imposing an identity on him. Characteristic of his resistance to these oppressive conditions, is the silence that he utilizes as an escape mechanism. His refusal to tell his story, to give himself substance, despite the medical officer's urging him to do so, but also his repeated attempts at escaping the institutions the state forces him into, are his ways of offering resistance to the identity of inferior other which the state tries to impose on him. Michael K's silence, his insistence on freedom from institutions and his desire to lead a life of solitude on the

farm may be seen as attempts to avoid and escape the hierarchies and trappings of his oppressive society. Ellen Kuzwayo's life journey is also marked by continued attempts to impose the hierarchies of race and gender discrimination on her. She is the black female other of a state that denies her legally inherited ownership of property, denies her freedom of domicile through Group Areas legislation and further denies her the freedom to live with her own children through Influx Control regulations. Instead of submitting to the role of silenced marginalized other that is imposed upon her, she chooses to speak out. She relates incidents where, following the example of her grandmother who was "straightforward...in her talk" (62), she spoke out in defiance instead of being silenced into submission. Her interaction with the divorce lawyer marks one such occasion, where despite the presence of legal council she decides to speak for herself, demanding settlement out of court and free access to her children (140-2). On another occasion she is granted an interview with the Minister of Justice, which is characterized by her refusal to be intimidated by his position and her determination to speak her mind: "The day the government of this country agrees to sit round the table with the black people's own chosen leaders about the political aspirations of that community, then and only then shall we all begin to see the dawn of a new day of anticipated peace and calm within the country" (214). Upon her release from prison she lashes out at the warders, causing them great embarrassment in front of newly-arrived inmates (216), and shortly after her release she testifies at the trial of eleven students arrested under the Terrorism Act. After her testimony a grateful father thanks her with the following words: "You are not an ordinary woman, you pleaded like a man, only a man could speak the way you did" (227). Although the statement is loaded with patriarchal assumptions of male superiority, is it significant to

note that Ellen speaks out despite the risk of being detained again and against the expectations of silence imposed on her by her role as a woman. Her writing of the book entitled Call Me Woman is, in itself, a defiance of her position as silenced other and by giving recognition to numerous individuals and organizations like the YWCA in her book she also gives a voice to other black women: "These women form a large band of unsung heroines in the black community in South Africa" (178).

Where Michael K thus offers resistance to oppression through silence and withdrawal, and repeated attempts at escaping the structures of society, Ellen Kuzwayo offers resistance through speaking out and her involvement in society, first through her social work and later through political work. The parallel has already been drawn between Ellen's displacement, her continued search for a home and the dislocation of Sonny and his family in My Son's Story. It would seem that both Sonny's family and also the family of Ellen Kuzwayo attempt to find freedom from oppression by engaging with the plight of their communities and eventually becoming involved in political activity.

Sonny starts his career as a schoolteacher, but also does community work through his engagement with the parents. This work sparks a growing political awareness in him, followed up by political activity that results in his eventual detention. Ellen's career path portrays startling similarities. She also starts out as a schoolteacher, trains and works as a social worker, where through her involvement with the black community, her growing awareness of their plight prompts her to embrace political activity. Her detention and removal from her family has been mentioned. In addition she is denied freedom of

movement through the seizure of her passport (214). This is reminiscent of Sonny's being unable to visit his daughter in Lusaka due to the state's refusal to grant him a passport (267) and again the devastating effects of a repressive political system on the life of the family and individual are emphasized. In fact, Wells (1986:163) contends that Kuzwayo's series of personal crises is exacerbated by the political context:

...the death of her mother, the temporary collapse of her own mental health, ejection from her family home by a jealous stepmother, a disastrous first marriage and separation from her children. These could have happened anywhere in the world, but, set against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa, her problems took on exaggerated proportions. The obvious solution of turning to other relatives for help brought her into conflict with the nation's notorious 'influx control' laws which dictate who may live where. Non-compliance with such laws proved to be her only viable option, as it is for so many others.

This brings us to the importance of transgression in Call Me Woman. It has been mentioned that Influx Control laws prohibit Ellen from living with her sons from her first marriage and although her eldest is eventually influxed through legal channels, the same does not happen with her younger son and she has no choice but to transgress the law in order to fulfil her role as a mother. When Bakone is arrested for political activity his mother says to him:

"Life has never been a bed of roses for black people in South Africa. If you had done anything subversive, the law would have been even with you. You have been involved in a very noble engagement...which could have earned you recognition, honour and special respect in a normal, sane-minded

country. Here for this noble gesture, you are facing prosecution. This says to me, in this country if you are black, and you embark on a most respectable worthwhile project for your community, you become a threat to the rulers of this country. Remember nobody ever kicks a dead dog. This action by the state should never ever dampen your spirit. On the contrary, let it inspire you..." (188).

Here transgression is presented as a way of subverting the authority of an unjust regime, as a movement to power by the disempowered. There is the suggestion that in an unjust dispensation, transgression is necessitated in order to tip the scales of justice, as Kuzwayo says in Part 1: "Who is robbing whom in this country?" (19). Not only is the transgression of unjust laws presented as a way of subverting the authority of an unjust government, it also becomes a way of subverting patriarchal oppression. Although Kuzwayo's book is undeniably subversive of the racist laws of apartheid South Africa, it is also a subversion of the hierarchies imposed by the gender dialectic. Her book is not only an attempt to give a voice to the exploited black other, subjected to the superior white center, but it is also an attempt to give a voice to those who suffer the double marginalization of being black and female in a racist, patriarchal political system. Kuzwayo says: "As I shall stress time and time again in this book, the majority of black women for too long have been discriminated against as women and as blacks" (32). Significant in this regard is the minority status of women as sanctified by law at the time. In previous chapters reference was made to the reversal of roles between parent and child, resulting in a shift of power from the parent, as authority figure, to the child. In Chapter 16 of Call Me Woman, Ellen relates how in 1969 her application for a passport had to be signed by a male member of her family, due to her status as a minor under the law. Her eldest son,

Everington, signs the form under protest, but does so as a means to an end (240). Herein we see a reversal of roles where the son, despite moral objections to the principle involved, effectively becomes the parent's guardian. In this case, however, the shift in power is sanctified by patriarchal laws, reflecting the double discrimination against black women, but also pointing to the apartheid system as a male-dominated system.

Where the male/female dialectic is concerned, Kuzwayo subverts the assumptions of male superiority by showing numerous examples of women successfully breaking into so-called male territory. Call Me Woman is filled with examples of women breaking the restrictive bounds of their gender roles, a few of these examples follow. It has been mentioned that Part 1 of the book deals with the system of migrant labour, where the women are often left behind in rural areas to fend for their families. In the absence of the father they have to cultivate the land and tend the cattle (12) and take upon themselves the roles of both father and mother of the household:

Without warning, training or any sort of preparation, she became overnight mother, father, family administrator, counsellor, child-minder, old age caretaker and overall overseer of both family and neighbourhood affairs in a community which had been totally deprived of its active male population (13).

The said responsibilities have to be taken on despite the assumptions of inferiority surrounding these black women. Kuzwayo says:

The black woman, who through the centuries had been viewed by the white state as unproductive in industry, as totally dependent on her male

counterpart, as helpless, unintelligent to the point of being useless and stupid – the woman who much against her will had resigned herself to being labelled a 'minor' by the state – was suddenly plunged into a situation of accepting numerous roles of responsibility (12-13).

However, during the course of her social work and through her involvement with self-help organizations, Kuzwayo finds ample evidence to counter these assumptions of inferiority. The potters of Thaba Patchoa (75) and Legkraal (128) are a case in point. They show themselves capable of being industrious and enterprising through the production, bartering or selling of pots, in turn generating much-needed income for their families. Another case in point is the women of Zoutpansberg, who display initiative and independence in their tackling the problem of gastro-enteritis in their community by organizing and building latrines for their homes and local schools without the help of their husbands:

The husbands of about three-quarters of the women in this community were migrant labourers in cities... Some sent money home at regular intervals, but others were very irregular, while the rest had long stopped sending anything at all... Those husbands who came home when on leave wanted to rest and relax in that time... The rest did not bother to come home for one day. They had established new homes in the cities and often had new wives and children (177).

In the absence of the men, the women show themselves to be fully capable of assuming the role of breadwinner and by so doing, taking care of their families; they also organize projects and carry out demanding physical tasks themselves, so taking care of their community.

At the close of the book Kuzwayo takes pains to list the names of black women who have qualified as medical doctors and lawyers, previously regarded as predominantly male occupations. We also see Ellen herself often breaking into so-called male territory. On one such occasion she is asked by her son who is serving a banning order to propose marriage to the girl he loves, and to also take charge of the negotiations with the prospective family in-law, a task she carries out to its full fruition (Chapter 13). Even in her political involvement, she plays a leading role as the only female member of the Committee of Ten (200), instead of being the supportive partner of one of the leaders, the woman behind the man. Where Ellen's political involvement is concerned, Driver (1990:229) notes the significance of her placing the chapter dealing with her own detention due to political involvement (Chapter 14) directly after the chapter relating her son's banishment to Mafikeng. She bridges the two chapters with the following statement:

As I write this chapter in 1983, I am sitting in full view of the Atlantic Ocean, at a point where I can raise my eyes and catch a glimpse of Robben Island where many of the political prisoners from the black community are still serving jail sentences, ranging from twelve years to life imprisonment. The irony of it all!

This mixture of beauty and pain takes me back to 19 October 1977, when, at about half past four in the morning, a harsh rap on my front door startled me from sleep... The words, 'Maak oop', were sufficient for me to know that the new arrivals at my home were the security police (198).

This would seem like a determined effort to give recognition to women's contribution to the struggle alongside the contribution of their male counterparts. Kuzwayo's homage to the wives of prominent figures in the struggle in Part 3, Chapter 16, entitled "'Minors' are Heroines", seems to drive home the same point. She does, however, take pains also to pay homage to those women who made a contribution without receiving much recognition for it: "How can I begin to convey the suffering endured by so many black women – and the courage with which this suffering has been borne? Let me share with you a little of the lives of four women, two of them world renowned, one famous within South Africa, and one famous only in her community" (243). She mentions Mrs Nthaelone Manthata, whose son was detained under the Terrorism Act and placed in solitary confinement for seven months. Through shared nightly prayers and tears, this woman leads Kuzwayo to a better understanding of "the hurt, fear, doubt and sadness of a mother in this predicament" (245). By adding a name, a face and human emotion to the plight of so many mothers suffering the same fate, Kuzwayo effectively gives a voice to the silenced other. She mentions Albertina Sisulu who, together with her political involvement had to act as sole breadwinner for five children, due to the life sentence imposed on Walter Sisulu in 1964 (264) and Winnie Mandela, "the first black medical social worker in South Africa" (246). In addition reference is made to Dr Mary Susan Malahlela Xakana, "the first black woman doctor in South Africa" (247), who together with Mamazana Desiree Mkhale, "the first black woman to qualify as a lawyer in South Africa", succeeded in disproving "the myth that medicine and the law are the exclusive domain of men and white women" (249). Kuzwayo's text is thus subversive not only of white dominance, but also of male dominance. It lends a voice to the silenced other of racial and gender domination by

presenting black women as hard-working, innovative, enterprising and capable of establishing independence, despite the taxing conditions imposed upon them.

In Chapter 4 it was argued that Galgut's emphasis on borders and institutions serves as a comment on the inevitability of transgression and that the laying down of rigid lines of division, the jealous guarding of those borderlines, will eventually result in the transgression of those lines. The crossing of borderlines is illustrated through the journey he takes to Namibia, the territory of his previous enemy; but also in his shifting of various allegiances. He helps SWAPO, identifies with his mother, loves men - all in contravention of the limitations his white, male, heterosexual heritage seeks to impose on him. Kuzwayo's book shows the same tendency towards transgression. She subverts the power of colonial, racial superiority by showing that the assumptions that underpin the center/other dialectic are false. With numerous concrete examples of individuals and organizations she shows that black women, presumed the most inferior on the racial spectrum, so inferior as to classify them as minors (Chapter 16), are capable of initiating, organizing and completing hard work, in order to establish financial independence for themselves and take care of their families. Kuzwayo herself, after the failure of her first marriage and the death of her second husband, shows growing independence and self-determination. Her decision to leave her first husband and two children constitutes a decision to take responsibility for her own life, to save herself for herself and for her two sons (125), after which she increasingly finds self-expression and self-fulfilment in her community involvement and political work. Not only does she break the bounds of the inferior black other, but also of the inferior female black other, by crossing the rigidly

drawn lines of the gender dichotomy to enter into so-called male territory and showing, in addition, how other black women have tried, and succeeded in breaking into so-called male territory.

According to Driver (1990:230) the title of Call Me Woman could be read as a response to the earlier book Call Me Not a Man by Mtutuzeli Matshoba, which deals with, amongst other things, the dehumanization of a man at the hands of police reservists. In fact, Kuzwayo makes an impassioned effort in her book to show the humanity of those who have been denied this very basic quality by the apartheid system. In her Foreword to the book, Bessie Head refers to the black skin as "being a kind of rhinoceros hide at which are hurled tear gas, batons, bullets and ferocious police dogs" (xiii). Kuzwayo's text, however "puts aside the rhinoceros hide, to reveal a people with a delicate nervous balance like everybody else" (xiii). She does this by individualizing people, as was seen in her description of Mrs Nthaelone Manthata (243), thus adding a face to the suffering, but also by attacking labels and attempting to present the person behind the label. She refers to the infamous "Skokian Queens" who carried on beer brewing businesses and who were "seen as immoral and undesirable members of the community" (27). Elaborating beyond these labels she says:

But it was amazing to see the other side of their lives once you came to know them as residents, individuals and ordinary people...I recall particularly one lady named Motena. She was a lovely person, warm and very orderly in her life as a mother and housewife (27).

In doing so she presents the struggle of "Mama Motena" (28) as a mother, desperately trying to make ends meet for her family. About the boys from the reformatory who constituted part of her class at Law Palmer she says "My direct contact with them helped me to get to know them as people with weaknesses and strengths. Some of them were very lovable and intelligent" (139), thus presenting them as victims of circumstance instead of labelling them as degenerates. The incident where one of the boys grabs the headmaster by the tie to let him "experience the difference between a pupil and criminal" (157) is diffused by Kuzwayo's intervention because she is seen as treating these boys like all the others – "as *pupils*" (157) – and not as criminals or delinquents.

The affirmation and pride conveyed by the title are thus attempts at restoring dignity and humanity to those who are often seen as the most marginalized by both racial and gender discrimination, those who "have been given the humiliating and degrading tag of 'Minors' by both their menfolk and the government of this country" (151). By her assumption of the name of "woman" with pride and defiance, the sign that would normally predispose her to assumptions of inferiority and weakness becomes a mark of distinction, a proud re-definition and re-application of the word. It emphasizes that although she is woman by birth, she is also "man enough", strong and capable of assuming the roles and responsibilities usually attributed to men in a gender-biased society.

The title bears another significant implication. Instead of personalizing the title of her autobiography by the use of a proper noun - "Call Me Ellen" - Kuzwayo chooses to use a common noun, indicating that her plight is also the plight of her people, the plight of her

gender. Furthermore, although she writes an autobiography and so uses the first person pronoun, Driver (1990:230) points out the following about the narrative:

Kuzwayo's text focuses far less on the individual self than is usually the case with autobiography, for although it includes a considerable amount of personal narrative, with some introspection, it tries, largely through its portraits of other women, to proclaim an anti-individualist position that coheres with the philosophy of communalism proposed by Black Consciousness.

Kuzwayo's narrative is characterized by the relatively few occasions she refers to her personal feelings, and her avoiding elaborate detail when doing so. Her feelings of isolation and rejection when she is evicted by Aunt Blanche are soon pushed aside to tend to practicalities: "Quickly, though, I realised that weeping and moaning would not help me. So, I composed myself and wrote to my father" (105). When writing about the trauma she suffered at the hands of her first husband, she refers briefly to "both physical and mental sufferings" (124) and concludes "It is a great hardship to have your trust shaken in someone so very close to you. Even now, I find I cannot write in detail about it" (124). About her experiences in detention, her isolation from her relatives and children, she says "It is very difficult to describe the pain I suffered" (206), continuing with a description of the support received from friends such as Mrs Elaine Morris, deflecting the focus away from herself (207). In fact, the text abounds with examples of Kuzwayo placing own suffering in the context of the suffering of her people. The whole of Part 1 is dedicated to the appalling living and working conditions of the black community of which she forms part, in Part 2 she relates the abuse at the hands of her husband to the scourge of women abuse in

general "an experience I have in recent years come to realise is suffered by many wives the world over" (124). About Bakone's ban to Mafikeng, she says "My son Justice's sufferings when he was forcibly removed from his home and banned to Mafikeng for three years put me on a par with many other mothers of the black community who suffered the same or even greater hurt and pain" (194). There is the sense that she finds it difficult, impossible even to separate her life story from the story of her people and so the "I" becomes embroiled with the "we" that is her community. Driver (1990:232), citing Derrida, makes the following statement about the destabilizing of borderlines between "I" and "we" in the process of defining the self:

'Self' is constructed in dialectic with others or another: one cannot see oneself in the absence of projections from the world around one. What the self is awaits its determination by or from those outside the self, those who say 'me' to me, and who constitute the self for which I strive (Derrida, 1985:51).

When looking at the issue of identity in Call Me Woman, and taking into account the destabilizing of borderlines between superior white and inferior black, between male and female roles, between the individual "I" and the communal "we" illustrated in this chapter, what comes to the fore once more is that purity and "Wholeness of identity is an illusion" (Driver, 1990:249). Ellen Kuzwayo is undeniably a woman, but she also fulfills numerous traditionally male roles on the home and political front. She often fulfils the role of the father after her divorce and after the death of her second husband - her negotiations with Bakone's prospective in-laws being but one example - and plays a leading political role, for which she is detained, instead of being a woman fulfilling a largely supportive,

background role. She mentions numerous examples of black women who have successfully provided for their families in the virtual absence of their husbands due to migrant labour or abandonment and others who have established financial independence by breaking into professions that were previously regarded as "the exclusive domain of men and white women" (249). Again, the transgression of lines of division, whether it be into the "white" territory of industry and innovation, or the "male" territory of leadership on the home and political front, seems to arise as a necessary step in the definition of the self. Indeed it would seem as if Kuzwayo's sense of self-worth, as well as her pride in her sisters, stem to a large extent from their success in breaking into these territories of the white and male other.

In Chapter 1 reference was made to the philosophy/literature dialectic, and it was shown how, in Derridean terms, all writing is narrative and therefore falls subject to the unfixed nature of the sign. Derrida's concept of *différance* implies that the sign contains *différance* within itself, thus referring to other meanings beyond itself, and that truth cannot be fully captured by the sign, due to the *deferring* of meaning through the chain of signifiers. The looking up of a word in a dictionary, and being perpetually referred to another word, was cited as an example. Hence, according to Derrida, no writing - in the given example philosophy or literature - has an exclusive claim to complete and absolute truth, as the sign is perpetually contaminated by meanings beyond itself, and both philosophy and literature are expressed through the discourse of the sign. In the context of this chapter parallels were drawn between three novels regarded as works of fiction and an autobiography, which would be classified as factual writing. It is significant, however, that

the works of fiction addressed themes very similar to the factual narrative – marginalization, oppression, dispossession, displacement, isolation and transgression – and significant parallels could be traced between fictional characters and the real person, Ellen Kuzwayo. Although it is by no means suggested here that Kuzwayo's life story should be trivialized, by the same token the novels discussed earlier should perhaps not be dismissed as being only stories either. The parallels that have arisen between the texts, suggest that the issues of marginalization and oppression and their impact on identity are real, given the pains Coetzee, Gordimer and Galgut take to place their novels in historically and politically recognizable contexts. These parallels between fact and fiction, truth and fantasy, destabilize the divisive line between factual and fictional writing and subvert the exclusive claims of factual writing to "truth". This enables us to conclude that truths may reside in fiction, and - bearing in mind that biographical writing depends on reconstruction of memories in the mind of the writer – fiction may be found in factual writing.

Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to investigate the problem of identity from a South African post-colonial perspective. The researcher discussed four novels by four different authors so as to broaden the perspective on the central theme of identity. In the Theoretical Framework (Chapter 1) the center/other dialectic was discussed with reference to the deconstructive strategies of Jacques Derrida, who insists upon the link between logocentric thinking and the discourses of oppression which, in this dissertation, are primarily those of racism and sexism in the apartheid context. The link lies therein that logocentrism not only intends the division of conceptual material into categories of binary terms, so separating center from other, colonizer from colonized, black from white and male from female; but also points to the separation and alienation of individuals and societies by dividing them into oppositional poles, where each oppositional pole is meant to be pure and sealed against contamination by the other. The said division and separation are accompanied by the imposition of a value system that valorizes the center over the other, where the center is viewed as an originary source of truth, so subjecting the other to the power of the center and creating the violent hierarchies of racial and gender oppression.

In McQuillan (2000:10) it is stated that the "history of Western thought is the history of logocentrism in which the inequality of binary oppositions (privileging one term to the detriment of another) depends upon the representation of such inequality within discourse

(philosophical, literary, and so on)". Thus, logocentrism, or the centering and privileging of one word (the logos) to the detriment of the other

...is a theological activity because it presupposes and desires a single, fixed and authoritative centre. Such a concept also assumes that the question of who we are (subjectivity) is settled and stable: if the centre of authority is fixed then the question of who I am, defined in relation to that essential authority, is also fixed. Hence logocentrism treats subjectivity as being a matter of essential and stable meanings (McQuillan, 2000:14).

Logocentrism not only treats the formulation of identity as the compilation of set and stable meanings, but also functions to maintain a fiction of purity around its privileged terms, so marginalizing the other. McQuillan (2000:15) states in this regard:

In presupposing the innate superiority of one term over another (man/woman, white/black) it is necessary to assume that one term is sealed against contamination by the other. In an essay entitled 'Racism's last word' Derrida argues that the practice of apartheid (racial segregation) in South Africa before 1994 was the ultimate logic of Western logocentrism. 'Apartheid' literally means 'segregation', and logocentrism works by constructing false borders between concepts and assuming the rigorous purity of terms. Deconstruction is hybridity because it seeks to undo this logic of 'outside' and 'inside', showing the ways in which terms within a binary opposition are not independent of one another but rely on each other through mutual contamination.

Indeed, throughout the dissertation the examining of the relationships structured around binary terms revealed the unsustainability of rigorously pure, uncontaminated identities. In

fact, it was shown that the crisis of identity in the post-colonial context is a crisis perpetuated by binary categorization, where the various characters find themselves at odds with, and often unable to reconcile themselves with the definitive and rigorous categories of race and gender imposed upon them. In terms of racial identity, the coloured identity emerged as a case in point where Sonny and his family are caught between the poles of white and black, in Will's words, they are "Halfway between" (21). They are dislocated and alienated from the white society that violently tries to expel them, eventually bombing their home; and they are also not completely absorbed by black society, as evidenced by Sonny's intermediate role in the liberation movement and Will's feeling that the black vendor "has no recognition for me, my half-blackness" (145). It was shown, however, that even though Sonny's family, and also Michael K, find themselves uncomfortably interposed between the poles of white and black, not fitting either category, the white state finds a way of forcefully inscribing them into the pool of black exploited labour by defining their identity negatively, by labelling them as non-white, so creating another binary through the centering of white superiority. This points to the recuperative power of logocentric thinking, but McQuillan (2000:15) argues, "This does not mean that we should give up deconstructing racial identity. Rather it suggests that there can be no limit to this task because there is no limit to the recuperative effects of metaphysics".

The recuperative effects of metaphysics, the recuperative power of binary logic, was also illustrated in Chapter 2 through Michael K's continued search for freedom from state institutions, which is also a search for the freedom to define a self that is free from the identities of the black, exploited labourer which the state tries to impose on him. The novel

presents cycles of escape and incarceration, where in the end the character of Michael faces near physical disintegration, reduction in body mass to the point of starvation in a last desperate attempt to elude state institutions and the institutionalized identities imposed upon him.

The alienation and dislocation suffered by those labelled as non-white - Michael K and Will are examples of this alienated condition - constitute indictments against the system that forces them into the position of inferior other, thereby denying them the freedom to define themselves and practice the vocation of their choice. However, the said alienation and sense of dislocation are not limited to the so-called non-white side of the racial spectrum. The medical officer (Life & Times of Michael K) - in his grappling with the precariousness of his position of power over K, his inability to establish a rapport so as to confirm his position as master - and Patrick (The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs) - in his inability to reconcile himself with the identity of white male supremacy that is his heritage, his need to transgress into the territory of the other for self-definition - both emerge as examples of the alienation that arises from an identity of insularity and separation from the other. In both examples the supremacy, but also the security of the category "pure white" are eroded. In the case of the white medical officer his authority is undermined by the revelation of his dependence on the subordinate K for the latter's recognition and submission and by the fact that he increasingly questions his involvement in the war to sustain racial dominance. Similarly, Patrick questions his involvement in the border war against the black enemy, SWAPO. He is unable to find camaraderie with his white South African fellow-soldiers and it is only when he transgresses into the Namibian territory of

the black SWAPO other that he learns more about camaraderie and purposeful commitment to the cause of liberation through the characters of Godfrey, who seems to live for the cause of liberation and Andrew Lovell, who sacrificed his life for the same cause. This puts assumptions of white superiority into question, and through Patrick's affiliation with the black other he is brought into contact with what seems to him a more fulfilling and purposeful way of being in the world. Ellen Kuzwayo's narrative of repeated examples of innovation, industriousness and movement towards independence amongst black women - those oftentimes regarded as most inferior on the spectrum of race and gender polarization - also undermine assumptions of white (male) superiority by the portrayal of these women as capable of successfully transgressing into the so-called white territories of industry, innovation and independence. Thus, when looking at the issue of racial identity, it becomes evident that the problem of attempting to secure an identity of purity, an identity based on the exclusion of the other, lies partly in the isolation and alienation that lie in its wake, but also in the unsustainability of securing its borders indefinitely. The various transgressions into the territory of the other, presented in Call Me Woman, but also represented by the crossing of various borders and changing of allegiances in The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs, serve as illustrations of the fact that the categories of identity, particularly those of race and gender, are by no means inviolable or fixed.

Another problem with attempting to formulate an identity of purity, according to Reckwitz (1993), is that it is often based on an over-simplification and misperception of the other. The medical officer's formulating a false identity of mastery, which collapses because it is

based on the misperception of Michael as his inferior, serves as a telling example. The fact that the coloured identity is defined negatively, as non-white, is another illustration of the over-simplification and misperception of the other. Reckwitz (1993:2-3) says about the formulation of a false identity in relation to a misperceived other:

In other words, the inevitable self-simplification necessary for the formation of any social system is here compounded by an extremely crude simplification of the others. In regarding them only as the non-self the white system cuts off its vital world-referentiality... The resulting aporia has been expressed in very strong terms by Breyten Breytenbach: "The protection of one's purity implies the straining of one's surroundings through a simplifying eye" (*End Papers* 60). However: "It will be said it is 'us' or 'them' – without knowing who 'us' is, without our *knowing* 'them'" (Breytenbach, *Season* 158-59)... "He [the white South African] is becoming conditioned by his lack of contact with the people of the country, his lack of contact with the South African in himself" (Breytenbach, *End Papers* 56). Put very drastically, the ensuing loss of identity suffered by the whites that results in "The Alienation of White South Africa" (Breytenbach, *End Papers* 53-61) can be summed up as follows: "By defecating others we defecate ourselves" (Breytenbach, *Season* 159).

The male/female dialectic, its implied either/or choice of being either male or female, has, like the race dialectic, revealed itself as insufficient in the explication of identity for the characters in the various novels. In Chapter 3 it was shown that Aila, the silent, female other of Sonny the revolutionary, evolves through her transgression into the territory of the male, politically-active other, increasingly assuming roles and responsibilities normally regarded as male territory. Similarly, in Chapter 5, Ellen Kuzwayo's increased political

involvement, her leadership position in the ANC, her outspokenness and the writing of the autobiography itself are ways in which she defies her role as marginalized, black, silenced, female other. Both Aila and Ellen also transgress into male territory by assuming the roles of both father and mother in the absence of the heads of their respective households, accepting and bearing the burden of being the family breadwinner.

The said transgression into the territory of the male other by both Aila and Ellen, through the adoption of roles normally regarded as male roles, constitutes not only a means to a broader and fuller definition of the self, but also a movement to power, causing both women to evolve towards independence and self-determination. The said transgression as a means to self-definition also takes place from the other side of the spectrum. In Chapter 4 it was shown that Patrick, a white South African soldier, is unable to reconcile himself with the violent values of white male heterosexual superiority that seem to be his heritage. By his interaction with the black enemy, in the form of Godfrey, he learns to embrace the purpose of commitment to the cause of racial freedom and through his association with the female other in the form of his mother, he learns to embrace the value of emotional vulnerability, which is often regarded as a form of weakness by what he calls the brotherhood of men. His interactions with the so-called inferior black, Godfrey; the inferior female, his mother; and homosexual other, Lappies thus offer him an alternative to the values of the racist, patriarchal society he has rejected.

Hence, the idea of a pure, uncontaminated identity is destabilized by figures like Ellen Kuzwayo, Aila and Patrick who transgress into the territory of the other, assuming roles

typically associated with the other. The isolation, alienation and dislocation that prompt their transgression constitute but some of the difficulties surrounding the formulation of an identity based on either/or choices and mutually exclusive determinations. Sonny and his family and Michael K, are neither purely black or white; Patrick is white by birth, but affiliates with the cause for black liberation, so betraying his pure white heritage; Aila and Ellen Kuzwayo are female by birth, but adopt various male roles. Similarly, Sonny, in his learning to perform domestic tasks and Patrick, through his increased emotional vulnerability, adopt traditionally female roles. These characters cannot be said to be purely white or black, male or female, in that in their daily functioning, within the larger process of defining themselves, they not only learn to occupy a variety of roles, but also fall subject to the reversal of roles and the changing of allegiances and affiliations.

Furthermore, the crisis of identity is not only a crisis of the sign, where characters are faced with rigid either/or options for self-definition, but is also perpetuated by the violent hierarchies of race and gender discrimination so prevalent in the South African apartheid context. Michael K's isolation, the sense of alienation and dislocation experienced by both Sonny and Ellen Kuzwayo's families in their search for a home, a place of belonging, but also the isolation experienced by the medical officer and Patrick testify to the struggle of characters on both sides of the race and gender dialectic to formulate an identity based on mutually exclusive categories. These characters find themselves at odds with their designated positions on the dialectical scale, unable to limit themselves to and reconcile themselves with the categories imposed upon them. This inability to reconcile themselves with the position of inferior other, whether it be the black slave of white power or the

female, minor other of a patriarchal society, finds expression through various modes of resistance. In Life & Times of Michael K, silence emerges as a form of resistance. In Call Me Woman, resistance is shown by the breaking of silence and increased political engagement, as is the case with Sonny and the members of his family in My Son's Story.

The various examples of the reversal of roles, illustrated mainly through the parent/child dialectic and the characters' venturing into the territory of the other, by the adoption of roles and changing of allegiances, carry not only the inevitable implication of contamination of identity categories, but also bear the implication of destabilized power relations. In fact, enquiry into the power relations - mainly the relations between master and slave, male and female, parent and child - reveal various reversals, transgressions, subversion and even equivocation. In Life & Times of Michael K the white male master is decentralized and disempowered by K's refusal to recognize his authority or to submit to his mastery. In My Son's Story, Sonny is decentered and displaced by his wife who becomes father, breadwinner, revolutionary. His eventual fall from power, his increased impotence, is counterpointed by her movement to power. In Call Me Woman Kuzwayo illustrates a similar movement to power by breaking into the territory of the superior white/male center, and in The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs the authority of the white male master is undermined once more through the character of Patrick, who feels compelled to break into the respective territories of the black and female inferior other to achieve self-definition. During the course of all four of these texts the parent/child dialectic becomes a site for the reversal and destabilizing of power relations. In the relationship between Anna and Michael K, Aila and Will, Ellen Winter and Patrick, the decentering of the parent takes

place as the child becomes the parent's caretaker and protector, and in Call Me Woman, this reversal of power is sanctioned by law, due to Ellen's classification as a minor. From this we see that the contamination of the binary categories of identity, the decentering of the center through reversal and displacement, leads inevitably to shifts in power between center and other, so creating the subversive possibilities of movement to power by the disempowered and marginalized.

In the Introduction, reference was made to Kirkwood (1976) who attributes the displacement of the colonized to the colonizers' assumptions of superiority regarding their own culture, values and traditions, and their enforcing of their value system on the colonized, leading to the entrenchment of these ideas within the occupied society. The division of a colonized society into imperial center and marginalized other, thus goes beyond segregation politics. It also implies the violent imposition of a foreign value system upon the colonized. The fact that the CNA prize was in existence for twenty-five years before it was awarded to a black writer is an undeniable reflection of the values of white superiority so prevalent in the apartheid society of the time. However, as McQuillan (2000:22) has pointed out about totalitarian, separationist ideology - like that of apartheid - and its giving rise to so-called pure identities:

Even the most 'rigorously pure' identity cannot help but be hybrid because all identity depends upon the construction of limits which must, by their nature, be permeable. Thus, any identity is always already haunted by the other it seeks to exclude.

It would thus seem that even though the CNA prize serves as a prime example of the imposition of imperial values and their entrenchment in colonized society, the eventual penetration of a previously white domain by a black female writer meant that it also eventually became an example of the impossibility of sustaining the linearity of frontiers of black exclusion and marginalization. Reckwitz (1993:18) states the following in this regard:

Where classifications like black and white, because of their inherent weakness, become untenable and where, therefore, the traditional ways in which human beings define themselves as individuals or act within society are no longer viable, the actantial and functional system of language in general and of the narrative code in particular must also register (or anticipate) such changes, thus giving tangible proof of a world that is no longer understandable or controllable in traditional terms.

The examination of binarism reveals that the either/or options implied by binary structuring are untenable in the struggle for achieving self-expression and self-definition. This deconstructive unravelling of binarism would suggest that the formation of identity is not as controllable or as quantifiable as binary structuring with its either/or choices would lead us to believe. Derrida's notion of *differance*, which denotes both difference and deferment of meaning within the sign, points to the instability of the sign, its inability to capture meaning completely, to name fully and finally. Thus, the contamination of the dialectical categories of identity and the continual crisscrossing and transgression of borderlines, show the insufficiency of these either/or categories in explicating identity, and reveal their inability to contain and give full and final definition to the individual. As the instability of the sign implies a perpetual shifting of meaning, so the hierarchies created by binary

structuring are repeatedly destabilized, which not only problematizes the formulation of pure, essentialist identities but also makes it virtually inconceivable to think of positions of power in absolutist terms. In short, if the dialectical categories of identity are not secure or inviolable, the power relations structured around these oppositions are also unstable and vulnerable to equivocation. We may thus conclude that neither the signs and the categories by which we designate identity, nor the power relations structured around these categories of identity, are cast in stone and that the formulation of an identity remains an ongoing search, marked by processual continuity – an arduous, but fascinating journey.

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