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ANXIETY OF AUTHORSHIP AND THE BILDUNGSROMAN: THE HIDDEN NARRATIVE IN BURGER'S DAUGHTER.

T E S I S

QUE PARA OPTAR POR EL GRADO DE:

MAESTRIA EN LETRAS INGLESAS

P R E S E N T A:

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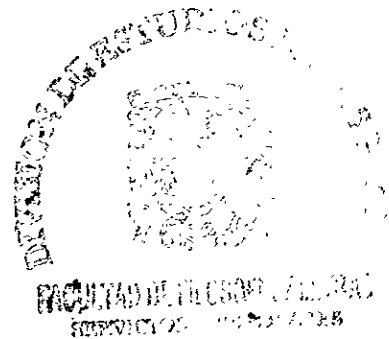

To Alex and Nick

They have endured

And my very special thanks to

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Preface

The draft of this essay was researched and written several years ago and originally formed part of a much longer exploration of Nadine Gordimer's work This has caused several problems when trying to present it as an independent unit, even though I had always envisaged each chapter as such. Arguments, ideas and quotations seem to stick to one unconsciously as one moves from one approach to another. It may appear rather dated, in so far as feminist, literary and socio-political theory and criticism are concerned, but my intention has always been to place Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* within the socio-historical consciousness of its times. My hope is that this study stands for what it is rather than for what it could have been and that it is as enjoyable to read as it was to write.

One reason underlying my refusal to update it is personal, but central to this study. I wrote part of it while looking after my mother who was dying of cancer, as was Elizabeth Curren in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990), written as a testament to her "lost" daughter, now living in America:

> Now, my child, flesh of my flesh, my best self, I *ask you to draw back. I tell you this story not so* that you will feel for me but so that you will learn how things are. It would be easier for you, I know, if the story came from someone else, if it were a stranger's voice sounding in your ear. But the fact is, there is no one else (Coetzee 1990,95)

Reflecting upon the differences in circumstance of these two women and yet the obvious parallels, I could not get Coetzee's protagonist out of my mind. Coetzee chose this topic in part to depict an allegory of the horrific cancer of apartheid eating South Africa out from inside. My mother's cancer was no fiction, no allegory; it was as real as life itself. Our ability to detach ourselves from reality and attach literary labels to it when presented in fictional terms has always amazed me.

So I would firstly like to dedicate this essay to my mother, who gave me all the

encouragement she could - endless cups of tea and biscuits, long chats and giggles, as we explored our pasts and presents I would not say I always had an easy relationship with her; in this I would agree with Nadine Gordimer, who found it difficult to set herself free from her mother's care and affection. Although Gordimer has refused to write an autobiography as such, some of her essays give an insight into her relationship with her mother It was suggested that Nadine, as a young adolescent, had some heart condition. Her mother, an English woman, decided that she should not go to school and definitely could not dance, which was all young Nadine wanted to do. However, this gave a young woman, born to be a writer, the opportunity, despite her fury at the time, to read and read and read. It also kindled that fire of rebellion, as we observe in her semi-autobiographical first novel, *The Lying Days* (1953), to question her position in society and to expose the great South African lie, as she has called it. Anyway, as Marcus Aurelius said, living "calls for the art of the wrestler, not the dancer. Staying on your feet is all, there is no need for pretty steps" (Coetzee 1990,121) Gordimer has wrestled with all her might and has even found room to exercise those "pretty steps" formerly denied her in her magnificent *oeuvre*.

Burger's Daughter (1979) tells the story of Rosa Burger, who loses her parents and tries to discover what it actually means to be Lionel Burger's daughter, so that she can transform that earlier identity. This young woman was born, unlike Gordimer, into a family of dissidents, the meaning of which becomes more and more irrelevant as the Black Consciousness Movement, under Steve Biko, decides to take the struggle for liberation into its own hands, thereby casting the white dissidents to one side As the title implies, the relationship between Rosa and her father is crucial to Rosa's development as a revolutionary and a storyteller, but, underlying this, is the almost occult, yet significant relationship with her mother. *Burger's Daughter* is a novel "of social and political import which is also an intensely subjective prose poem, mesmerizing in the subtle cadences of its language", Joyce Carol Oates is quoted as saying on the back cover of the Penguin

edition. Thus, this study of the role of the dissident is embellished by Gordimer's persuasive mode of expression, while she challenges the role of art and storytelling in the age of iron, watching "not the lie but the space behind the lie where the truth ought to be" (Coetzee 1990,26). Overtaken by the strength of the black movement when writing this novel, Gordimer preferred, for example, to incorporate the statement made by the Soweto Students Representative Council after the massacre of June 16, 1976 verbatim. Nelson Mandela enjoyed this novel particularly, which reassured him of Gordimer's growing political commitment. He wrote to Helen Joseph: "She has turned out to be a forthright and formidable communicator whose message reaches far beyond the visible horizons. How such girls are so precious today!" (Sampson 1999,329).

At one stage in the novel, this girl confesses:

> What I say will not be understood.
> Once it passes from me, it becomes apologia or
> accusation. I am talking about neither but
> you will use my words to make your own meaning
> (Gordimer 1979,171).

Yes, Gordimer speaks to you and me, as Rosa speaks in her mind to specific narratees. Each addressee adopts a completely different stance, as will her readers However we interpret it, there can be no doubt that we are moved and challenged. As Stephen Clingman has said, Gordimer is *the* transgressor. Her protagonist in this novel may remain silent, but Gordimer will not, whatever the outcome may be for her personally. Like several of her former novels, *Burger's Daughter* was banned in South Africa. What follows is neither apologia nor accusation. The meaning depends on each one of us

It was not until I came across Gordimer's work, with which I could identify in one way or another, that the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle concerning my personal interest in South Africa began to take shape. Throughout my childhood, my father had regaled us with stories about his adventures at the tender age of seventeen in the Boer War; one that particularly impressed us was

that his company had saved young Churchill from imprisonment - or death - because he was, as an audacious young Englishman, standing in the middle of a battle-field trying to get the best war report back to Britain. I later discovered the guest room contained a surprisingly good library Having devoured an early copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, I went back for more and came upon Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which moved me beyond belief. Once out in the real world, I had the good fortune to work with James Kantor, who, apparently an 'innocent' party, had spent a year in detention before the Rivonia trial (1963-1964). He and Mandela exchanged ties as a sign of good luck on the day when the judge was going to deliver sentence. Kantor was given a nominal sentence, which he preferred not to serve and escaped Mandela did not. He had, however, made perhaps the most effective speech of his life from the dock, which ended on the following note:

> During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die (Sampson 1999,193).

Still living in an age of heroes, whether of the hegemonic or the underground culture, I became fascinated by Mandela. At long last I heard him speak in Westminster Hall in 1996 Like the Labour peer sitting in front of Anthony Sampson, I cried, as the Grenadier Guards played "*Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika*", the former hymn of South Africa's black revolutionaries, and "the historic Mandela" stood before us all: "the last of the succession of revolutionary leaders in Asia and Africa who fought for their freedom, were imprisoned and reviled, and were eventually recognised as heads of state", as Sampson puts it in his biography *Mandela* (1999,xxii). No saint, of course, but a leader of moral authority and a consummate politician, who "has always been determined,

like Gandhi or Churchill, to lead from the front, through his example and presence".

This man of admirable courage, fortitude and forgiveness seldom witnessed has been my inspiration throughout. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has helped me with this thesis, including Nadine Gordimer and Stephen Clingman (the former for writing such thought-provoking and courageous novels and the latter for so kindly sending me his extensive bibliography). I would like to dedicate this as well to all those people, not just in South Africa, who have lost their lives defending human rights as I would never have the courage to do, and who have had the urge to make with words, as Gordimer puts it, whatever the circumstances.

1. Introduction

At the time of writing *Burger's Daughter* (1979), Nadine Gordimer resisted being described as a feminist writer, even though she did admit in 1981 to becoming much more radical as a woman Despite this, most readers of her work would agree with Martin Trump's assertion that "some of her best works deal with areas of women's experience" (1989,187). It is not so much that she renders visible women's experience, however, as the ways in which she renders it visible which explain the "feminist impulse" that has been present in her novels from *The Lying Days* (1953) to *A House Gun* (1998) (Driver 1983,33). Gordimer's questioning of the relationship "to power, language and meaning", which is determined by her gender difference and socio-political differing, is the underlying interest running throughout her work. "Writing, the production of meaning becomes", as Mary Jacobus has observed, "the site both of challenge and otherness" (1989,52)

When distinguishing three types of intellectual dissidents with direct reference to the Soviet bloc, Julia Kristeva discusses the "sexual difference" of women who, as writers, are subject to another form of dissidence, that of exile which is both an essential condition of writing (what Gordimer calls "solitude" or "detachment" (1988,114)) and an inevitable one for all writing women, "an irreligious act that breaks all ties" (1986a,295). As many have argued in the case of Virginia Woolf and her predecessors, the relationship of women to the symbolic order is different. Kristeva writes in "Women's Time":

> sexual difference - which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction - is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which *is* the social contract; a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning. (1986b,200)

According to Kristeva's theory, Gordimer might well be thought of as one of those dissident intellectuals who, by attacking political power directly, remains within the very discourse she wishes to outdo, but it is Gordimer's alien and critical relationship to this discourse that has made her, particularly through Rosa Burger, the protagonist of *Burger's Daughter*, question the identity of women writers and dissidents who have recognised its split nature and the means by which it is construed. I am concerned here with the ways in which Gordimer, as a woman writer, challenges that internalised split. This has determined my decision to focus on the anxiety of authorship in *Burger's Daughter* and the genre of the *Bildungsroman* chosen for this exploration, in an attempt to illustrate, from a feminist perspective, the veracity of Toni Morrison's idea that "the best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time" (1988,345).

Gordimer believes, as do many other writers, that writing in a situation of oppression is a political act. Morrison, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, two years after Gordimer was awarded this honour, expands upon this belief.

> If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn't about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything. I am not interested in indulging myself in some private, closed exercise of my imagination that fulfills only the obligation of my personal dreams - which is to say yes, the work must be political. It must have that as its thrust. That's a pejorative term in critical circles now: if a work of art has any political influence in it, somehow it's tainted. My feeling is just the opposite: if it has none, it is tainted (1988,344-45).
>
> The problem comes when you find harangue passing off as art. It seems to me that the best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time.

My main interest throughout my study of Gordimer's work has been to discover how she

combines literary awareness and socio-political consciousness in her commitment as a novelist to find alternatives to the chameleon-like apartheid discourse that she exposes and explores; in other words, her narrators' ability to expose those false definitions in all their ambiguity in order to challenge, undermine and transform them. I should point out that I am speaking principally about her work written *before* the multi-racial elections in South Africa in April 1994 and my study relies mainly upon information published before that date.

Central to this discussion is Gordimer's statement that "the transformation of experience remains the writer's basic essential gesture" (1988,298)[1]: the transformation of a country, of a committed and dissident woman writer, of the act of writing, and, hopefully, of the critics and readers, however "split down the middle", as E. Mphahlele puts it in "Renewal Time" (1981), in this "divided house" (1988,214). Clearly, the transformation of experience is not posed as an indulgence in "some private, closed exercise of [the] imagination" but as an exploration of the South African community which is the source of Gordimer's inspiration. This exploration inevitably involves the public and the private domain, for, as Gordimer has explained people's "lives, and I believe their very personalities, are changed by the extreme political circumstances one lives under in South Africa" (Plimpton 1989,239)

As Gordimer explains in "A Bolter and the Invincible Summer" (1963), she was born within the white enclave of Springs, an East Rand mining town some sixty kilometres from Johannesburg (1988,22-26). On account of the circumstances of her upbringing, she took refuge in reading about a world of ideas "remote from [her] experience" and in writing short stories in which she "was looking for what people meant but didn't say, not only about sex, but about politics and their relationship with the black people among whom we lived" [2] To the world she projected a "cosmetic-counter sophistication", a "camouflage image" as "a dilettantish girl [. .] at most a Bovary in the making". Her awakening to the South African situation came from a "doubt,

led by Kafka rather than Marx" and

> the "problems" of my country did not set me writing, on the contrary, it was learning to write that sent me falling, falling through the surface of "the South African way of life".

In this way she began her life-long and convoluted battle "to chip [her] way out of shell after shell of ready-made concepts and make [her] own sense of life" Against a backdrop of a society torn apart by class, racial and sexual discrimination, the battle waged in her writing breaks down that "essential coherence" of the ready-made concepts of her social, racial and sexual identities In this respect, we might regard her non-fictional writing and her fiction, including many collections of excellent short stories, as two different modes revolving around a single process

In the literary tradition of her country she started to write at a time when the novel of ideas was the province of her male counterparts. She is frequently discussed along with such writers as Alan Paton, Peter Abrahams, Dan Jakobson, Alex La Guma, Jack Cope, J.M. Coetzee and André Brink, all of whom have offered insights into the peculiar plight of the South African living under an apartheid regime In the tradition of patriarchy and racism, she writes as an outsider, a trespasser on language and history. Despite her marginality as a South African and a woman writer, she has become for many the interpreter of South Africa.

Though the birth was a difficult one, Gordimer has won this recognition perhaps because her work fits so well in the school of thought which demands that one question the natural order of things, especially since it deals specifically with a situation in which the "unnatural" has become the "natural". Her novelistic venture appears to run parallel to the project set for her by the country in which she was born and bred:

> South Africa is a country that sets you on a permanent course of self-discovery; it can detect you, quite without warning, in some act of striking hypocrisy (1988,143).

Under every stone upturned - and many are - lies a hypocritical attitude Gordimer's quest for self-discovery challenges her readers to turn over those stones and scrutinise what they find concealed there. Her insistent questioning of the nature of language and the difference in language makes us very aware that the novel moves, clings firmly on to that life of its own and is forever surprising the snooper at work on it. Surprise alerts and awakens: it shakes the frozen mind out of prejudices and preconceptions Neat and comfortable schemes are shattered; contracts and conventions are broken. As another's subjectivity encroaches upon our own, the concepts we had begun to feel at ease with disrupt challenging that sense of existential coherence.[3] For this reason, the text should be read

> as a site of contradiction and conflict, both in terms of its formal constitution and its critical history. From contemporary post-colonial theory we get the idea of the novel as resistance, a political strategy to disrupt, if not fully refuse, the oppositional 'reality' posited by colonial discourse (Smyth 1997,31).

Gordimer's "conscionable awareness", which has accompanied her through a life of "creative self-absorption", has transformed her perception of self, society and writing as her narrative and political confidence has grown (1988,285-300). Under the influence of many a writer, that "most solitary and deeply marvellous of secrets - the urge *to make* with words" - began to fill the "blank spot" Gordimer found on the imaginative colonial map, echoing in her own way the words of Lyndall in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). "*we* bear the world, and *we* make it" (1976,180). In this sense, it might be suggested that Gordimer, so critical of her South African literary foremothers (including Schreiner (1885-1920)) who failed, in her opinion, to make the connection between one particular form of oppression and others, had no specific model to fall back on - as Toni Morrison has also claimed - and thus began to write the kind of novels she would like to read - of which there was a dearth at the time. Gordimer recalls

that her encounter with Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) and Pauline Smith (1882-1959) "confirmed for me that my own 'colonial' background provided an experience that had scarcely been looked at, let alone thought about, except as a source of adventure stories" (1988,25). The other English world, associated with beauty, with "the unattainable world of the imagination", with the world of ideas while still harbouring the urge for imperial expansion even in its unconscious (Spivak 1986,262-80), gradually came alive in conjunction with her own "lived experience". Her critical approach to the books she read enabled her to adapt modes of expression, culled from such sources as the Russian pre-revolutionary novels, E.M. Forster and Upton Sinclair, and to appropriate her own in order that she might fall "through the surface of 'the South African way of life'" in the particular way she did.[4] The apprentices of freedom have to develop differently in such different circumstances.

Burger's Daughter is, indeed, a novel of anxiety. It represents the anxiety of authority and authorship that Rosa Burger - and through her Gordimer - experiences as she grows aware of her exclusion and confinement which threaten her authority not only to know and thus to act, but also to speak, to engage in an act of communication beyond the confines of the mind: '*To know and not to act is not to know*' (*BD*,213).[5] The growth of Rosa's artistic self, so essential to the narrative text, may well be stunted by the dominant discourses, conventions and institutions ruling South African literature and society. How can she find a voice in which to transmit this experience? The solution proposed by Gordimer at this crucial stage in her personal literary history - and the history of South Africa - appears not to challenge the hegemonic norms particularly. Or, for that matter, the inverted racist strategy of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) to exclude white dissidents from their struggle for equality. Rosamarie Burger, the first-person narrator born in May 1948 when the Afrikaner nationalist government took office, remains silent (*BD*,94). Indeed, her anxiety is such that, as she tells Conrad, if "you knew I was talking to you I wouldn't

be able to talk" (*BD*,16-17). Representing the socio-political situation in the narrative universe, this self-censure dominates the story she relates in her mind of her growth in self-knowledge and her reconnection with the collective struggles to three identified narratees: Conrad, a former lover, Madame Bagnelli or Katya, her father's first wife, and, finally, Lionel Burger, her father.

Even if they are an essential literary device, they are physically absent (either dead or unsympathetic to her cause) and cannot *hear* her versions. "The absence of an empathic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story" (Laub 1992,68). This might chill one to the bone, if it were not for the reader, that final addressable other who has privileged access to her narrative universe, shaped in a form by the first- and third-person narrators that has been classified by some as a *Bildungsroman*. It appears that Rosa gains some self-confidence as her narrative develops until she can finally address her father on her own terms. There may still be that lingering irony in her comment when she tells him about the shattering telephone call from Baasie (little boss), who lived with the Burgers as a child and now calls himself Zwelinzima Vulindlela (Zwelinzima means "suffering land" (*BD*,318)): "I would gladly be censured, by you or the others, for being able to say what I did" (*BD*,329). Although *Burger's Daughter* was initially embargoed and then banned (Gordimer 1980), Rosa's comment focuses more on the issue of self-censorship. On account of its ambiguity, it also serves to indicate, among other things, two different narrative levels: the power to act and the power to narrate. Just as she questions her position of authority as a white woman and her power to act when she sees a downtrodden black man whipping his donkey (*BD*, 208-10), so she doubts her own authority of authorship when recounting her experience. Thus, the voice *we* hear "is a site of crisis, contradiction, or challenge that is manifested in and sometimes resolved through ideologically changed technical practices" (Lanser 1992,5).

My contention is that Gordimer's strategy of introducing Rosa as a narrating instance in a novel of development presents a truly feminist challenge - which, if class-bound as some feminisms tend to be, is not completely class-blind - because it calls into question, as the protagonist explores the possibilities of autobiographic storytelling, the authority of authorship and appropriates and reworks such established literary genres as the *Bildungsroman*. Although Gordimer may not have specifically set out "to make a point about being a woman" as she claims women writers do (Sternhell 1990,278), the point is made, if in what I call the hidden narrative. Indeed, many women novelists have, as Annis V. Pratt suggests, "'even succeeded in hiding the covert or implicit feminism [...] from themselves'" (Gilbert and Gubar 1984, 659). This "subterranean challenge" may be noted in the "presence of absence", the hollows, centres and caverns within the work (Gilbert and Gubar 1984,75). It is worth mentioning that anxiety should not be understood in a strictly psychological sense, even if I do introduce some ideas expressed in, among others, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's studies, who, have, in turn, used Harold Bloom's Freudian/Nietzschean study of "the anxiety of influence".[6] My exploration of Gordimer's reappraisal of the *Bildungsroman* may well, in certain respects, reveal Gordimer's awareness of what Judie Newman calls "a potential mismatch between western literary norms and her particular subject" (1988,45), but, in others, it displays an extraordinarily good match, according to Rita Felski's study of this genre.

Burger's Daughter clearly shows that the feminist battle is not incompatible with the battle for human rights, as I have already implied, and that these two struggles should be conceived of as complementary Philip Rieff makes the following illuminating comment:

> Habits of domestic living are concrete ways in which ideology internalises authority. Unless a revolution conquers the bedroom it cannot conquer, without a rearrangement of intimacy, men will continue to identify themselves, if not with old

> rulers, then with old rules of conduct (Newman 1988,40-41).[7]

This "rearrangement of intimacy" is a central underlying concern in this novel, as Rosa sets off on an inner journey of self-discovery and self-knowledge from which she returns transformed. Despite her authorial anxiety, she succeeds, once she has come to terms with her otherness as a young woman and a Burger, in appropriating the "unkillable word" (Gordimer 1988, 243) and telling the story of her transformation in an inner voice, the voice of silence, thereby transgressing - and exposing - such "old rules of conduct" as the expected narrative contract between narrator and narratee.

It might be argued that this young narrator is merely following in the footsteps of her literary foremothers, who wrote in "intimate forms" - the diary or journal - which would never be read, but it is clear that Gordimer uses what Dominic Head calls "a diary confession" (1994,114) in order to challenge the current rules of conduct and arrangement of intimacy in mind and body politic. Beyond Rosa is Nadine Gordimer, who expressed her nervousness about this novel privately to the young woman she had once seen outside the prison upon whom it is based (1995,1-19). She overcame this by distancing herself from the family and by giving the young woman the manuscript to read before she published it: "I deliberately had allowed friendship to lapse. Perhaps it seems naive, perhaps it was my quaint notion of authorial morality, perhaps it was my eccentric methodology". The young woman eventually returned the manuscript:

> She said. "This was our life"
> And nothing more.
> I knew this was the best response I should ever
> have to that novel. Perhaps the best I should
> ever have in respect of any of my fictions
> Something I should never receive again.

Gordimer makes this anxiety quite explicit at the beginning of the text when Rosa says "My version and theirs. And if this were being written down, both would seem equally concocted when

read over" (*BD*,16). Neither has been written down and yet both - or all - versions have. the irony enhancing the anxiety caused by this self-conscious act of narration is there from the start

Another move Gordimer makes to conceal both her questioning of official myth and political policy, whether of the grand figures of the Nationalist Party or of the dissident movements, and her submerged story of the rearrangement of intimacy, is her introduction of Lionel Burger's official biographer, who is given leave to quote from works that have been banned This technique represents the tension between the two literary genres of biography and autobiography, which coexist and overlap in this novel. It also underlines "the intensity of conflict that exists between the South African artist and the external power of society" (Gordimer 1983,13).

In this respect, the macro-narrative provides a point of entry to Gordimer's study of the *Bildungsroman*. At the beginning of the novel, Rosa is seen standing outside a prison and at the end she is in prison. Both mother and daughter, like all other political dissidents, are exposed to institutional oppression and moral injustice. they are refused the right to freedom of expression, to "talk back", as bell hooks (1989) puts it. This setting draws attention both to the significance of this patriarchal institution and to its meaning as *Burger's Daughter* proposes an alternative plot in its quest for an appropriate solution. Rosa eventually rejects the "heterosexual romance plot" she had envisioned earlier, when visiting Noel de Witt in prison, and finds, instead, a community of women, which offers "an alternative form of intimacy grounded in gender identification" (Felski 1989, 132). Thus, confinement, whether in prison or among "concocted" versions, becomes, in line with my argument, liberating and the act of narration becomes the site of ideological struggle, resistance and, ultimately, survival The difference in the plot proposed by Gordimer in *Burger's Daughter* from those proposed by Doris Lessing in *The Summer Before the Dark*, by Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* or Margaret Atwood in *Surfacing*, for example, arises from the

particular cultural and socio-political context. the bonding of women, in this case known as Asian, African and European, challenges the modes of conduct followed by advocates and opponents of apartheid policy

The term critical realism has often been applied to Gordimer's work and I shall, with some reservations, adopt it Although the argument that realist narrative conceals its ideological apparatus and modernist texts disrupt ideological closure sounds plausible, it is worth noting, on the one hand, that the revolutionary effects of so-called experimental writing and its challenge to former aesthetic conventions are short-lived and, on the other, that realist texts still generate different readings. Despite the influence of the literary canon on the concept of aesthetic convention, one should also remember that literatures move at a different pace and a writer living in one socio-historical context may find the dominant conventions totally inadequate to his or her purposes. From an historical perspective, women's writing in general has moved at a different pace from men's writing, whenever, of course, it is taken into account Moreover, women often chose, and choose, different modes of expression, which were, and are, perceived as minor genres. Without going into the details of this well-rehearsed argument, I would just like to repeat that at the time when Olive Schreiner wrote the first 'real' South African novel, her black counterparts were being taught how to write fiction by well-meaning European missionaries One could hardly expect South African writers, if they were to be true to the consciousness of their era, to write modernist novels in the European sense. Seemingly, it is not so much aesthetic convention as the socio-political circumstances of South Africa which have, subsequently, dictated the literary forms and techniques adopted by some South African writers

The recent empowerment of women in South Africa has led to the recognition of the part played by women in the struggle against racial and sexist discrimination from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. White and black women have been actively engaged in the struggle, working

silently and often side by side, throughout this century for universal franchise and emancipation, but, as in so many parts of the world, franchise has been prioritised over equality between men and women· that is, an equal share in the running of government, significantly hailed as "one man, one vote", has somehow been perceived as more important than an equal share in the running of the family. For these reasons, novels written by South Africans are generally read as denunciations of inequalities in terms of race and class. It is heartening to read Alice Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989) and discover the formative influence Bessie Head had on Fanny, one of the main characters. Upon meeting Fanny, Head called herself, "'The great *unheard-of* writer Bessie Head'" Continuing her narrative to her ex-husband Suwelo, Fanny says:

> But what a writer! How else could we know all we know about the psyche of South Africa? About the sexism of Africa? About the Bush people of the Kalahari? About Botswana? It is only because Bessie Head [who had recently had a 'complete nervous breakdown'] sits there in the desert, in her little hut, writing, that we have knowledge of a way of life that flowed for thousands of years, which would otherwise be missing from human record. That is no small thing! (Walker 1989,202-04)

One can sense Walker's long-standing admiration for this writer, who was born and brought up in South Africa, through Fanny's words. One reading does not, of course, exclude others and an emphasis on one aspect of a literary text does not mean that it cannot invite other interpretations. Bessie Head's concern with sexism in Africa inevitably reveals the ways in which women have been oppressed and subordinated by different and ever-changing patriarchal ideologies, and her examination of these issues would also be different from, for example, that of Adrienne Rich, Julia Kristeva, Alice Walker or Nadine Gordimer.

Any feminist study must necessarily take the context of the novel under discussion into account For this reason, I shall return very briefly to the collective struggle of South African

women and explore certain questions raised by Gordimer's stance as a woman writer, before studying the representation and significance of Rosa's narrative anxiety and the solution proposed by Gordimer's use of the *Bildungsroman*

2. Poetics and Politics: "Hey, when you strike a woman, you strike a rock"

Mary Benson heard a choir singing in celebration of the 1956 demonstration of twenty thousand women in Pretoria against the extension of the pass laws to women, organised by the Federation of South African Women (1990,140). South African history is full of stories of the solid and unmoving commitment of women to the battle for human rights. Their stories seldom hit the headlines and more often than not they tell the tale of the resilience and courage of an individual; a word of praise or recognition, an anecdote, an uneasy paragraph Here, as elsewhere, women's collective struggle has remained outside history; it is lost in the achievements of the male-dominated movements. But women have always been an integral part of this struggle and remain a key to its strength and development. "Victory in this struggle against apartheid is the absolute condition for any fundamental change in the social status of women - the participation of women is the absolute condition for its success" (Bernstein 1985, 117). Nelson Mandela wrote of the 1956 demonstration: "The women were courageous, persistent, enthusiastic, indefatigable and their protest against passes set a standard for anti-government protest that was never equalled As Chief Luthuli [president of the African National Congress] said, 'When the women begin to take an active part in the struggle, no power on earth can stop us from achieving freedom in our lifetime'" (Mandela 1994,206) Unfortunately, Luthuli did not live to vote in the 1994 elections as Mandela did. Needless to say, men (even Mandela) have shown an ambivalent attitude towards the mobilisation of women, but women have, Bernstein argues, often changed men's attitudes through their activities, such as this demonstration, "which many men viewed with surprise and with awe, and which produced from men, who cared for children while the women were demonstrating, a co-operation that had not been evident in the past" (1985,115).

This change in the habits of domestic living has made men pay more attention to the emancipation of women, particularly to that of black women who suffer the three-fold burden as

blacks, women and workers, and to the role of women in liberation struggles. Oliver Tambo's words, spoken at the first conference of the Women's Section of the African National Congress (ANC) - *held outside South Africa in 1981 - exemplify this growing, if contradictory, awareness.*

> If we are to engage our full potential in pursuit of the goals of our revolutionary struggle, then, as revolutionaries, we should stop pretending that women in our movement have the same opportunities as men [...] On the other hand, women should stop behaving as if there was no place for them above the level of certain categories of involvement. They have a duty to liberate us men from antique concepts and attitudes about the place and role of women in society [. .] The oppressor has, at best, a lesser duty to liberate the oppressed than the oppressed themselves. The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women (*Voice of Women* 1981).

The oppressed women take their task seriously and have been helped in their research into the history and activities of women by the literature of feminism from other countries [8] Feminist issues can never be divorced from the context of a deeply sexist and class-ridden society torn farther apart by the apartheid system, which has denied many the right to live in a family unit on account of the crippling migrant labour system In South Africa, "the liberation of women is not simply a matter of amending laws or changing male attitudes, but of the fundamental restructuring of a society towards the aims of freedom and justice for all" (Bernstein 1985, 117) The struggle for emancipation must be fought on all fronts if one is to change the habits of mind and prejudices that have persisted for centuries.

Whenever Gordimer chooses to address the problems of women, she is explicitly, if not solely, directing her narrative to white women; women must assume responsibility for their actions

and should not blame the male-dominated movements for their distorted focus. This is one argument Driver puts forward when she suggests that it is women who are politicised in Gordimer's novels (1983,31). They are just as responsible as their menfolk for many of the inequalities, but their position is ambiguous. This is clear when we recontextualise Tambo's words: as the oppressed, white women have "a duty to liberate men from antique concepts and attitudes", but since they are also oppressors, they have "a lesser duty to liberate". It might be for this reason that Gordimer made that contradictory, and perhaps politically expedient, statement in interview in 1980, when she said that the "feminist battle must come afterwards [. .] I feel that if the real battle for human rights is won the kingdom of ... feminine liberation follows [...] I know this view is not shared by feminists" (Gardner 1990,167-68). Leaving aside the complications raised by her use of the terms feminist and feminine, any reader of her work would note the incongruence between this statement and her narrative statement. Besides the interrelationship between sexuality and historical consciousness in her novels, which Stephen Clingman (1986), Judie Newman (1988) and others have detected, Gordimer's narratives also express a deep interest in the psychological forces that determine sexual difference and the relationship of women to power, language and meaning. Moreover, her consciousness of the (re)productive and creative process, its place in her socio-historical and cultural context and its political implications is evidence of her awareness of her role as a dissident South African woman writer. Bernstein has indicated that the battle for human rights is not incompatible with the feminist battle and I contend that Gordimer shows as much concern for both issues, thus exposing the hidden agenda through her revelation of the effect of apartheid on individuals For we must not forget that Gordimer's search for truth is a moral quest

Metaphorically speaking, a writing woman thinks back through her mothers (Woolf 1957,79): a task "at once [of] recuperation and revision" (Jacobus 1989,61). This brings to mind

the work of Olive Schreiner, known by many as the mother of the modern white South African novel and for her feminist studies, such as *Women and Labour* (1911) What is at stake in this rediscovery of the female tradition, "for both women writing and writing about women", is the rewriting, or work of critical and alien revision "which makes 'the difference of view' a question rather than an answer, and a question to be asked not simply of women, but of writing too" (Jacobus 1989,62) For the reader (and writer) at the turn of the millennium, this involves the recognition that literature (and literary theory) "will always be an expression of now: current needs, dreads, preoccupations" (Beer 1989,89). Readers' expectations are determined by their cultural specificity and thus, as Beer goes on to argue, if we read past texts to show their "relevance" we must also be aware of their difference and read them in the light of the conditions of their production· "The encounter with the otherness of earlier literature can allow us also to recognise and challenge our own assumptions, and those of the society in which we live". One example of this would be *Orlando* in which Woolf offers a transformation of history and through which "she de-natures our assumptions about gender, about nature and the natural, and brings to light the collusion that pretends that the inheritance through the male line is 'natural law'". George Eliot's "difference of view, difference of standard" and Woolf's challenge of gender assumptions may form part of my cultural specificity but should not merely be assimilated to current concerns: reading of past texts should be, Beer concludes, "an activity that tests and de-natures our assumptions in the light of the strange languages and desires of past writing" [9] These and many other arguments advanced by feminist literary theorists are aimed at stirring the reader to resist fixed and stable meanings and discourses instead of assenting to them.

Women writers and readers approach their subject from many different perspectives, but the overall trend in this process is that of the demystification of official male models and categories; the phallocentric and privileged ideal of unity of vision, determined by an opposition

between the sexes and immortalised in a phallocentric discourse, has been exchanged, as Jacobus puts it, for "a multiplicity, joyousness and heterogeneity which is that of textuality itself" (1989,52). Many claim to celebrate *jouissance* (sexual pleasure) as against the burden of womanhood experienced by their foremothers, while praising them for finding a space within a traditionally male form of discourse for their own imaginative utterance.

Marguerite Duras has observed that when she writes everything "inculcated by" studies and experience "shuts off":

> I think 'feminine literature' is an organic,
> translated writing ... translated from blackness,
> from darkness [. .] The writing of women is really
> translated from the unknown, like a new way of
> communicating rather than an already formed language
> (1975)

According to Duras, this feminine literature is "a violent, direct literature" and "to judge it, we must not [ ] start all over again, take off from a theoretical platform". She proposes that we "[m]ake women the point of departure in judging, make darkness the point of departure in what men call light . ". Even though Duras might be accused of inverted sexism, her point is worth bearing in mind, especially in light of Kristeva's idea that sexual difference "is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract". Our task as feminist readers consists of resisting the distortion and entering the darkness of the unknown, freeing the imagination from preconceptions perpetrated by the symbolic order:

> Feminist criticism is a political act whose aim
> is not simply to interpret the world but to change
> it by changing the consciousness of those who read
> and their relation to what they read (Fetterley 1978,viii)

The first act of a feminist critic is, in Fetterley's opinion, "to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader and, by this refusal to assent, to begin the process of exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us" (1978,xxii). The important point here, as Rosa Burger knows all

too well, is that reading (whether a text or the world) "is a *learned* activity which, like many other learned interpretative strategies in our society, is inevitably sex-coded and gender-inflected" (Kolodny 1980,588) [10] At the end of his summary of certain trends in mainstream feminist reading/writing practices, J. Culler transposes what Peggy Kamuf says about writing as a woman to reading as a woman, which once again points to the "sudden splitting off of consciousness", as V Woolf put it, or what I call, upon Mary Jacobus's suggestion, the "multiple internalised split" of the woman writer/reader (1989,61):

> - 'a woman [reading] as a woman' - the repetition of the 'identical' term splits that identity, making room for a slight shift, spacing out the differential meaning which has always been at work in the single term And the repetition has no reason to stop there, no finite number of times it can be repeated until it closes itself off logically, with the original identity recuperated in a final term. Likewise, one can find only arbitrary beginnings for the series, and no term which is not already a repetition: '. . a woman [reading] as a woman [reading] as ...'(Culler 1983,64)[11]

During her exploration of *The Story of an African Farm* Gordimer quotes Nietzsche: "Truth begins in dialogue" (1961,50). "What the South African novel is doing at present", she suggests, "is making heard that dialogue". In taking up that dialogue initiated by Schreiner, Gordimer's fiction bears testimony to the presence of creative self-absorption and conscionable awareness, which she finds missing in Schreiner's novels Their writing lives began at very different times, however. It has been said of *Women and Labour* that Schreiner added to the method of ratiocination she adopted from J.S Mill an imaginative dimension in the form of parables and allegories. This was her attempt at a "feminine literature" in a feminist tract, which blended "the form and the spirit, the passion and the thought" (Clayton 1989b,47) In this way, she found her own space in which to express the dilemmas inherent in her colonial situation. One detects the urge to blend voices in her writing. "If her own voice could resonate alongside the

voice of male logic, the work would be whole and alive, it would incorporate male and female, speak for the metropolitan centre and the colony, fusing her divided inheritance"(Gordimer 1961, 50). So many times divided, and at once unknown; Olive Schreiner proposes a fusion, Marguerite Duras a reversal: "Can *men* forget everything and join women?"

Gordimer recognises the restrictions of Schreiner's divided inheritance in her review of First and Scott's biography of this writer (1987,221-27).[12] She was at once "a founding mother of women's liberation in Britain" and the inventor of a literary mode "to carry her advanced perceptions"· "the spectacle of the rebel dashing herself against the cold panes of convention is that of a creature doubly trapped by a specific social history, and by the consciousness that was possible for her time". Recognising the "multiple internalised split", Gordimer proposes that instead of writing *about* "the race conflicts" Schreiner should have transformed them into fiction "This could have achieved the only real synthesis of life and work, ideology and praxis".[13] Gordimer directs her own work to what she calls in "Selecting My Stories" (1975) "the *synthesis of revelation*", achieved by the tension between "standing apart" and "being fully involved", which she would like to have found in that of her literary foremother· "this is the moral, the human justification for what we [writers] do" (1988,114). To her mind, what any writer attempts to do is "to build the pattern of his own perception out of chaos"; make that jigsaw puzzle of the brightly-coloured pieces which are her subjects or "the *consciousness*" of her era. Might we not also hear in this a variation on the theme of that necessary dialectical relationship in Marxism between theory and practice, which, as Toril Moi suggests, "also applies to the relationship between female experience and feminist politics" (1988a,121)?

Indirectly acknowledging the contradictions underlying her own "divided inheritance", Gordimer raises two other complex issues concerning women's writing practice in "Selecting My Stories". the woman intellectual's solitude and androgyny. She writes·

> In any case, I question the existence of any specific solitude of woman-as-intellectual when that woman is a writer, because when it comes to their essential faculty as writers, all writers are androgynous beings (1988,111-17)

Since this statement is rather controversial, it is worth exploring in greater depth, as Gordimer's non-fictional writing expresses once more her literary anxiety Without going into it in too much detail, she picks up the idea of the woman-as-intellectual from Octavio Paz's definition of Sor Juana's double solitude. Of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Paz says: "Her double solitude, as a woman and an intellectual, revealed a conflict that was also double: that of her society and that of her femininity" (1990,114). Of her own femininity, Gordimer can "truthfully say" that it

> has never constituted any special kind of solitude, for me. Indeed, in that small town, walled up among the mine dumps, born exiled from the European world of ideas, ignorant that such a world existed among Africans, my only genuine and innocent connection with the social life of the town (in the sense that I was not pretending to be what I was not, for ever hiding the activities of mind and imagination which must be suspect, must be concealed) was through my femaleness (1988,113).

Here Gordimer's writing practice reveals her double solitude - as woman and intellectual, it bears unexpected affinities with Sor Juana's "double conflict", as the metaphors of exile and imprisonment suggest Whereas the activities of mind and imagination must be concealed (and even placed in brackets), "sexual attraction" is "a form of communion [Gordimer] could share":

> Rapunzel's hair is the right metaphor for this femininity; by means of it, I was able to let myself out and live in the body, with others, as well as - alone - in my mind.[14]

This sharp distinction between secretive mind and communicative body, inner and outer worlds, gender identity and gender role, might well be an early expression of *écriture féminine*, though it does place a question mark over her belief in androgyny. As Gordimer denies her particular

solitude as a woman intellectual and writer, so she affirms it by, among other things, referring to a literary foremother from another colonial empire The two women - in quite different times and circumstances - experience, at least, a double bind, which remains a subtext in Gordimer's essays, interviews and fiction. In this oblique and concealed fashion, Sor Juana's *Reply to Sor Filotea* provocatively becomes Gordimer's response to the patriarchal system oppressing her society and herself - as a woman and an intellectual. For Paz argues that *Reply to Sor Filotea* is a defence of the intellectual and of women, in which she proclaimed "her fondness for disinterested thought [which] makes her a modern figure".[15] Gordimer thus reveals, through a momentary reference, her dissidence and difference, as she inadvertently calls her writing identity into question.

Developing her discussion of writers' solitude, which is, she points out, quite different from their alienation, Gordimer - in her own estimation, "a writer who happens to be a woman" (1981) - sustains that "some form of solitude" is "the condition of creation", whether found in a "crowded café" or "among the cockroaches in a night-time family kitchen". There are few things she would "care to dogmatise about, on the subject of writing", but solitude is one: "I believe - I *know* - [...] that writers need solitude". All writers need solitude and, according to Gordimer's hidden narrative, women writers do, indeed, experience a specific solitude. It appears that both solitude and androgyny are, in her opinion, conditions for the creation of a literary text, though of a different order Solitude can be found in our everyday world and is subject to it, but androgyny can only be experienced in the imagination, which somehow transcends this world. Or, as Gordimer told Carol Sternhell in 1987: "I think there is a special quality a writer has that is not defined by sex" (1990,278) Or, for example, race? Let us consider this for a moment

Androgyny ("andros", man, "gyne", woman) might be termed the fusion of two signs, things, representations, social and generic constructs in one word. Carolyn Heilbrun describes the concept of androgyny as one of "an unbounded and hence fundamentally indefinable nature"

(1973,xi). Gordimer seems to have a much clearer idea of what it means. She described it implicitly in "A Bolter and the Invincible Summer" when talking of the two schools: the one she bolted from which "reflected the attitudes of home" and the one of books (1988,20). The former is associated with what she calls her femininity and the latter with the secret world of the mind, imagination, and ideas, nourished, to a large extent, by European men writers Her camouflage image of femininity is clearly a stereotype, a mask worn to conceal, as she says, her "uncertainty of the possibility of any other [world]", an opposition which would vanish once she had put aside the "ready-made" socio-political, sexual and gender concepts. When she discovered the horrors of white supremacy, she could combine this, as she implies, with her earlier questioning of the inner and outer world around her and transform it in her androgynous imagination into fictional writing with all its "deep internalities and paradoxes" (Clingman 1988,111). Is androgyny, however, really a matter of reconciliation, or fusion, of two worlds? Or is it, as Gordimer says, "the ability" - simply? - "to intuit other people's states of mind", whoever they are (Sternhell 1990, 278)

When discussing V. Woolf's understanding of androgyny, Jacobus argues that it should not be read so much as an attempt to transcend the "determinants of gender and culture" but "rather as a harmonising gesture, a simultaneous enactment of desire and repression by which the split [that internalising split] is closed with an essentially Utopian vision of undivided consciousness" (1989,61) - of which Peggy Kamuf has spoken as well This might suggest a return to the patriarchal "unity of vision", but Jacobus goes on to say: "The repressive male/female opposition which 'interferes with the unity of the mind' gives way to a mind paradoxically conceived of not as one, but as heterogeneous, open to a play of difference". Nancy Topping Bazin, in turn, reads Woolf's concept of androgyny as the *union* of masculinity and femininity: "for Bazin, masculinity and femininity in Woolf are concepts that retain their full essential charge of

meaning. She thus argues [...] that the androgynous solution of [*To the Lighthouse*] consists in a *balance* of the masculine and feminine 'approach to truth'"(Moi 1988a,14). Moi disagrees with this reading and views the concept of androgyny as a deconstruction of the duality implied in it. She sustains that Woolf has "understood that the goal of feminist struggle must precisely be to deconstruct the death-dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity"

This comes closer to a Derridean/Kristevan approach and might shed some light on Gordimer's understanding of androgyny. When outlining the three phases in the development of the feminist struggle in "Women's Time", Kristeva pointed out:

> In the third attitude, which I strongly advocate - which I imagine? - the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to metaphysics. What can "identity", even "sexual identity", mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged? (1989,33-34)

Before proceeding, I plead guilty to the charge of simplification Presented chronologically and cyclically, the three phases Kristeva discusses may all exist "in the same historical time" In the first phase, "women demand access to the symbolic order" through participation in the public and social sphere, and, in the second phase, historically linked to post-1968 feminism, "women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference", which includes "the struggle for socio-cultural recognition" and "the radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time on an experiment carried out in the name of irreducible difference" The third phase challenges the very notion of identity and proposes the notion of an androgynous writer, but does not suggest, or so she claims, a "hypothetical bisexuality" that would draw it in line with Hélène Cixous's Utopian vision of writing. What it implies, at least in the first instance, is "an apparent de-dramatisation of the 'fight to the death' between rival groups", executed "not in the name of some reconciliation" between the sexes "but in order that the struggle, the implacable difference,

the violence be conceived *in the very place where it operates with* the maximum intransigence, in other words, in personal and sexual identity itself, so as to make it disintegrate in its very nucleus".

Felski uses the first two phases of Kristeva's model to demonstrate the "hesitation between alternative models of liberation" in the main types of "feminist self-discovery narrative" and in oppositional movements (such as feminism, in her case) and the conflicting tendencies underlying them. "on the one hand, a desire for integration and participation within a larger social and public community as a means of overcoming a condition of marginalization and powerlessness, on the other, an insistence upon a qualitative difference of cultural perspective as a means of articulating a radical challenge to dominant values and institutions, a stress on difference which resists assimilation into the mainstream of social life" (1989,150)

These phases might just as well characterise the development of Gordimer's awareness as represented in her writing, even if the third phase is difficult to imagine, let alone embrace, and certainly involves risks, as Kristeva points out We might suggest that an initial moment of recognition came when Gordimer sought refuge as an adolescent in a world of ideas, which enabled her to survive and grow in secret. Once she had come to terms with her early conditioning and had discovered that aspect of herself she did not know was "permissible", she could become more assertive and embark on her own journey. Hence, might we not argue that Gordimer *deconstructs* the oppositions of masculinity and femininity as she sets off on her quest for her "own sense of life" within "the play of difference perpetually enacted in writing"? Such a reading of Gordimer's notion of androgyny is appealing and might be more satisfactory because she shows the destructive nature of a metaphysical belief in strong, immutably fixed gender identities.

It might also explain her desire for a "common culture" in the South Africa of the future. The white writer has, as Gordimer insists, to find his or her commitment in a new set of values,

to "admit openly the order of [his or her] experience as a white as differing completely from the order of black experience", and, by rethinking attitudes and conceptions, to reconnect his or her work to the total reality of the present so that he or she may attempt for the same position as the black writer aims for

> to be seen as relevant by and committed to commonly-understood, commonly-created cultural entities corresponding to a common reality - an *indigenous culture (1983,22).*

Fixed gender identities/roles are just as crippling as the racial identities/roles immutably fixed by the South African state. Seductive as this reading may be, we must not forget, as Herbert Marcuse reminds us, that "the roots of repression are and remain real roots, consequently, their eradication remains a real and rational job" (Moi 1988a,122-23). Thus, what must be abolished is "not everything, but such particular things as business, politics, exploitation, poverty". It would be more sensible to perceive this deconstructive attempt as interwoven with the other two phases Kristeva proposes, because "it still remains *politically* essential for feminists to defend women *as* women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women *as* women" (Moi 1988a,13). Moreover, an "undeconstructed" form of phase two might simply become an inverted form of sexism (one cannot help but add racism in our context) by taking over the metaphysical categories set up by patriarchy

Gordimer claims to speak for all writers, but does she really mean what she says? Dorothy Driver suggests that Gordimer's statement is "hopelessly out of touch with the current situation" (1983,33) So far, so good But she then says: "Gordimer surely means that *all* writers (like all people) *ought to be* androgynous, and that she strives to be so to make up for a society which is not androgynous". Just as all people ought to be equal? Is Driver proposing a society free from sexual, racial and class identity (Kristeva's "new theoretical and scientific space"?) or a society in

which all sexes, races and classes reside in each of its members? The possibilities are numerous, but the point is that Gordimer's writing practice invites these complications. Even when we put this statement in context - "when it comes to their essential faculty as writers, all writers are androgynous beings" - it is difficult to accept what does she means by "their essential faculty as writers"?

Recalling Gordimer's image of the chameleon, I wonder if she is influenced by Keats' remark in a letter of 1818 "As to the poetical Character [...] it is not itself - it has no self - it is everything and nothing - it has no character .. ". Is this the writer's "essential faculty"? Might the "poetical Character" that "has no self" be this androgynous being? C.K Stead, who quotes Keats' words in her introduction to *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield*, comments.

> Katherine Mansfield has this chameleon quality
> She is always adopting a mask, changing roles,
> assuming the identity of the person she speaks
> to or the thing she contemplates (1977,17).[16]

Rosa dissolves from identity to identity in *Burger's Daughter* and, likewise, the writer assumes and subsequently deconstructs the identity/identities of her characters, as she constructs them. There is bound to be, whatever Keats might argue, an encounter between "the poetical Character" and the "other Body" she is "filling". This idea brings us back to the distinction between gender role and gender identity, which causes confusion and is not often elaborated upon. While both are socio-cultural constructs that vary from one community to another, the former relates principally to the accepted codes of conduct in that community - the public sphere - and the latter is a much more personal matter. The negotiation and interaction between role and identity, between the public and the private, with all its different facets, constitute the gender-inflected "person" into whose shoes our writer has stepped. Thus, as soon as the selfless androgynous being, so to speak, comes into contact with a human being, located in a specific socio-historical, political and cultural

context, "it" ceases to be androgynous, just as "it" ceases to be classless, raceless or characterless. By this I do not mean that an abstract concept ("the poetical Character") becomes concrete by "informing and filling some other Body" but that it is forced into the situation in which it has to abandon its selflessness in order to negotiate the terms upon which it may inform and fill this "Body". At this stage, the writer reveals her own "chameleon quality" and that of her characters. Even if this is a cornerstone of imaginative writing, it is particularly notable in *Burger's Daughter*; the text constantly changes its role, challenges and is challenged, resists and is resisted. The ways in which the different versions negotiate with one another and interact are merely one instance of this tendency.

If we are tempted to detect in Gordimer's notion of androgyny a move towards the deconstruction of fixed gender identities, which is based on an initial recognition of inequalities and the assertion of difference, we should not forget that the mind, the world of ideas (whatever its inspiration), informs the substance of her writing and her body gives it its form. Her explanation of the short story in "Selecting My Stories" appears to confirm this view. "A short story", Gordimer claims, "is a concept that a writer can 'hold', fully realised, in his *imagination*, at one time":

> to write one is to express from a situation in the
> exterior or interior world the life-giving drop -
> sweat, tear, semen, saliva - that will spread like
> an intensity on the page; burn a hole in it (1988,117)

The sheer physicality of this description might be said to define Gordimer's mode of expression It also draws attention to the importance of sensuality, sexuality and eroticism in her work Nonetheless, we cannot help noticing that the 'life-giving' flow is man's contribution to (pro)creation: is she writing within the patriarchal psychosexual context in which so much of Western literature is authored? Is her femaleness "a form of communion" she could really share?

Binary thought does oversimplify matters.

Gordimer's continual trivialising of feminism, particularly in interview, has annoyed many critics. How can she, they ask, be so blind to the rearrangement of intimacy proposed by this other narrative running through her novelistic *oeuvre*? After presenting one of Gordimer's outbursts against "white girls at the University campaigning for Women's Liberation [when they] have the vote; *no* black, male or female, has", Elizabeth A. Meese writes

> Why Gordimer characterizes feminism in this way is implicit in the circularity sustaining the hierarchy she constructs. For Gordimer, feminism is 'secondary', 'farcical', 'piffling', personal (a matter of social-club membership) not political (loyalty to the struggle against apartheid) - something for educated, middle- or upper-class white girls. These women share a subject position with Gordimer and her character Rosa Burger They are like her (white women), and they also occupy a position of white privilege she wishes to denounce (to be against apartheid). In her refusal to advance a critique of the (hetero)-sex-gender system, Gordimer inscribes feminism on one side of the black/white divide that apartheid produces (1990,62).

On the strength of many of Gordimer's interviews of the period, one might well like to agree with Meese, but this is a delicate matter in the South African context; the first meeting of the Women's Section of the ANC was not held until 1981, for example Gordimer's courage as a cultural worker overseas should never be discredited - she has always been amazingly outspoken. The argument underlying her comments regarding feminism is that she cannot believe in the simultaneity of these struggles; as she said in an 1980 interview, "as soon as you touch any of the real feminist issues you are going right into the heart of the racial problem" (Gardner 1990,165). Be that as it may, it is clear from *Burger's Daughter* alone that her textual practice does not present "a single-focused struggle for liberation" (Meese 1990,63).

It is perhaps for this reason that Meese, like others, points out, that there is "something

about Gordimer's texts that, as much as she denies it, invites us to consider [the] knot of interlocking oppressions and complicities" (1990,64). Gordimer shows that "the public and private worlds" are "inseparably connected; . the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (Woolf 1938,142), even if she refuses to engage "the personal [that] becomes political in the sanctuary of the bedroom where the home (with feminism) is no longer a sanctuary" in her texts. However, "they perversely stage this scene [...], just as they challenge the ease with which a certain kind of feminism fails to project itself into the dimension of political action that exceeds the personal" (Meese 1990,65). This kind of feminism is what bell hooks calls "identity politics" which appeals to the "primacy of self" and, though a necessary stage, should not be an end in itself (1989,108) Rosa's redefinition of political history is inevitably inseparable from her redefinition of her social relationships As she recalls, and Meese quotes:

> In 1956 when the Soviet tanks came into Budapest
> I was his little girl, dog-paddling to him with
> my black brother Baasie, the two of us reaching
> for him as a place where no fear, hurt or pain
> existed. And later, when he was in jail and I
> began to think back, even I [..] could not have
> found the way to ask him - in spite of all these
> things: do you still believe in the future? The
> same Future? Just as you always did (*BD*,115)

Even more intimate than this, however, is her remark made to Conrad in her mind that starts off this train of thought "You didn't want to believe that at twelve years old what happened at Sharpeville was as immediate to me as what was happening in my own body" (*BD*,115) This, of course, is her "monthly crisis of destruction, the purging, tearing, draining of my own structure"(*BD*,16) that here is closely linked to the purging, tearing, draining of the body politic during the Sharpeville massacre. As the epigraph to the novel also implies, Rosa's body and subject positioning are scarred from birth by the atrocities committed by and on behalf of the body politic "I am the place in which something has occurred". What we are never permitted to forget

are her particular politics of location defining her subject positioning and her divided inheritance provided by her naming and being named (by parents and state)

It is hardly surprising that Rosa's act of narration causes her and Gordimer such anxiety. While Rosa tries to find some way to relate to the collective struggles, which are not those of her parents, Gordimer puts the black woman first in her sustained effort to undermine racial and sexual privilege and to "resist territorialization" (Meese 1990,62) Rosa embodies a mystery, as Gordimer explains:

> I know that I've been fascinated by the kind of person Rosa is for many years. It's as if the secret of a life is there, and slowly I'm circling, coming closer and closer to it (Hurwitt 1990,149).

Rather than the "absolute" or "determined" character proposed by Clingman (1986,191), it is "the mystery, the off-the-center, the expression of the not-to-be-discovered" which interests Gordimer "and serves as a model for characterization and narrative strategy" (Meese 1990,72).[17] Gordimer's circling recalls the image of the enigmatic helicopter hovering over the village at the end of *July's People* (1981), "its landing gear like spread legs, battling the air with whirling scythes" (*JP*,158). The narrative trails off as Maureen Smales runs towards the helicopter, "with all the suppressed trust of a lifetime, alert, like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of their young, existing only for their lone survival. ."(*JP*,160); *Burger's Daughter* ends with close-up shot of Rosa sitting writing in prison. Both texts resist closure, are thought-provoking and address the problems facing white middle-class South African women in the late seventies and early eighties. This image of flight in *July's People* is reworked in *A Sport of Nature* (1987), in which Hillela, essentially another orphan, flees from South Africa and eventually lands up in London fighting for the cause, and in *My Son's Story* (1990), in which both mother and daughter leave South Africa to become activists in the ANC. Her following novel, *None to*

Accompany Me (1994), witnesses the return of the exiles and the tensions that arise upon the birth of a new social order. Following the multi-racial elections, Gordimer's narrative agenda changes There is no escape for Duncan in her novel of 1998, *The House Gun*, which explores what Günter Grass calls 'a daring theme' (1988, 111). The whole world changes for a middle-class white couple, Harald, a respected insurance executive, and his doctor wife, Claudia, when they discover that their son, Duncan, is a self-confessed murderer.

3. Anxiety of Authorship

A word dropped careless on a Page
May stimulate an eye
When folded in perpetual seam
The Wrinkled Maker lie

Infection in the sentence breeds
We may inhale Despair
At *distances of Centuries*
From the Malaria--
Emily Dickinson (1261)

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar open *The Madwoman in the Attic* with a question: 'Is the pen a metaphorical penis?' This question is central to their feminist poetics and focuses on the notion that creativity has been inextricably linked with male sexuality. In support of this idea, they quote Gerard Manley Hopkins, who declared that the artist's "most essential quality [is] masterly execution, which is a kind of male gift, and especially marks off men from women, the begetting of one's thought on paper, on verse, on whatever the matter is". He then noted, in this letter to his friend R.W. Dixon in 1886: "The male quality is the creative gift" - while the female quality is, one supposes, the procreative gift (Gilbert and Gubar 1984,3).[18]

Their discussion centres on the "infection in the sentence" these women have inherited, their dis(-)ease, or even despair, with the way in which the representatives of "the Wrinkled Maker" have set down "thought on paper". Expressing a similar concern to that of Emily Dickinson, V Woolf points out that "before a woman can write what she wishes", she has to overcome many difficulties

> To begin with, there is a technical difficulty -
> so simple, apparently; in reality, so baffling -
> that the very form of the sentence does not fit her.
> It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too
> *heavy, too pompous for a woman's use. Yet in a novel,*
> [...], an ordinary and usual type of sentence has to
> be found to carry the reader on easily and naturally
> from one end of the book to the other. And this a woman

> must make for herself, altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it. (1975,76-84)

Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre* fame, condemned by Rochester to the attic, stands for the women writers who, in Gilbert and Gubar's work, confront this technical difficulty of finding a grammatical unit that will not condemn them "As a creation 'penned' by man", Gilbert and Gubar, among others, suggest, "woman has been 'penned up' or 'penned in' As a sort of 'sentence' man has spoken, she has herself been 'sentenced' [..]. As a thought he has 'framed', she has been both 'framed' (enclosed) in his texts, glyphs, graphics, and 'framed-up' (*found guilty, found wanting*) in his cosmologies" (1984,13). No wonder this technical difficulty is so baffling. Although Woolf's view, like that of some advocates of *écriture féminine*, has been called into question by feminists who consider it deterministic, one cannot deny, as so many feminists claim, that women writers have had to confront many problems particular to them on account of the way in which they have been inscribed in men's texts.

Drawing their material almost exclusively from white, middle-class, British and North American English-speaking writers, Gilbert and Gubar thus pose the problem of how women writers can negotiate their position within and without the male literary tradition, sometimes known as the canon From this concern emerges their argument that while male writers suffer from "anxiety of influence", as Harold Bloom puts it, women writers suffer from "anxiety of authorship". Bloom's historical construction of the warfare waged between the literary precursor - the father - and his offspring - the son - is useful because it helps us not only to identify and define the patriarchal psychosexual contract, but also to distinguish the anxieties and achievements of female writers from those of male writers. Can women, for example, mother literary texts, as men have fathered them throughout the centuries? Their discussion of these issues runs along three main lines· the ways in which women are inscribed in and alienated from the western patriarchal

literary tradition, the distinctive female subculture and, finally, the debilitating effect of the history of dis(-)ease on women writers Although the three inevitably coexist, what I wish to discuss here are the first two, the first in this chapter and the second in the context of the *Bildungsroman.*

Before tackling this issue, I must make it clear that although I intend to focus my discussion on Rosa and the growth of her artistic self in relation to the anxiety of authorship she experiences, I may well continue to blur the boundaries between author and protagonist, since Gordimer has also had to ask herself how to cope with this situation of being within and without the patriarchal literary tradition For instance, Gilbert and Gubar sustain that before a woman writer "can journey through the looking glass towards literary autonomy" (in one sense, an impossibility in committed South African fiction), "she must come to terms with the images on the surface", with the anxiety of authorship expressed by her literary foremothers, as well as with her male precursors' reading of the world and their reading of her (1984,16) That is to say, the woman writer "must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of 'angel' and 'monster' which male authors [and, subsequently, female authors of the past] have generated for her" (Gilbert and Gubar 1984,17). On account of this struggle, or "triple bind", our scholars argue, "anxiety of authorship" is one of the hallmarks of female creativity. In this context, we should remember that Woolf wrote that the woman novelist, "perpetually wishing to alter the established values", will be criticised by members of the opposite sex who

> will be genuinely puzzled and surprised by an attempt
> to alter the current scale of values, and will see in
> it not merely a *difference of view*, but a view that is
> weak, or trivial, or sentimental, because it differs
> from his own (1975,81) (*My italics*)

This immediately brings to mind a letter the South African Pauline Smith wrote to her fellow countrywoman Sarah Gertrude Millin, who wrote *God's Stepchildren* (1924) among other novels. On September 11, 1939, Smith spoke in despair about the feminine simplicity that renders her

work politically powerless: "Tell me if there is anything *I* can do for SA - as a writer -. But my writing is all so *simple* - my brain not *masculine* in its grasp of affairs like yours -" (Driver 1989,87).[19]

Gordimer is the only woman writer (apart from Doris Lessing whose writing practice changed so much after her "African stories"[20]) in the group of internationally renowned English-speaking South African white writers that emerged just after the Second World War. In this sense, she was most courageous in launching her novelistic career with a study of a woman's consciousness. Her body of essays, interviews and conversations aim, in general terms, at justifying her work, or, we might suggest, at justifying her difference of view within the South African context, but they also express, among many other things, her contradictory misgivings about feminism, her secrecy when she discovered the world of ideas, her dialogue with such literary foremothers as Schreiner and Millin, and her perusal of the literary map chartered by Katherine Mansfield, not to mention her admiration for Virginia Woolf.

Another aspect of Gilbert and Gubar's feminist poetics that we should bear in mind is that women's writing contains a hidden story, which narrates the "woman's quest for self-definition" (1984,76). As I mentioned, men's writing practice tends to present types of women, which silence, still and effectively kill women. Although many women writers have argued against the persistence of these types, they tend to proliferate in women's writing practice to conceal and obscure deeper levels of meaning. This makes their writing appear to conform to patriarchal literary standards, by which means they might overcome their anxiety of authorship, but the intention is to subvert them. If we were to reduce *Burger's Daughter* to a study of types, we would discover that Rosa does fall into the trap of depicting characters as types, for instance in her analogies with paintings, however, since she is regarded as a type - particularly by the extended dissident "family" - in the surface text, her identity assumes a subversive chameleon

quality in the quest for self-definition and transformation This gives rise to endless ambiguities, which, together with those presented by the third-person narrators (Rosa's other interpretations), are a source of anxiety for her as experiencing and narrating self If she is to sustain her attitude of nonconformity, she has to learn that re(-)vision - of self and others - is a continual process. In this sense, Rosa's quest is Gordimer's act of subversion. neither identity nor reading can be stable or fixed.

Abdul R. JanMohamed argues for the perfect balance, created by the "split narratives", in *Burger's Daughter* between subjectivity and objectivity, between self and society, which, in his opinion, alleviates "the anguish" produced in *The Conservationist* (1974): "The subjective/expressionistic bias can be interpreted [in *The Conservationist*] as a sign of the anguish produced in the author/narrator by the onerous objective social conditions that tenaciously resist change and thereby encourage a retreat into the self" (1985,272) He argues that this "effect of manichean society" is temporarily rectified in *Burger's Daughter* because the "opposition between social conditions and personal predicament" is absorbed "into the substance of the novel", thereby creating "a more appropriate balance between objective and subjective narratives" While I would agree with this in part, his argument rests on the premise that Gordimer's work shows "a gradual transference from the use of characters who are only themselves to those who represent larger cultural forces". So as not to distort this argument, I should say that JanMohamed goes on to argue that this transference is "attended by a transition from concern with personal freedom to an understanding of communal and historical determinism" (1985,148). Wary as I am of the causality necessary to, for example, the word determinism, it is true that Rosa has a greater understanding by the end of her narration than Gordimer's earlier protagonists In this respect, we might remember Woolf's words from "Modern Fiction": "Any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express, if we are writers" (1953,156).

Rosa's understanding does not mean, however, that she has abandoned the quest for "personal freedom", which obviously extends to the public sphere; nor does it mean that this young woman, often so misunderstood by her male critics, has simply relinquished self or selves *in order to represent "larger cultural forces"* Her revisionary struggle to come to terms with a socio-political, historical and cultural process leads to a transformation of consciousness· "Revision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction [...] an act of survival" (*Rich 1975,90*). *The woman author must* "redefine the terms of her socialization". This struggle often begins "by actively seeking a *female* precursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proved by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible" (Gilbert and Gubar *1984,292*). In the case of Gordimer, she has "sought", among others, Olive Schreiner and Katherine Mansfield, who both called the terms of their socialisation into question, but Rosa does not appear to have had the same opportunity She seeks female precursors in the dissident political family: Madame Bagnelli, who clearly revolted against patriarchal authority, and her mother, who never obtained the recognition she deserved. Rosa's "act of looking back" is bound to involve a retreat into the self and a concealed narration, as personal censure has, in one sense, become a way of life for the Burgers. The narratives do not, upon revision, create such a perfect balance between objectivity and subjectivity as JanMohamed has argued for. Thus, the anguish remains and will persist until social conditions change.[21]

The alternation between first-person and third-person narration is an obvious example of Gordimer's questioning of the art of storytelling· Rosa, as narrating instance, is continually challenged, firstly by the author, it appears, and then by the narrators. Rosa's act of narration takes place in a *"void". The character claims it is not spoken nor heard, but the author writes it down* and it can therefore be read; an obvious paradox perhaps, yet significant. A third-person narrator

refers to this void, when Fats Mxenge comes to visit Rosa after the Soweto riots and she tells him about "a little girl who had lost an eye" (*BD*,343). The narrator says that the white hospital personnel "could not imagine what it was like to be living as their patients did" and Rosa "was not able to describe the black hole, the void she was seeing where the eye ought to be" From her new critical perspective, Rosa discovers she cannot articulate or communicate what she finds there, even though "she was used to working with horrors (she used the word 'deformities') about which something could be done" (*BD*,343). The narrator's correction of Rosa's use of language in this intensely political context is just one of many instances revealing the underlying tensions between the different versions, which give a further insight into the many layers of meaning with which Rosa and Gordimer are working.

In the conversation about the horrors following Soweto, her voice is silenced, after her attempt at intervention, in order to privilege Mxenge's version of the violence and conflicts in his community. He says he is going to take away his children, even if it means breaking the boycott. Rosa is permitted to say, "I don't know what I would do", and the narrator comments: "She was white, she had never had a child, only a lover with children by some other woman" (*BD*,345). The implication seems to be that she has no authority of experience, and hence of authorship, to comment upon this situation - or upon many others. Gordimer would agree, especially at this time of the exclusion of the white voice, although she sustained in 1987 that the writer's "special quality" could not be defined by gender or skin-colour.

> Probably, it would be easier for me quite subconsciously to slip into writing from the point of view of a white man whose general range of living experience I was familiar with, than it would be for me to project into a similar black person who lived perhaps in an area of life that was truly out of my range of possibility. But to decide simply on grounds of black and white, again, I find incomprehensible.

(Sternhell 1990,278-79)

Surely she, like Rosa, is taking a lot more into consideration, if between the lines, than gender or skin-colour?

Following this, there is only one final passage in the first person. Telling her father that she was scared, Rosa confirms the opinion expressed by the third-person narrator and reveals her own awareness: "Maybe you will believe me. No one else would. If I were to try out telling, which I won't" (*BD*,350). She might have tried to talk to the "man in France" (his name has become irrelevant), but, ironically, "when it came to the point, this was the one subject I couldn't open with him". Rosa, like Gordimer, withdraws her voice, as black experience is foregrounded. "The schoolchildren's revolt in Soweto", Newman argues, "is directed at the white paternalist state, but also at the political compromises of black fathers" (1988,84). Fats Mxenge is such a father, a man who brings Rosa a message and sits in her flat like "someone brought aboard out of a tempest" (*BD*,343)· the tempest of political commitment rather than that of political indifference and flight, as in the case of Conrad

Some might argue that Rosa's act of narration is merely another of those literary conventions, which of course it is, but surely one has to ask oneself why Gordimer chose this convention in particular, thereby emphasising the difference between oral (clandestine and inexpressible?) and written narrative It is for this reason that I have chosen to name this tentative quest for a "rearrangement of intimacy" the hidden narrative, although it necessarily coexists, if at a different level, with the transformation of Rosa's consciousness as a revolutionary subject There are perhaps many ways of explaining this distinction, but one I might mention in passing is that this desire to rearrange intimacy is an underlying theme running through many of Gordimer's novels and short stories Others might argue that Rosa's letter to Katya, as she calls Madame Bagnelli, at the end of the text indicates that Rosa is beginning to write down her story.

If this were so, it would provide readers interested in the South African story and shaping of consciousness with an alternative prison autobiography

Rosa's predicament as a narrator is also observed in her narrative self-consciousness, which becomes a source of her own and her creator's anxiety of authorship. Gordimer's anxiety over writing a novel about the emergence of a white (and female) revolutionary at a time when white dissidents were excluded from the struggle is represented by Rosa's consciousness of her addressees Quoting Frantz Fanon, Newman argues that Rosa "remembers and observes her past self in an extensive attempt to recapture and reconstitute it, and to engage with 'the world of the *You*'" (1988,72) When Rosa begins to concoct silent versions, she suddenly realises that even though it had never happened to her before, "always one is addressed to someone", whether in dreams, when committing suicide or when in love (*BD*,16). In light of what she goes on to say, the adverb and the use of the passive voice are very strange here: it almost seems as if she has been told this and that she is going to have to take over her narration from some unmentioned force manipulating her - the patriarchal literary authority perhaps? This "someone", as we know, is a different person in each of the three sections of the novel: Conrad, then Madame Bagnelli and then her father, addressees who are at once types and attractive individuals with very different political leanings The end of the passage provides the reason for her silence and her anxiety: "If you knew I was talking to you I wouldn't be able to talk. But you know that about me" (*BD*,17). The tautological intention of this statement at once undermines narrative convention and reinforces it. as she refuses to "try out telling", so she tries it out, using her named addressees as her foils Beyond these lie Lionel Burger's biographer and, of course, the reader, who is compelled "to build this world of the *You*" (Fanon 1968,231-32) with Rosa, if on very different terms, and is confronted with a series of questions For example, which version of Rosa does he or she accept? "That of a white woman who is part of a racist society and who can address a 'You' who

exists only in her projections? Or that of a woman confronting and correcting a stereotyped image and painfully learning to address herself to a world of other autonomous beings?" Newman, who asks these questions, suggests that "Gordimer employs the terms of the white racist subconscious in an attempt to free her art from Prospero's complex, and to direct it towards a world where 'You' is not a fantasy projection but real" (1988,74).

The final lines in this passage conceal at least one other meaning. Rosa begins to tell her story a long time after her relationship with Conrad, whom she ostensibly meets at her father's trial, although, as a third-person narrator recounts, she must have invited him to the Sunday barbecues at home "when she was a university student and her father was not yet on trial":

> The guest was a young man named Conrad. A pale
> acne-scarred back to the sun, lying in the way
> of but never putting a teasing hand to catch the
> black and white legs of children who raced round
> the edge of the pool [...] He was not the type
> looking for commitment. There had been, were some,
> and they were quickly recognized. Sometimes their
> potential was made use of He was not even a paid
> spy posing as the type looking for commitment;
> that had become a recognizable type, too. [...]
> But this boy was of interest to no one; let him
> look at them all, if the spectacle intrigued him.
> *revolutionaries at play, a sight like the secret*
> mating of whales (*BD*,17)

This ironic narrator provides an early insight into Lionel Burger's scale of values around that swimming pool, which embodies his attempt to rearrange intimacy, and goes on to say. "Rosa was a pretty thing as she grew up, many boys would follow her, not knowing she was not for them", even if her father supervised, while not restricting, her "normal student sociability for fear she might be made use of [by a] paid spy". In fact, Conrad is not for her· "In order to assert her autonomy, Rosa can rebel only against another rebel" (Newman 1988,75). As an uncommitted individual who reads literature and talks about "consumer love" (*BD*,131), Conrad acquires a

yacht and escapes (*BD*,134) - as, indeed, does Rosa. On the anniversary of her father's death, Rosa tells Conrad in her mind. "Only the dove could find you, that's the idea. No claims from the world can reach the ark" (*BD*,130). Conrad's lack of commitment and literal and metaphorical death makes him safe to talk to:

> I do not even know if you are alive. I read of a yacht that has disappeared between Durban and Mauritius. [. .] At sea, at sea; to circumnavigate is to end up no farther than you started. The world round your navel. Your contemplation of it in the cottage doesn't serve me any more. (*BD*,192)

Unlike Conrad, Rosa is no longer "at sea" and has learned that the circumnavigation involved in his "navel-fluff-picking hunt for 'individual destiny'" (*BD*,62) is not the answer. However, his likely death has made it much easier for her to use him as a foil. This seems to be confirmed at the end this first section: "Conrad I did not tell you before. The yacht was never found. I may have been talking to a dead man: only to myself" (*BD*,210).

Conrad, who had fantasised about making love to his mother and wished her lover and his "father dead" (*BD*,62-63), is as impervious to Lionel Burger's attempt to rearrange intimacy at home - in the domestic sphere - as he is to that other intimacy of "political necessity". Another of Rosa's models is Marisa Kgosana, whose husband is on Robben Island. The two meet in a department store when Marisa has just returned from visiting her husband. Rosa explains to Conrad.

> But there was I, asking about all the others by name, Mandela, Sisulu, Kathrada, Mbedi, the black men with whom my father worked in an intimacy whose nature no one outside it, standing in the street watching the arrests of people who haven't snatched pay-rolls or pushed drugs, can understand. (*BD*,137)

Taunting the censors, Gordimer urges Rosa to name the unnameable as an extratextual and intratextual reminder. Like Conrad, Rosa may not have understood this intimacy, but she has

learned that both black and white are "two sides of false consciousness", even as understood in "that house" where "blackness was a sensuous-redemptive means of perception". If to embrace Marisa was "to immerse in another mode of perception", which was as "near as a woman can get to the transformation of the world a man seeks in the beauty of a woman", Marisa's sensuality also embodied aspects of this false consciousness in the stereotyped white mode of perception:

> Marisa is black; near, then, as well, to the white
> way of using blackness as a way of perceiving a
> sensual redemption, as romantics do, or of perceiving
> fears, as racialists do. (*BD*,135)

In that house, "[t]hrough blackness is revealed the way to the future": in the black people around the swimming pool and the "black faces in the majority at the last of the underground congresses my father could attend" was envisaged "the merger of white Cain, black Abel, a new brotherhood of flesh is the way to the final brotherhood" (*BD*,135). Of course, the way forward is to form a common culture (not just brotherhood), but the suggestion here is that both whites and blacks have to change the terms of the struggle - and of their habit of mind - in order to overcome the inherent division even among the fighters for equality. As young Zwelinzima Vulindlela, who lived with the Burgers as a boy, tells Rosa: "Whatever you whites touch, it's a take-over [...]. Even when we get free, they'll want us to remember to thank Lionel Burger " (*BD*, 321).

The frequent references to the swimming pool reveal the significance of the motif of water, which claimed her brother and presumably her former lover. It becomes a source of anxiety for Rosa Upon her brother's death, Lily tells Rosa "they would 'fill up that terrible hole' - the swimming pool" (*BD*,83), but it is eventually left to Rosa to fill up the hole (or "void"), to seek, as we shall see, a more appropriate form of intimacy, if this is possible. Although death is an ever-present theme in *Burger's Daughter*, the dead - Conrad and her father - assist Rosa on her quest for autonomy and self-knowledge (she addresses herself through them) as they protect her from

death This idea is suggested by the protagonist in Pat Barker's *The Ghost Road*, who, when leaving for the front with his regiment during the First World War, writes that all the men are getting their diaries up to date:

> 'Why?' he wrote 'You have to ask yourself. I think it's a way of claiming immunity. First-person narrators can't die, so as long as we keep telling the story of our own lives we're safe Ha bloody fucking Ha'.(1996,115)

By narrating one version in the first person, if only in her mind, Rosa is granted immunity, a narrative space in which to sort out the terms of her commitment Since first-person narration persists to the end of the novel - in the letter to Madame Bagnelli - one might also interpret it as a sign of optimism: unlike *The Ghost Road*, this state of mind is not exploded. Moreover, the literary imperative represents the political imperative· Rosa, as the daughter of an Afrikaner Communist and "the place in which something has occurred", must continue to claim this immunity until that "something" (in one sense, the legacy of apartheid) has been dismantled and replaced by a different form of intimacy Thus, we note how Gordimer expresses her conscionable awareness and creative self-absorption through this technique, also linking *Burger's Daughter* to her first novel, *The Lying Days*, and her ninth, *A Sport of Nature*, the novel in which Rosa Burger and Helen Shaw meet Hillela Capran, who takes on Rosa's mission outside South Africa. Gordimer's "urge to *make* with words", in every sense, significantly creates the conditions for the survival of the three white women narrators (1988,285).

Bearing all these points in mind, I shall now turn to the question of how Rosa's inscription in male texts reveals her authorial anxiety by focussing on her three addresses. The long shadow cast over her narration is Lionel Burger's inscription of his daughter in his ideological text of dissidence. It affects her relationship with her addressees and her selection: Conrad is the antithesis of her father and Katya of her mother. Rosa's feeling of being framed is clear in her

question at the beginning of her narration: '*When they saw me outside the prison, what did they see?*' (*BD*,13) Even if it is her imagination that concocts the responses to this question, what is immediately discernible, and subsequently becomes a pattern throughout the text, is her invisibility, her silence as a narrating instance and her desire to entertain different perspectives in order to understand the language in which they are expressed. Trained to perform her parents' discourse, she wishes to contextualise herself ("I was in place, outside the prison" (*BD*,15)) before embarking on the narrative journey of discovery, exploration and transformation of self. As she portrays the scene around her at that time, she draws attention to the difficulties the narrating self confronts, when describing Flora Donaldson:

> I draw that analogy now, not then; it's impossible to filter free of what I have learnt, felt, thought, the subjective presence of a schoolgirl. She's a stranger about whom some intimate facts are known to me, that's all (*BD*,14).

As a sort of "sentence" man has spoken, she has herself been "sentenced": she cannot break completely free from her conditioning. This applies equally, as one would expect in first-person narration, to her own subjectivity. From her subject position in the present, she regards the experiencing self of the past as a remote and extraneous memory. However, her conditioning in the past and her growing awareness of it in the present continually overlap - and inevitably coexist

Conrad acts as the device by means of which she can explore and deconstruct the former mode of thought and of intimacy and come to terms with her own exclusion as a young white woman known for her association with dissidence. Her descriptions of the schoolgirl hint at an initial response to her own question: "I saw - see - that profile in a hand-held mirror directed towards another mirror" (*BD*,14). Her perception of the double reflection and apparent dissociation of body from self makes this a very suggestive response: the stranger-schoolgirl is

now a profile reflected in a mirror - a frame - held in a hand, a profile affecting the form and substance of her narration. The tangible has become intangible; the memory has escaped her An abyss seems to divide experience from its representation by anecdote Her consciousness of her own gender, however momentary and fragmentary at this stage, permits her (and us) to "see meaning in what has previously been an empty space The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint" (Showalter 1975,435).

What is forever present in her memory is an intimate fact associated with the prison door:

> It was that door that I see: the huge double door
> under the stone archway with a bulb on a goose's
> neck looking down as a gargoyle does. The tiny
> hatch where the warder's eyes will appear could
> be a cat-door if it were lower. There are iron
> studs with hammer-marks faceting the white sunlight
> like a turned ring I see these things over and over
> again as I stand. (*BD*,15)

The feelings and thoughts of the schoolgirl subject appear to fuse with the narrating self the prison door creates a link between past and present This description, the shortest of several descriptions of prisons in the text, is very telling. The movement from past ("It was") to present ("I see") to future ("eyes will appear"), in conjunction with the iterative sentence at the end, reveal the central narrative pattern of confinement/release/confinement (both inner and outer, as experiencing and narrating self), as well as Rosa's very real fear, before she has found her own solution, of her entrapment in outdated male texts and sentences. But her "real awareness" at this moment focuses on the pain caused by her period. Standing outside the

> prison the internal landscape of my mysterious body
> turns me inside out, so that in that public place on
> that public occasion [...] I am within that monthly
> crisis of destruction, [.]. I am my womb, and a year
> ago I wasn't aware - physically - I had one.(*BD*,16)

"[A]lternately submerged below and thrust over the threshold of pain", Rosa's fear of the external landscape is eclipsed by the pain of the internal landscape of her mysterious body, which turns the public into the most intimate, and, as she perceives it, most destructive event. Just as her mother is confined by the South African apartheid regime, so Rosa is conscious of her confinement in a woman's body and its procreative purpose ("I am my womb").

This description of pain reminds Rosa of the note she has hidden in a hot-water bottle:

> The hot-water bottle is my idea. My mother never used one, and so - as I prepared the device I imagined her swiftly discovering it - she would realize there must be some special reason for its having been sent. (*BD*,16)

The explicit reason is to communicate to her mother that her father has not been detained, but, underlying this, is the hidden message between daughter and mother. Rosa hopes that her mother will discover the "special reason" beyond political expediency for concealing it in a hot-water bottle This further camouflaged message contains one of the keys to Rosa's authorial anxiety. She has never learned, as she says, how to communicate "intimate facts" to her mother: "I found I did not know how to address her except as I did in the letters I would write when away on holiday" (*BD*,16)

This incident was also a source of anxiety for Gordimer, who was introduced to "the schoolgirl daughter of the man" as she waited "outside the prison to visit a friend detained for *political interrogation*" (1995,8). At that moment, and, of course, when writing *Burger's Daughter*, Gordimer felt like Primo Levi's 'Metamir', "a metaphysical mirror", which "does not obey the law of optics but reproduces your image as it is seen by the person who stands before you" (1995,5).[22] This is, in her opinion, one of the "closest definitions of the process of the imagination upon actuality[:] the writer is that person who stands before you". From that position, in which Rosa is also placed, Gordimer wrote *Burger's Daughter*:

> From that mystery, the facility that works upon while it stores fragments of perception, the snatched phases of turbulence that is existence both lived and observed by the writer, came the alternative lives of the man and the schoolgirl, created in the imagination but touching [...] the actual ..(1995,8)[23]

Rosa's inexperience in communicating, connecting, with her mother echoes Gordimer's artistic distance, which she explains by saying that she had known the "man and his family", but "had been by no means an intimate in their house, neither, although I was committed to the Left, was I a member of the revolutionary group which was more than their home" (1995,7). The necessary detachment and commitment, felt by both author and protagonist, is represented in the text by the mirror "directed to another mirror", the mirror that provides the frame, so to speak, for the first section of the novel and for the novel itself. Moreover, this blurring of borders between textual and extratextual strategies creates an intimacy between protagonist and author that cannot be ignored in artistic and socio-political terms. After all, both live in South Africa and both had known the "man and his family".

Rosa's foregrounding of this memory, made so immediate by the use of the present tense, stresses the impossibility of clearly defining the distinction between experiencing and narrating self, as one becomes the other, and perhaps shows the firm hold the prison and her body have on Rosa's imagination In addition, Rosa's awareness of her body not only distances her from the schoolgirl, but also alerts her to the different layers of meaning produced and interpreted so differently by different people. Her intimate experience, unknown even to the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), defines her as a woman among women, who perceives the world from her particular perspective. It is from this concealed (and mysterious) landscape, which may undermine appearances by laying emphasis on the inner rather than the public occasion, that her awareness and her narration emerge. Rosa starts from the body, the body of a living human individual who

must learn to read the signs as she would read them rather than as she has been trained to read them. Her physical suffering at this moment anticipates the formation of her ideology of suffering, which threatens her authority and eventually gives her the strength to address her father from her "difference of view".

By using Conrad as her addressee, Rosa can also examine another part of her self, that which might give precedence to the "emotional contract" over that of "political necessity" in these new circumstances (*BD*,62-63). "It was a contact visit?" she asks Marisa and proceeds to explain:

> I fall back easily into the jargon of prison visiting. It will always come to me, the language I learnt as a child. At the caprice of the chief warder I would see my father in a small bare room [. .] or on the other side of the wire grille through which I could not touch my fiancé's hand.

Rosa's narrative expresses great anguish concerning her personal relationships, which are almost always, until she leaves for France, played out in the public sphere with a public purpose. She tells Conrad about her affair with Marcus, a Swede who made a documentary film about her father He

> could coax from me [..] three orgasms, one after the other, each pleasuring spreading the limits of the spent one like the water touching to its own tidemarks on the sand. This had never happened to me before. And he wrote to me, when Lionel died. He said he would try to show a rough cut of the unfinished film if the Scandinavian anti-apartheid movement held a memorial meeting. (*BD*,64)

The shift here from the intimacy of love-making to the letter of public purpose is explained in the next sentence. "Perhaps [...] being the lover of Lionel Burger's daughter for a month or two was the nearest he would ever get to the barricades I don't mind. What else was I?" (*BD*,64-65) While Rosa's erotic intimacy with Marcus - as with Conrad, Noel de Witt and even Brandt Vermuelen - is clear, she perceives herself as an object, a type, even when narrating this event.

A point worth noting in passing is the sexual/textual interconnection between this intensity of pleasure and Rosa's awareness of an addressee: neither had ever happened to her before

The Burgers have another hierarchy of pleasures, as, for example, when Rosa became "engaged" to Noel de Witt, a man she actually loved, so that she could visit him in prison "That was one of the satisfactions you didn't have on the list of our pleasures in that house - outsmarting *the police" (BD,65). This immediately evokes the pleasuring experienced during her love-making:* as Katya later confirms, even the most intimate feelings are transformed in the public sphere to become the collective experience of the Communist Party. The situations vary, but the one constant is the exploitation of Rosa - as "Lionel Burger's daughter". She later tells Clare Terblanche, watching "her as if she were myself", that they are both "the instruments of struggle appropriate to this phase. [...] What conformists: the children of our parents" (*BD*,127). No wonder Rosa struggles with "monstrous resentment against the claim [...] of blood, shared genes, the semen from which I had issued and the body in which I had grown" (*BD*,62). In this context, "the very personal one of the love relationship between men and women" is a feminist, racial and generational issue (Gardner 1990,165-68).[24] It is Rosa's emphasis on the current arrangement of intimacy that demonstrates her desire to rearrange it, albeit tentatively.

Rosa makes her rebellion clear when she outgrows the "intimacy of self-engrossment without the reserve of adult accountability" of her life with Conrad in the cottage, where her "silence hammered sullen, hysterical, repetitive without words; sick, sick of the maimed, the endangered, the fugitive, the stoic; sick of courts, sick of prisons, sick of institutions scrubbed bare for the regulation endurance of dread and pain" (*BD*,70) The experiencing Rosa lives alone for the first time in her life without a "stake of responsibility" in anyone else's life· "For us - coming from that house - that was the real definition of loneliness: to live without social responsibility" (*BD*,77) She now has the opportunity to become socially responsible and to give

voice to her silence, but her critical expression of this sense of responsibility only comes across later in her silent narration. The rough equation of inarticulate silence with loneliness and lack of social responsibility begins to reveal the significance of Rosa's act of narration Once she has found some way in which to reconnect herself to the struggle, she can start to order her thoughts and experiences in a narrative mode, even if she is "of political necessity" excluded from the struggle, or assigned a very secondary role For the time being, she will defy her parents

Her refusal to join "the family", who persist in reifying, desexualising and infantilising her, is inevitably a cause of anguish and confusion as it brings her into direct confrontation with her father's ideology: the dominant ideology of dissidence. Whilst he, like so many other freedom fighters of his kind, would willingly sacrifice his own life and that of others, Rosa's difference of view (and difference of circumstance) makes her privilege the ideology of suffering, thus positing herself on the political middle ground What other ideology could she adhere to in the context? Meaningful action is impossible, as J.M. Coetzee argues when discussing the donkey flogging scene, because it "comes from the inner reaches of Dante's hell, beyond the scope of morality. For morality is human, whereas the two figures locked in the cart belong to a damned, dehumanized world" (1992,35). What Rosa waits for is what the author must suffer and wait for; "a world in which the author may once more legitimately claim meaning for [her] narrative" (Jolly 1996,134-35). All Rosa and Gordimer can do is expose and explore the situation, as they have no authority to act, and await, in Coetzee's opinion, "a time when humanity will be restored across the face of society, and therefore when all human acts [..] will be returned to the ambit of moral judgement " (1992,35)

Naming, as we have seen, is important in the South African context. In a provocative intertextual play, Rosa's Conrad recalls the writer Joseph Conrad in more ways than one, Gordimer's "The African Magician" is considered a partial rewriting of *Heart of Darkness* and she

frequently refers to Conrad's thoughts on the art of fiction in her essays [25] According to Gilbert and Gubar, the South African writer Rider Haggard had implied, "with anxious xenophobia", that "what Joseph Conrad's Kurtz was to call 'the horror, the horror' of Africa or of any of the 'dark' colonized places on the globe, inhered in what seemed to be a subliminal conspiracy between 'strange' races and the (eternal) feminine" (1989,40-45). That is to say, this racial/sexual otherness could emasculate the so-called civilised invaders, because it "might ironically call into question the very nature of the imperialist project". Not only does Marlow begin "his quest under female patronage", like Ludwig Horace Holly in Haggard's *She*, but Kurtz is "ultimately meant to signify the nightmare corpse at the core of the anxious patriarchal/imperialist mind, the dead father who has been 'blasted' into impotence by 'the horror, the horror' of otherness" [26] Rosa's Conrad, a young man totally dedicated to the cultivation of self, becomes, like Marlow, a textual figure on account of a woman, if of a very different kind, and "the horror, the horror" of his fantasies about his mother linger in the mind when we learn he goes to sea. Of this decision, Rosa says: "But you know that when you take passage with them it's to flee. Because my boss Barry Eckhard and your successful scrap-dealer father proposed to you their fate, the bourgeois fate, alternate to Lionel's: to eat without hunger, mate without desire" (*BD*,117). Life for Rosa's Conrad is "the tension between creation and destruction in yourself"; his "fantasies" and "obsessions" come from literature rather than from "Saint-Simon and Fourier and Marx and Lenin and Luxemburg"; his realities are, plainly, "sex and death" (*BD*,47) Meanwhile, for Lionel Burger the tension is "between self and others; between present and something called the future" (*BD*,86) This is the tension Gordimer approves of. in 1994, she said of what Allister Sparks calls Mandela's "almost card-index memory" (1996,47), that it was not a trick of political showmanship but

> a sign of something profound: a remove from
> self-centeredness, the capacity to live for others
> that is central to his character.

In relation to these notions of tension, Newman argues: "Gordimer's narrative technique draws the reader into a tension of freedom, progressing from Conrad's inner psychological existence to a fresh orientation towards the world of the autonomous other" (1988,73). The soul-destroying effects of materialism, so evident in *Heart of Darkness*, shape Conrad's fate, a fate that makes no attempt to mediate, as the reader must, between self and other, between first- and third-person narration, between "internal voice and external image". Does Rosa's Conrad ultimately signify one of the nightmare corpses "at the core of the anxious patriarchal/imperialist mind"?

Kristeva's idea that sexual difference "is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract" is quite evident in Rosa's narration in her mind to Conrad. Ironically, it appears that his function is partly to enable Rosa to recognise the two sides of false consciousness within herself and to free the imagination from the preconceptions and prejudices perpetrated by them. Gordimer's study of the ordering of the imagination in this text also becomes a political act, because Rosa begins to exorcise "the male mind that has been implanted in" her (Fetterley 1978,xxii). For example, she tells Conrad that she now recognises that her life "has been coded, since you forced me to read such things [Borges' poems, among others] in the cottage: but the code is my own, not yours, not theirs" (*BD*,196). Declaring her independence in this way is central to her growth as revolutionary and artistic self Considering her difference of view, she is bound to challenge the differing scales of values perpetrated, for instance, by Conrad, her father and the Afrikaner apartheid advocate Brandt Vermeulen, as she resists the "order of life" (and the order of narrative) which formerly "coated and swaddled" her: "the order of Saturday, the order of family hierarchy, the order of black people out in the street and white people in the shade of the hotel stoep" (*BD*,61). When she is about to leave South Africa, she "did things", as she tells Conrad, "without a connection made by intention or decision", one of which was to go to the women's meeting where they did not recognise "Mrs Cathy

Burger's schoolgirl", and she explains: "I try to sort this out in some order, now, of present and future, of logic; it didn't have or need any" (*BD*,204-06). However, "Flora was right. My direction existed". Her direction will be, in one sense, to bridge that gap between self and others, but on different terms from those of her father.

Not knowing how to live in "Lionel's country" (*BD*,210), let alone that of "Cathy Burger", and wanting "to defect", Rosa embarks on a quest to examine other parts of the unknown, albeit in her mind as narrating instance. It is interesting that her father's first wife is the only living narratee. Conrad, presumed dead, only comes alive as one voice in this polyphonic text, which gives Rosa the opportunity to explore the themes that will be developed in the following sections, whereas Lionel Burger comes alive as a private individual and a freedom fighter, epitomising the living past haunting the present. Rosa goes to France partly to escape from South Africa, thus fulfilling that impulse driving some of Gordimer's characters to leave the country, while being magnetically drawn to it. In the overall scheme of things, this trip also enables Rosa to step back from her immediate South African situation, thus creating that distance or detachment Gordimer finds so essential to involvement or commitment, particularly in artistic terms (1988,114). By taking Rosa out of her South African context, Gordimer is gradually withdrawing Rosa from the foreground, as she immerses herself in the emotional contract. A third and more compelling reason is that Rosa is on a quest for self-knowledge and self-discovery. It seems that she can only obtain the necessary knowledge on which to ground the terms of her commitment by becoming involved in a passionate heterosexual relationship without public cause and by discovering how Katya, or Colette as she is also called, lived during her dissident years in South Africa, how she now lives after abandoning the South African struggle and what her own response is to Katya's situation. The women Rosa meets in France serve their sentence under the old social order. The metaphor of the elderly woman embodies this order and provides the frame for this second

section, as Rosa's hand-held mirror had for the first:

> I had met a woman [in Europe] in her nightdress
> wandering in the street. She was like anyone else:
> Katya, Gaby, Donna, poor thing, a hamster turning
> her female treadmill [...] My sense of sorority
> was clear (*BD*,332).

Interacting with them, Rosa gains greater critical insight into this capitalist and gender-inflected society. Her words spoken to others in conversation and in her mind are no longer a mere regurgitation of the South African Communist Party doctrine and she clarifies her view of the circulation of women as commodities.

The scene is set for this reappraisal of self/selves and others by the room Katya has prepared for her:

> A big jar of lilac, scent of peaches furry in
> a bowl, dim mirrors, feminine bric-a-brac of
> bottles and brushes, a little screen of ruched
> taffeta for sociable intimacies, a long cane
> chair to read the poetry and elegant magazines
> in, a large low bed to bring a lover to. It was
> a room made ready for someone imagined. A girl,
> a creature whose sense of existence would be in
> her nose buried in flowers, peach juice running
> down her chin, face tended at mirrors, mind
> dreamily diverted, body seeking pleasure. Rosa
> Burger entered, going forward into possession by
> that image (*BD*,229-30)

The eroticism of this description - and its irreverence in contrast with the former section - reveal Madame Bagnelli's expectations of the imagined girl or creature: this is the "creature that has never been" (when observing the tapestries (*BD*,340-41)), that other self who, having been protected as a child in that other order on her grandparents' farm, has only experienced sexual pleasure as an object. While the third-person narrators are chiefly responsible for *constructing* this image, Rosa does little to counter it. Her "face tending" here contrasts sharply with that in her subsequent act of narration. Dominic Head emphasises the importance of this cocoon-like

environment to Rosa's exploration of her "personal wants, pleasures and emotions" This is a "crucial stage of development", or so it would appear, "in which attention to the self facilitates a growth that is preliminary to a successful return to the social world" (Head 1994,118-19) Lorraine Liscio argues, in line with the theory of Cixous and Irigaray, that "Colette's nurturing is important in just this way, because pleasure in the self creates the ability to move toward someone as a genuine other, rather than from a motive of self-need" (1987,257).[27] However, this reading of the function of this section does not account for such complications as Rosa's escape, which is "condemned as an apolitical and irresponsible escapism" (Head 1994,120), or, of course, for her submissiveness in her relationship with Bernard Chabalier.

During Rosa's first meal with Katya, the narrator comments that all around her were "[p]eople with nothing to hide from, no one to elude, careless of privacy, in their abundance letting be. The food was delicious and roused a new pleasure, of greed. Rosa Burger had not known she could want to eat so much" (*BD*,224). As she discovers new pleasures, indulges her senses, and takes possession of the expected external image, her mind is often "dreamily diverted" If she had not met her surrogate brother "Baasie" in London and had that other confrontation with the mirror which made her so aware of her own false consciousness, one wonders whether she might not have remained faithful to the heterosexual romance plot and become a "traitor". Katya later explains this to Rosa:

> If I'd stayed ... at home, how will they fit in, white people? Their continuity stems from the colonial experience, the white one. When they lose power it'll be cut. Just like that! They've got nothing but their horrible power. Africans will take up their own kind of past the whites never belonged to Even the Terblanches and Alettas - our rebellion against the whites was also part of *being white* ... it was, it was. But here you never really have to start from scratch [..] That's what I love - nobody

> expects you to be more than you are, you know.
> That kind of tolerance, I didn't even know it
> existed - I mean, there if you're not equal to
> facing *everything*, there . you're a traitor.
> To the human cause - justice, humanity, the
> lot - there's nothing else (*BD*,250)

Here and there: white and black· continuity and rupture· the comfort of bourgeois complacency held within an either/or discourse and the dis(-)ease tearing South Africa apart at the seams. Rosa must eschew this easy solution, which she accuses Conrad of taking, at all cost, if her revolutionary and artistic selves are to evolve towards meaningful action.

I would just like to draw attention to the possible source of Rosa's anxiety in this section We might argue that Rosa is torn between adopting the stance taken by Cathy, her real mother, and by others in the revolutionary family and becoming absorbed by the community of Katya, her surrogate mother: the coincidence of names reveals the two sides of this conflict. Thinking back through the mother may become, as Jacobus said, at once "recuperation and revision" (1989,61); Rosa soon begins to recuperate her mother through this displacement. One of Katya's main functions is to help Rosa overcome her matrophobia and realise that love comes in many guises, so that she can embark upon

> a courageously sustained quest for the mother
> [...]. As the death of the father has always
> been an archetypal rite of passage for the
> Western hero, now the death of the mother as
> witnessed and transcended by the daughter
> has become one of the most profound occasions
> of female literature (Showalter 1986,135).

Rosa's mother died of multiple sclerosis as an unrecognised heroine in that country of heroes "The crowds of people who came to her funeral" either "loved her for her kindness" or for "the rationale of her always deciding what action to take, and acting" (*BD*,82). Cathy Burger, née Jansen (*BD*,90), had been one of Rosa's first addressees - when she wrote her a note - and she

now begins to understand her through Katya, who initially thinks Rosa is like her father, but then says "I would say you are more like your mother. Yes. I didn't know her well - although in the Party we all 'slept in each other's underwear' [...] Your mother was simply - at once - my idea of a revolutionary" (*BD*,224).

As Conrad is, in one sense, the antithesis of Rosa's father, so Katya is the antithesis of her mother. The sensual artist - Katya - was cast aside for the committed revolutionary - Cathy. When Rosa has a lover, she spends less time with her stepmother, knowing that she, unlike her mother, understands "that sort of priority well" (*BD*,279). She goes on to recall her breakfasts with Chabalier and Katya:

> I notice you make up your eyes and brush your hair out of respect for male presence and as an aesthetic delicacy of differentiation from the stage in life of a young woman in perfect lassitude and carelessness of sensuality - I can't help yawning till the tears come to my eyes, thirsty and hungry [..], spilling over in affection towards you a bounty I can afford to be generous with Bernard says to me: -I am full of semen for you - It has nothing to do with passion that had to be learned to deceive prison warders, and you're no real revolutionary waiting to decode my lovey-dovey as I dutifully report it (*BD*,279)

The reminder of Rosa's ordeal of passion in the public sphere contrasts sharply with the affection she is now receiving as she abandons herself to "lassitude" and "sensuality" in the private sphere. The "incredible layers of concealment" (Gray 1990,178) in these lines recall much of Rosa's resentment against her mother, made explicit by the mention of the "real revolutionary waiting to decode my lovey-dovey". Her surrogate mother takes care of her looks ("Katya, you still have a beauty, êh" (*BD*,283)), and, upon reflection, Rosa, the narrator, tells Conrad. "It surprises me to see, looking at photographs, my mother was actually good-looking" (*BD*,82). Yet her mother

"*does not inhabit*" her good looks: "a narrow face with deep eye-sockets, a long, straight slender prow of nose, a skin so fine that even the earlobes are delicately ornamented under early-greying hair, these beauties fall into disuse through something more than neglect". Each feature shows the signs of another purpose:

> Beautiful eyes. But I see only the interrogatory
> watchfulness that looked out, looked up at my
> footsteps displacing the gravel outside my
> 'fiancé's' jail; [..] The lipstick she, in the
> habit of women of her generation, put on her lips,
> outlined not the shape of the lips so much as the
> determined complexity that composed them - a mouth
> that has learnt to give nothing away when speaking;
> whose smile comes from the confidence not of
> attraction but of conviction (*BD*,82)

Describing the beauties of a revolutionary and public figure, Rosa is once again reminded of her public humiliation as Noel de Witt's "girl": she associates this with a past she would rather not revisit. Her mother was an inspiration for others, but "we children had few exclusive rights" (*BD*,84). Rosa's relationship with Katya is, in turn, open, personal and warm: "I've never talked with anyone as I do with you, incontinently, femininely. [...] You've never asked me why I came and I don't ask that either. You tell me anecdotes of your youth that could transform my own. [..] Anyway, if you *were* to ask me - I didn't come on some pilgrimage, worshipping or iconoclastic, to learn about my father. [..] I wanted to know how to defect from him" (*BD*,262-64).

One of Katya's functions is to broaden Rosa's experience and vision by indulging her and regaling her with stories of her own rebelliousness. Katya was, as she says, disciplined because of "my bourgeois tendencies to put my private life first. [.]. Once I was suspended from the Party for 'inactivity' [...] I was dancing in some bloody terrible revue six nights a week - can you believe it? I had to - Lionel was an intern earning almost nothing". On Sundays she would take her street theatre group to the black townships, but she refused to go to the Party "lectures on Marxist-

Leninism - I could read it all for myself? - no, you were supposed to sit there listening to them drone on" (*BD*,262) And she had an affair with Dick Terblanche. Shelling peas or doing some other domestic chore, Rosa takes this all in.

> You deceived [Lionel] because you were not of his calibre; it was your revenge for being lesser, poor girl, you were made conscious of your shortcomings by his not even noticing the sort of peccadilloes you'd console yourself with (*BD*,263).

However, there was nothing her father could say because "by then there was the real revolutionary: you recognised my mother the first time you saw her" (*BD*,264). Explicitly and proudly, Rosa recognises her mother for what she was, but she has, nevertheless, also decided to render Katya's story visible, since it will not be in the biography This is important to Rosa because "[t]he former Katya has managed to be able to write to me that he was a great man, and yet decide 'there's a whole world' outside what he lived for, what life with him would have been" (*BD*,264).

Other sources of anxiety for Rosa notable in her narration to Katya are her immersion in the private sphere during her relationship with Chabalier and her concern about the reasons for her stay in France. There is no danger, however, that Rosa might become "her own person just through sexual experience" and that her "discovery of sexual needs and dislikes" would establish "sexual relations as somehow separate from social structures". For the "emphasis on sex as knowledge may well obscure the fact that sex is implicated in society as a whole" (Coward 1989,45) Precisely because Chabalier's "attitudes and concepts [turn] always on his private needs, fears and desires" (*BD*, 330-331), Rosa manages to overcome the desire to live in Paris as his mistress. At least that is what she says:"It isn't Baasie - Zwel-in-zima, I must get the stress right - who sent me back here" (*BD*, 332). As she goes on to tell her father in her mind: "No one can defect". Whatever her reasons may be for leaving France, her relationship with Bernard is essential

to her development:

> There is a sense in which Rosa appears to grow through and beyond this relationship, so that when she tells Chabalier that she feels he can make everything possible for her, there is a suggestion that their relationship has released the power of Rosa's emotional response that will be put to more productive use elsewhere: it is, simultaneously, an acknowledgement and a rejection of their bond (Head 1994,119)

Rosa's rejection of this bond awakens her to her ultimate responsibility, which she has, to be fair, defended on many occasions during her stay in France: she cannot be "the creature that has never been", but must return to South Africa, from whence she will continue to correspond with Katya Her surrogate mother has served inestimable functions: she has made Rosa aware of the importance of bonding with women and has given her the opportunity to question her past, come to terms with her mother and, finally, to continue to tell her *own* story

Gertrude Stein has questioned the notion of contemporariness, which she perceives as an idea that is only understood later when there is a new contemporariness to oppose (1990,488-91). Added to these two periods of time is a third element: the memory of what you were brought up with. In this case, the writer is struggling "under the shadow of the thing that has just passed" and, thus, to her mind "the creative person always has the appearance of ugliness".

> If you disagree with your parents, there is an ugliness in the relation. There is a double resistance that makes the essence of the thing ugly
>
> You always have in your writing the resistance outside of you and inside of you, a shadow upon you, and the thing which you must express.

This shadow has haunted Rosa since she began to concoct those versions in her mind; it is this that she "must express". There are at least two notions of contemporariness in her narration: that of her experiencing self and that of her narrating self However, since both resist the codes of the

past, "the essence of that ugliness", as Stein continues, "is the thing which will always make it beautiful". The first thing Rosa has to talk through with her father in her mind is her violent and uncontrollable response to Zwelinzima's telephone call:

> Repelled by him. Hating him so much! Wanted to
> be *loved*! - how I disfigured myself. How filthy
> and ugly, in the bathroom mirror Debauched (*BD*,329)

The vision Rosa has of herself in the mirror provides the frame for the final section, in which she learns to talk to her father, as the "absence" that she had never really felt with her father slowly begins to evoke his presence (*BD*,328) By describing quite literally the ugliness she sees, Rosa indicates a "double resistance" at least: her resistance to her father's past and to the image she has preserved of herself. Aware that she and Zwelinzima have been caught in a trap of the past and, above all, that she is excluded, Rosa's anxiety is how to make the ugly beautiful, to find a voice in which to express this double resistance within new structures. There is an attempt to sort out this frame by talking to Bernard Chabalier, but he resolves nothing with his soothing inanities ("*Don't be upset, my darling.* Of course you lost your temper. Your father! It's absurd Everyone, black and white .. no matter what political differences. Whatever happens. A noble life."(*BD*,331))

Eventually the obsession "with what had been said to me that night and what I had said or should have said, should have done" departs, even if Rosa cannot explain how:

> I solved nothing but was no longer badgered
> There's no explanation for how this comes about.
> Silence. In place of the obsession were the simple,
> practical facts of a life being planned (*BD*,331)

Silence: the secret to Rosa's act of narration. Withdrawing from the public debate of the politics of race, she gets on with the "practical facts" of life The necessity for action demands that clarity of conviction she knows her father had:

> But at least you *know*, you still know - there is only one end to the succession of necessary failures. Only one success; the life, unlike his or mine, that makes it all the way to the only rendezvous that matters, the victory where there will be room for all. (*BD*,330)

The goal is the same for "all", but it is the means that cause the "necessary failures" Rosa now realises that her father is right in this respect at least

The children's disagreement with their parents (their resistance) becomes quite clear in the only other section narrated in the first person. Rosa records her response to the Soweto Riots of 1976.

> Our children and our children's children. The sins of the fathers; at last, the children avenge on the fathers the sins of the fathers. Their children and children's children; that was the Future, father, in hands not foreseen. (*BD*,348)

This passage begins on her father's terms, in which all South Africans are perceived, from, for example, a Communist or an ANC perspective, as one large family ("our"). The second sentences registers a generational difference in which the children avenge the sins of the *fathers* on their fathers, while the third changes the focus once more to prioritise the perspective of the black children ("their"). It also records the change in emphasis, rendered visible by the possessive adjectives, in the dissident struggle from the inclusive policy of the ANC to the exclusive policy of the BCM:

> The real Rosa believed the real revolutionary initiative was to come from the people, you named me for that? This time it's coming from the children of the people, teaching the fathers - the ANC, BPC, PAC, all of them, all the acronyms hastening to claim, to catch up, the theory chasing events. (*BD*,349)[28]

Rosa is not the "real Rosa" (Luxemburg), but her narrative, if in her mind, has gained an energy

and self-confidence not perceived earlier. In one sense, it is fortunate that "theory is chasing events" because this gives both Rosa and her creator a breathing space. The events of Soweto overtook Gordimer when she was writing this novel it would have been extremely difficult at this time of shocking violence and the utmost exclusion of white dissidents to have proposed an alternative theory for the "Future" [29] She can, however, make proposals in so far as her character is concerned, for Rosa has eventually found her place in the turmoil of the present, she cannot defect: "No one can defect" (*BD*,332). With a recognition of her father - "And so, at last, you. It's to you . ."(*BD*,350) - left in suspense, Rosa finally tells him of her visit to the Coen Nels and her walk around the farm at night. Hearing the bees "on the boil" in their nest, she thinks. "Layer upon layer of night concealed them" as they might conceal those seeking a solution by putting "a Russian or Cuban machine-gun at my back [or] (it's time?) a scythe or even a hoe" (*BD*,352).[30] Having been granted immunity as a first-person narrator, she can plausibly end on the note "But it won't happen to me, don't worry" (*BD*,352). In this present, which is overtaking Rosa as she speaks, "[she] may not know where [she] is going", as Stein puts it, "but [she] is on [her] way" (1990,488).

This does not mean that she has overcome her anxiety of authorship, silence is, after all, *the* mark of anxiety. She has apparently discovered, however, that resistance to her parents has given her an inner strength upon which to ground the terms of her commitment Her final honesty with her father enables her to seek out that "rearrangement of intimacy" hinted at when, firstly, she finds a small apartment in Paris and, secondly, when she asks, after her return to South Africa, to be put in "one of the rondavels instead of the main house" during her stay with the Coen Nels (*BD*,351).[31] Once again, the withdrawal of her narrative voice coincides with a narrated event· her retreat to the country and to a room of her own, embodying the silence she needs to reconnect with the present and to address it on its own terms. On October 19, 1977, Rosa is "detained

without charges", although her lawyer, Theo Santorini, discovers that "the State was expecting to gather evidence to bring her to court in an important breakthrough for Security - a big trial - at last - of Kgosana's wife" (*BD*,354) Rosa's room of her own is now a prison cell· a far cry from that room Katya had prepared for the "imagined creature" in France.

From the beginning when Rosa sees her profile reflected in another mirror (*BD*,14), she is seeking a frame for her narrative, that is, a frame not imposed from *without* but emerging from *within*. She tells her "version" and "concocts" the others strictly on her terms, frequently "distancing" herself from "the private enclosures of her being" (*BD*,51). Yet this frame is, as we have seen, a constant source of anxiety; she seldom succeeds in bringing her characters, such as her parents, into focus As she says of her father: "To be free is to become almost a stranger to oneself. the nearest I'll ever get to seeing what they saw outside the prison. If I could have seen that, I could have seen that other father, the stranger to myself" (*BD*,81)

Despite the fact that she has decided upon the frame for her narrative, one begins to wonder if she does not feel "penned in" by those other versions/visions of herself. It is difficult to find a way to rearrange intimacy if one has never known it and, perhaps, even more difficult if one has only had a fragmented vision of oneself. For we must remember that while Rosa looks into a hand-held mirror and can thus only see at most the upper part of her body, the others perceive the whole body of a schoolgirl, an attractive young woman and a lover. For example, her response to Zwelinzima is anticipated in the first section when Conrad is cutting her hair She sits down on "the lid of the lavatory seat" and they begin to talk about her parents' commitment and the atmosphere at home, where, as Conrad suggests, visitors came not to tea-parties or bridge evenings but "to make a revolution" (*BD*,50):

> You seem to think people go around talking about
> revolution as if they were deciding to go for
> their summer holidays. Or which new car to buy.

> You romanticize - The cartilage of her nostrils stiffened [. .] She had stayed the attack of the scissors, holding up almost aggressively a jagged piece of mirror to see what he was taking off her nape hair. (*BD*,51)

This "jagged piece of mirror" reflects an image of an unhappy woman, so wanting to be loved by her parents, whom she could not get to know because the "occasions" she and her brother were taught to celebrate had nothing to do with their "own private kicks and poor little ingrown miseries" (*BD*,51). The public self-image is imposed upon her ("You didn't cry when your father was sentenced I saw. People said how brave. Some people say, a cold fish. But it's conditioning, brain-washing more like a trained seal, maybe" (*BD*,52)), whereas Conrad is totally the opposite: he would have pulled "the world down round [his] ears [..] The will is my own" (*BD*,52), foreshadowing the description of the tapestries at the Musée de Cluny (*BD*,340-41). Instead of suppressing these moments, Rosa prefers to record them as they are essential to her growth as a revolutionary and a narrating subject whose poetics must include an engagement with other women. She can only redefine her poetics once she has changed, once she has moved beyond that sense of victimisation and identity politics to reconnect herself to the collective struggle.

She later has the opportunity to gaze at the "creature that has never been" in the tapestries The unicorn can see "a tiny image of himself" in the Lady's mirror, while

> two tresses of her golden hair are bound with a fillet of pearls up round her oval face (like the gilt frame around the mirror) and twisted together at the top of her head imitating the modelling of his own. (*BD*,340)

Does Rosa gain her insight into the workings of art from this tapestry? Is this the inspiration for her narrative of self-discovery and development, in which she and her creator speculate upon the different versions of a public self by looking in a defamiliarising mirror? The first five tapestries appeal to the senses, but the sixth poses a problem. The tapestry's interpreter, Erlande-

Brandenburg, notes

> We know what the philosophers meant by 'free will': for Socrates and Plato it was the natural disposition to behave rightly, which we lose because, through our senses, we become the slaves of our passions .. '*à mon seul désir*', that is, 'in accordance only with my will'. (Meese 1990,73)

Meese goes on to say: "While we may 'know' what the philosophers meant (a point open to question), we can place alongside it the novel's second epigraph where 'knowing' in this state of free will only reveal itself as knowledge when we act it (out)" (1990,73-4). This critic argues that Rosa's identity is conflated with that of the lady, the unicorn and South Africa; thus, she renounces her life in France to return to South Africa I wonder if intertextual play might not be the more appropriate term? Be that as it may, this tapestry certainly makes it clear to her that she must return home, especially since she knows she cannot defect:

> While Rose redefines the terms of her actions, the specific theory (in)forming that redefinition remains vague and her exact motive to action and future actions unspecified. In other words, the theory of revolution and its implementation remain *'open' questions, while the need for revolution* does not. (Meese 1990,72)

I would suggest that contemplation of this tapestry gives her the strength of conviction to tell her story. She observes in this tapestry a new way of loving, which she wishes to communicate (if only in her mind): "to love you by letting you come to discover what I love" (*BD*,341). This would add greater weight to Robert Boyer's assessment that "[p]olitics here is conceived as a choice and a vocation, a fate and an ambiguously forbidding object of desire" (1984,62-93)

Meese claims that "to act" is Rosa's synonym for "to live". But how can she live, as the narrator makes clear when describing Rosa's sketchings, without (self-)representation (1990,74)? Rosa has made her choice and formulates the terms of her vocation on very different terms from

those envisioned by her parents, even if, at the end, she takes her mother's place in prison and displaces her father at the makeshift desk: "Lionel had said how the sun never came into his cell, only the coloured reflection of some sunsets, that would make a parallelogram coated with delicate pearly light, broken by the interruption of the bars, on the wall opposite his window" (*BD*,64). The "authorising text" upon which to build her present and future comes from her revision of her parents' ideology and her relationship with them. Perhaps the secret to the anxiety in this silent act of narration is contained in a comment Rosa makes to Conrad.

> What I say will not be understood
> Once it passes from me, it becomes apologia or
> accusation I am talking about neither . but
> you will use my words to make your own meaning.
> [..] I am considering only ways of trying to
> take hold; you will say: she is Manichean. You
> don't understand treason; a flying fish lands
> on the deck from fathoms you glide over. You
> bend curiously, call the rest of the crew to
> look, and throw it back. (*BD*,171)

Interpretation is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder. The fear of the reappropriation of her words for another purpose is a risk any storyteller takes, once he or she has appropriated them What concerns Rosa (and Gordimer) is the debate: the novel-length discussion about "ways of trying to take hold". If the reader interrupts, as "people pick up letters from the stack between them in word games" (*BD*,171), he or she may "scrabble" the meaning. But how can it pass from her, be communicated to the "world of the *You*" if she is only talking to Conrad in her mind? This question takes us beyond the textual boundaries to Gordimer, who is

> aware of the charges against the white novelist
> in South Africa, and designs her novel as an
> examination of the accusation that her art is
> solipsistic, that the white can produce only an
> art which articulates the dominating force of
> the white imagination. (Newman 1988,68)

Gordimer challenges the reader to deconstruct the colonial and racist discourse of darkness and

light in order to discover the real "you" underlying the fantasy projection of Rosa's revolt against her father. Disfiguration is, as Newman sustains when discussing the "Baasie" incident,

> an essential step in Rosa's progress towards
> autonomy, an autonomy which depends upon confron-
> tation with her real body, repugnant as well as
> beautiful, a body which cannot be split into good,
> clean white, or bad, dirty, black (1988,84).

Just as Rosa inhabits a room, so she, as from the beginning, *inhabits - and is inhabited by - her* body. The radical change in her internal image at this moment was anticipated so early on by the pain of destruction caused by period. Only by growing aware of how she has disfigured herself, both *mentally and physically, can she come to terms with* the "You" (the former "little boss"), who is now "talking back". However, we might wonder whether that world of readers will understand her, if they are not prepared to go through a similar "disfiguration".

4. *Burger's Daughter* as *Bildungsroman*

Rosa's revision of her parents' ideology, her reassessment of her own place in the struggle and, at another level, her act of narration show her awareness of the "complex nexus", as Felski says, "of social, ideological and psychological relations" involved in gender construction and its politics (1989,132). Some critics have classified this novel as a traditional *Bildungsroman*, which sounds plausible if one disregards the fact that it is a novel of *female* development. For example, Clingman, arguing that the basic organising motif of the text is that of the family, states:

> *Burger's Daughter* might then be regarded as a *Bildungsroman* with a difference, in which Rosa is eventually expelled from the womb-like infantilization she is subjected to from so many sources into the mature acceptance of her own life history (which of necessity leads her into another kind of womb, the prison cell). (1986,175)

Leaving the "psychoanalytic politics" aside, we should perhaps return to Clingman's first mention of this genre when he writes that "*The Lying Days* is in fact a fairly conventional *Bildungsroman* - a novel of education and learning" (1986,41-43). It appears to fulfil Hegel's observation on the ultimate social complicity of the *Bildungsroman*, or, as he calls it, the novel of apprenticeship in general:

> For the end of such apprenticeship consists in this, that the subject sows his wild oats, builds himself with his wishes and opinions into harmony with subsisting relationships and their rationality, enters the concatenation of the world, and acquires for himself an appropriate attitude to it. (Hegel 1975,1.593)

Clingman goes on to explain that the focus of this novel is almost entirely on "a white world and white consciousness"; that the novel registers "a feeling of exclusion between the forces of Afrikaner and African nationalism"; that, ideologically, it "occupies a humanist position" and that

it "sites the ultimate locus of historical development within an inner, subjective realm" He finds it fitting "that the work in which Gordimer begins to find her distinctive literary 'voice' should formally declare itself to be of 'personal exploration'". There is no mention of the fact that the protagonist happens to be a woman and that she may thus build her "wishes and opinions into harmony with subsisting relationships" in a somewhat different way from Hegel's apprentice. Hegel's observation is also questioned by Abel, Hirsch and Langland, who, when discussing the influence of gender upon genre and the psychological and social forces which have affected the nature of women's plots, point out:

> while male protagonists struggle to find a more hospitable context in which to realize their aspirations, female protagonists must frequently struggle to voice any aspirations whatsoever . . Even the broadest definitions of the *Bildungsroman* presuppose a range of social options available only to men. (1983,6-7)

We seem to have reached an impasse: can a woman ever write a meaningful novel in this genre? Cooke provides a partial answer when he argues that *The Lying Days*, *Occasion for Loving* and *Burger's Daughter* "form an extended *Bildungsroman*" in which the daughters, like their creator, "learn that truly leaving 'the mother's house' requires leaving 'the house of the white race'" (1985,11).

Even though M M. Bakhtin poses the problem of the *Bildungsroman* in male terms, he does find that there are so many diversities "from the theoretical and even from the biographical standpoint" that the entire problem of the so-called *Bildungsroman* should be sorted in a different way:

> Some of the novels are essentially biographical or autobiographical, while others are not; in some of them the organizing basis is the purely pedagogical notion of man's education, while this is not even mentioned in others; some of them are constructed on

> the strictly chronological plane of the main hero's educational development and have almost no plot at all, while others, conversely, have complex adventuristic plots. Even more significant are the differences in the relationship of these novels to realism, and particularly to real historical time. (1996,19-20)

In the case of a "rarer type of novel that provides an image of man in the process of becoming", Bakhtin argues, the hero himself, his character, "becomes a variable", and changes "in the hero himself acquire *plot* significance" (1996,21). Time enters into the "very image" of this man, thereby changing "all the aspects of his destiny and life". This type of novel can be designated "in the most general sense as the novel of human *emergence*" A human being can, however, emerge *in quite diverse ways*: "*Everything depends upon the degree of assimilation of real historical time*". Although the different types of novel of emergence may overlap in some respects, it is the fifth type that interests Bakhtin and seems most appropriate to *Burger's Daughter*. In this type, "man's individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence".

> He emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other This transition is accomplished in him and through him He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being What is happening here is precisely the emergence of a new man. The organizing force held by the future is therefore extremely great here - and this is not, of course, the private biographical future, but the historical future It is as though the very *foundations* of the world are changing, and man must change along with them. Understandably, in such a novel of emergence, problems of reality and man's potential, problems of freedom and necessity, and the problem of creative initiative rise to their full height. The image of the emerging man begins to surmount its private nature (within certain limits, of course) and enters into a completely new, *spatial* sphere of historical existence. (Bakhtin 1996,23-4)

Bakhtin makes a special case for Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by sustaining that this novel "is the greatest attempt at constructing an image of man growing in *national-historical* time", which paves the way for the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, for example (1996,25).

Burger's Daughter was in a very different time and place, however. This is not to say that Bakhtin's theory should be cast to one side, even if it is gender-inflected. What both Felski and Bakhtin would agree upon is the idea of relating the protagonist to his or her time, so that the novel traces not only a human being's emergence but also the emergence of the conditions under which he or she lives:

> The ability to *see time*, to *read time*, in the spatial whole of the world and, on the other hand, to perceive the filling of space not as an immobile background, a given that is completed once and for all, but as an emerging whole, an event - this is the ability to read in everything *signs that show time in its course*, beginning with nature and ending with human customs and ideas. (Bakhtin 1996,25)

Reading signs in this way is central to Rosa's development, but she does not depend merely on the "*seeing eye* as a center", but on all the senses (Bakhtin 1996,27). Her resistance to the former ideological value of these signs involves her in the most complex thought processes, which, in Rosa's case, often emerge from invisible or unreadable forces. For Gordimer, visibility can only be one authority "when the visible [is] enriched and saturated with all the complexity of thought and cognition" (Bakhtin 1996,27). In other words, "vision" goes beyond the visible. Furthermore, Gordimer's historical vision relies "on a deep, painstaking and concrete perception of the locality" (Bakhtin 1996,34). Despite these apparent similarities, Bakhtin works with the image of the hero as a "dynamic unity" (1996,21), whereas Gordimer undermines this unity by creating fragments of reflections and reversals. Some reveal the image of an emerging Rosa, whereas others represent the "static unity" of Lionel Burger's daughter, a named person, who, in this sense, might,

paradoxically, as well be anonymous. From this perspective, Rosa is a "*constant* in the novel's formula" rather than a variable. Two - or more - historical perceptions confront each other

Another point on which Bakhtin and Felski seem to agree is that this image of the emerging human being must not be "confined to the thematic plane, but acquire an essentially compositional and organizational significance" (Bakhtin 1996,26). This is, of course, related to the earlier remark that changes "in the hero [herself] acquire *plot* significance". The transformation of Rosa as a revolutionary and artistic subject is the result of her emergence at a moment of transition when she was "forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being" in her context The "*spatial* sphere of historical existence" she enters is forced upon her by the demands of "the historical future", however vague it may appear to Meese.

The general tendency among feminist critics has been, according to Felski, to cast aside the "fundamental differences in family structures, ideologies of childrearing and models of gender identity [...] in an attempt to extrapolate a universal [and abstract] model from theories which can at best help to explain gender acquisition in specific social strata of present-day Western societies" (1989,123). Perhaps a rather worn argument by now, her point is that feminist critics often do not engage cultural specificities. However, by focussing on gender as the central problem for women endeavouring to reconcile individual with social (and political) demands, we may discover that *Burger's Daughter* represents a narrative of a woman's development which appropriates and reworks the traditional literary genre of the *Bildungsroman*. We can, moreover, obtain a deeper insight into the shift in meaning of the concept of imprisonment in *Burger's Daughter*. Gordimer's reappropriation of a traditional form exacts alternative symbolic configurations, which Felski has found, yet again, in the metaphor of the mirror and in the mediation of a female community, which engenders a distinctive female subculture.

However, before explaining how *Burger's Daughter* challenges the traditional emplotment

of women's lives, I should explain Felski's understanding of feminism and the feminist novel. Given that feminism can be understood as an example of a fundamentally pluralistic world-view, which embraces differing and often conflicting ideological positions, Felski argues that it is impossible to offer anything other than the most general definitions (1989,13) She adopts Alison Jagger's formulation which "defines as feminist all those forms of theory and practice that seek, no matter on what grounds and by what means, to end the subordination of women" This is both rather general and somewhat restricting, in that it does not specify "grounds" or "means" in any way, and speaks only of the "subordination of women". However, having made this observation, I shall argue with her no further. definitions can lead to all too lengthy discussions.

When defining feminist literature, Felski rightly argues that it is difficult to draw a clear line separating the "feminist" text from any "woman-centered" text (1989,14). The key word in her definition is "critical": feminist literature "encompasses all those texts that reveal a critical awareness of women's subordinate position and of gender as a problematic category, however this is expressed". In this sense, by focussing on the second phase of the women's movement from the late sixties to the eighties, Felski has detected the emergence "of a large and distinctive body of women's writing concerned with feminist themes, often autobiographical, and consciously addressing a female audience" (1989,15). *Burger's Daughter* is not autobiographical, if by autobiographical we understand the author's writing of her own life, but autobiography is definitely an issue as Rosa confesses, so to speak, her intimate experiences and imagines how others perceive her. This raises the question of definition, which Felski claims "cannot be dispensed with in so far as it is necessary to clarify the underlying expectations which govern our reading of autobiography and make it possible to recognize elements of continuity as well as change in autobiographical writing" (1989,89). If we concede among these expectations that the identity of the author and narrator/protagonist is as indispensable to classification as

autobiography as the truthful account of his or her experiences, *Burger's Daughter* is not an autobiography *sensu stricto*, but a fictional autobiography "The blurring of this distinction between autobiography and fiction" is quite common in feminist literature because "feminist confession exemplifies the intersection between the autobiographical imperative to communicate unique individuality, and the feminist concern [. .] with a communal identity" (Felski 1989,93-4). That is, to go beyond identity politics to adopt a critical consciousness which enables women to discover new possibilities for change of self and society. In this case, "it is the representative aspects of the author's experience rather than her unique individuality which are important, allowing for the inclusion of fictive but representative episodes distilled from the lives of other women". This emphasis on the author's experience as a woman, obviously within her particular community, indicates the shifting conceptions of cultural identity (and thus of form and function of the autobiography) and implies, as Evelyne Keitel has suggested, the self-definition of oppositional subcultures, from which, as she has noted from her reading of literature in 1970s and 1980s, have emerged "distinctive literary 'counter-public spheres'"; these focus on specific concerns and reclaim for literary discourse "a representative and mimetic function which has been rendered increasingly problematic since modernism" (Felski 1989,94).

Burger's Daughter is partly a homage to Abram ('Bram') Fischer, the Queen's Counsel barrister who had defended Nelson Mandela and is represented by Lionel Burger, as such, it introduces selected factual information from one such counter-public sphere [32] In this respect, the interests of the author seem to be at odds with those of the protagonist. While Gordimer renders homage to one of the great South African dissidents, Rosa struggles desperately to rid herself of her father's overpowering and constraining presence and to seek an identity that is not imposed by the Establishment or inheritance. Yet she, like Virginia Woolf so long before her, cannot expect to be totally successful. Hermione Lee writes in her biography of Virginia Woolf that she

was "'modern'. But she was also a late Victorian The Victorian family past filled her fiction, shaped her political analyses of society and underlay the behaviour of her social group". Her father's expectation of "his writing daughter, from the age of ten or eleven, was that she would join in [the] family procession" (1996,55-7). In a very different context, Lionel Burger had similar expectations of his daughter, making her from the moment of her naming an inheritor of his beliefs. Thus, Rosa is partially entrapped by her past, even if she may be perceived to be outgrowing it.

Inextricably interrelated with these extratextual markers is Gordimer's (and Rosa's) quest for an understanding of their historical moment and an authentic mode in which to express it. Gordimer stresses the representative aspects of Rosa's quest experience by focussing on Rosa's exclusion as a white dissident and a silent woman story-teller. In this sense, Gordimer, so aware of her own situation, combined "historical truthfulness and authenticity", which "form part of the autobiographical contract" (Felski 1989,95). The "combination of 'authenticity' and representativeness [played] an important role in the self-definition of social movements in the 1970s and 1980s" (Felski 1989,95). This statement makes it clear that Felski is not merely interested in the confessions of women in the private sphere, but seeks to show the moments of interconnection and rupture between the private and the public sphere and the transformation of each

Bakhtin's fifth type of novel must, he claims, be related in particular to the third type, exemplified by Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Dickens' *David Copperfield*, in which emergence "takes place in biographical time [..] and is the result of the entire totality of changing life circumstances and events, activity and work" (Bakhtin 1996,23-5). Felski divides the self-discovery narrative into two groups, but only the first concerns us here. Whereas the male *Bildungsroman* survives only as parody, or, "in the form of a purely inward development which renounces all social

activity", as Abel, Hirsch and Langland suggest, self-discovery and emancipation in the feminist *Bildungsroman* "is developed as a process of moving outward into the public realm of social engagement and activity" (Felski 1989,126-27). This corresponds to a dominant movement principally within *mainstream* and *westernised* feminism which, represented by liberal and socialist feminism, "embraces a narrative model of history as progress, emphasizing the activist and participatory dimension of politics and the necessity of engagement in the public sphere". It is in this context that the specific social conditions and ideological coordinates shaping feminist literature result in significant differences from the male *Bildungsroman*. "the dominant function of gender in defining identity complicates the dialectic of individual and society which underlies the *Bildungsroman* genre by introducing the notion of a female community as a mediating structure" (Felski 1989,134). Furthermore, Felski is determined to go beyond the discussions of the *Bildungsroman* as a specifically German phenomenon in order to "accommodate historical and national variations" and, for this reason, she states:

> the *Bildungsroman* can be construed as *biographical*, assuming the existence of a coherent individual identity which constitutes the focal point of the narrative; *dialectical*, defining identity as the result of a complex interplay between psychological and social forces, *historical*, depicting identity formation as a temporal process which is represented by means of a linear and chronological narrative; and *teleological*, organizing textual significance in relation to the projected goal of the protagonist's access to self-knowledge, which will in practice be realized to a greater or lesser degree. (Felski 1989, 134-35)

A woman-centred text may often emphasise internal growth and self-understanding rather than public realisation, but Felski argues that "only by moving out into the world can the protagonist become critically aware of the limitations of her former secluded existence and her unquestioning acceptance of the circumscribed nature of women's social roles" (1989,135). When

speaking of "women-centred novels", we should bear in mind Rosalind Coward's idea that the term "covers a multitude of sins" (1989,47). The first of these is that two dominant foremothers were Pamela Andrews and Clarissa Harlowe, both constructed by Samuel Richardson. Secondly, *just as in the nineteenth century* "the consciousness of the heroine was treated in a recognisable format" (ending in marriage) with a "rigid separation between the public economic [and political] sphere and the private domestic sphere" (Coward 1989,38-9), so in the twentieth century women writers were over-reliant "on the construction of a narrative on the basis of woman's sexual identity" (Skeggs 1995,38-9). Indeed, they "represent a fictionalised version of our culture's contemporary obsession with autobiography and with intimate relations" (Coward 1989,45) Even if this be so, Coward concludes that "[b]ecause the whole issue of women's sexuality and changes in structures of living are crucial to our experiences now, these novels are sometimes able to explore the question of how female identity has been constructed and how this relates to society as a whole" (1989,47). This falls in line with Felski's argument

Despite Rosa's subjectivity, she is a public figure from the start, as she tells Conrad in her mind:

> Orde Greer is a press photographer who knew me by
> sight, as you did, and whom I knew as I knew you
> before we had coffee in Pretoria that day, all
> during the time of Lionel's trial, one of a cast
> of faces in which I read who I was (*BD*,144)

It is through her inner dialogue with her absent narratees and her reconstruction of the gaze of others that Rosa becomes so critically aware, as I have argued, of the role she had accepted and *subjected herself to, both in her immediate and in her extended family Thus, the necessary steps* she must take to reach maturity of vision are painful and often confusing The "Future" her father had mapped out is not *her* future and she cannot explain such fundamental concepts as "sex and death" except in terms of her parents' political doctrine. Her process of development is, in

biographical terms, slow and she certainly does not begin with a "coherent individual identity", since, even as narrating instance, she is constructing ("concocting") different versions. The construction of different selves is essential to her learning process: by perceiving herself from different perspectives, there grows within her an awareness not only of her politics of location but also that of others, which emerges from a simultaneity of oppression and can be grasped through an understanding of the same.[33]

The text's historical and teleological structure engenders an ironic distance between narrator(s) and protagonist, which, as Felski argues, "is a defining feature of the *Bildungsroman* as genre" (1989,136). The autobiographical narrative in *Burger's Daughter* reveals Rosa's naivety and inexperience. When her father begins his term of imprisonment, to "end only with the end of his life or the end of the regime", she very consciously explains the source of Conrad's curiosity. "Strong emotion - faith? - has different ways of being manifested among the different disciplines within which people order their behaviour. That was what you were curious - had a sense of wonder about" (*BD*,33) Her former self-assurance as Conrad's teacher vanishes in the light of her new knowledge and narrative consciousness, as she tops this off with a comment in the present: "I can't tell you anything more because I now see I don't know anything more, myself". This is clarified, however, when Rosa later tells him: "I could not shed the instinct for survival that kept my mouth shut to you on such subjects" (*BD*,141). Even silence contains so many meanings. Storytelling, that *selection* and organisation of "disconnected images", is for Rosa, as it has been for so many literary characters throughout history, survival: how can we ever expect to learn what she knows? The disparity between the perspectives of protagonist and narrator may gradually disappear at the end, but, on account of Rosa's extraordinary circumstances, she does not even attempt to tell her father, or her addressees, anything about her newfound knowledge and political commitment (*BD*,351). Gordimer puts this down to her method:

> In *Burger's Daughter* there are two things going - Rosa's conscious analysis, her reasoning approach to her life and this country, and then there is my exploration as a writer of what she doesn't know even when she *thinks* she's finding out. (Gray 1990,179)

Finally, Felski claims that just as the protagonist is educated, so is the reader. "the feminist *Bildungsroman* [...] aims to convince the reader of the legitimacy of a particular interpretative framework by bringing her or him to a cumulative and retrospective understanding of the events narrated in the text" (1989,137). Explicitly involving its readers, *Burger's Daughter* obliges them to reassess their understanding of the narrated events in this context, particularly through its study of the false colonial consciousness with all its implications If one is not obsessed by the South African political drama enacted in the novel and its ideological discussion, one might, upon reflection, also realise that Rosa is not merely a named person, a type, but a living individual - and a nascent feminist to boot.

The *Bildungsroman* is often considered a conservative genre because the hero's ideals are gradually worn away by the forces of reality, and his integration into society often reveals his acceptance of the existing social order. In the feminist *Bildungsroman*, in turn, the journey into society more often constitutes "the precondition for oppositional activity and engagement" (Felski 1989,137). Needless to say, the traditional *Bildungsroman* is definitely gender-inflected. This means that the hero is free to journey into the world on his quest for self-knowledge, whereas the female protagonist (like Rosa) is marked by "acquiescence, dependency and powerlessness" - and, in Rosa's case, for more than one reason In reviewing her life, Rosa makes manifest the ways in which she has acquiesced, even down to the choice of occupation. What constitutes the greatest obstacle for the female protagonist in a *Bildungsroman* is "the subordinate role she has occupied in the heterosexual relationship" (Felski 1989,137). Although Rosa is perhaps more self-confident than other protagonists of this novelistic genre, the heterosexual romance plot forms part of her

fantasy, it even threatens to overcome her at one stage, as it has so many woman protagonists in the past. True to Felski's understanding of the genre, marriage, as a denouement combining individual and social interests, is not the "endpoint of female *Bildung*", but its antithesis. The goal

> of the protagonist's journey and the text is an
> identity which is more or less explicitly defined
> in terms of a notion of broader female community,
> and it is this which can be said to identify the
> genre as distinctively feminist.

What particularly attracted me to Felski's approach is this notion of a female community, which becomes both organising principle and theme in *Burger's Daughter*. It all begins with Rosa standing outside the prison in the company of other women, bearing gifts for her mother, the true revolutionary Rosa recognises she can never be Since Cathy Burger is imprisoned and subsequently dies, two other female figures awaken Rosa to the complexities of life and of action in South Africa: her stepmother Katya and Marisa Kgosana Both Marisa and Katya exude a love for life and an irreverence for the cause and "family" that hearten Rosa, who has been brought up beside the hearth of total dedication to the cause. Moreover, Marisa's attitude and Katya's anecdotes about her youth have the power to transform Rosa, as she herself says (*BD*,263), and, although their codes are very different, neither is bound by the "subjection of women to bourgeois morality" (*BD*,262). The triangles constructed of the three women - Cathy, Katya and Rosa, Katya, Marisa and Rosa - inevitably point to other triangular relationships and, thus, to other readings. One I might mention, as a digression, is that composed by Rosa Luxemburg from beyond the text and Rosa and Zwelinzima within it However, the cornerstone of what I have called the 'hidden narrative' is the former grouping, which underlies the political significance of the latter.

Rosa first describes Marisa when she comes to Theo's house upon Burger's imprisonment. The description reveals those different layers of meaning, provoked in part by the differing modes

of perception of the experiencing and narrating Rosa. Marisa makes her entrance at ten o'clock (we must remember she is under house arrest and cannot attend meetings, especially in white residential areas)

> with her usual bodyguard of huge, silent admirers,
> and jerking her beautiful breasts, challenged with
> a throw-away gesture of hands decked as much in
> their own blackness as their rings and red-painted
> nails - Rosa, whose life anyway? Theirs or his? -
> My father is dead and her husband is still on Robben
> Island. She has been banned for years. She has many
> lovers and probably as a husband she has forgotten
> him, she isn't the Penelope the faithful write about
> when they find a sympathetic press. He wouldn't
> expect her to be, because his way, as my father's was,
> is to go on living however you must. And if he doesn't
> outlast his jailers, his and Marisa's children will.
> (*BD*,32)[34]

Marisa defies the authorities, demonstrating through her actions and others' speculation that she will not serve their cause. Rosa (and Gordimer) realise there is much to be learned from Marisa's *politics of resistance*.

When Rosa meets Marisa in a department store, the description is even more magnificent:

> Leaning on her elbow at the cosmetic counter opposite
> I saw the half-bare back of a black woman dressed in
> splashing colour which included as overall effect the
> colour of her skin. The boldest, darkest lines of blue
> and brown, ancient ideogrammatic symbols of fish, bird
> and conch were extended in the movement of two rounded
> shoulder-blades from the matt slope of the neck to their
> perfect centring on the indented line of spine, rippling
> as shadowless store lighting ran a scale down it The
> cloth suggested robes but was in fact cut tight to the
> proud backside jutting negligently at the angle of the
> weight-bearing hip, and close to the long legs. There
> was a blue turban, and before the head turned, the tilt
> of a gold hoop bigger than a tiny ear. She could have
> been a splendid chorus girl but she looked like a queen
> of some prototype, extinct in Britain or Denmark where
> the office still exists. She was Marisa Kgosana (*BD*,134)

The analogy with Penelope, a chorus girl or even an outdated prototype of a queen of Britain or Denmark when describing an African who might well be the queen of her own kingdom is crucial because it reveals that false consciousness and mode of perception of which Rosa is growing aware. This is reinforced by the sensuous description of her clothing and body - both so striking from a white perspective. Nevertheless, it also points a way to the future, as Rosa embraces her, thereby entering "the invisible magnetic field of the body of a beautiful creature" - so unlike Clare Terblanche whose body "had no signals" (*BD*,122) - and becoming immersed "in another mode of perception" (*BD*,134). Again, Rosa is challenged by Marisa's action: "Marisa is banned and under house arrest I am Named The law forbids us to meet or speak, let alone embrace" (*BD*,138).

In that comparison with Clare Terblanche, who irritates Rosa, it is interesting to note Rosa's class consciousness, which indicates an ambiguous and contradictory sense of superiority:

> Anyway, both of us are nicely-brought-up girls,
> fastidiously middle-class in many ways [...]
> although if the class membership of our respective
> families were to be correctly defined by place in
> production relations, she was working-class and I
> was not. Our kind has never been dirty or hungry
> although prison and exile are commonplaces of family
> life to us. Being white constitutes a counter-
> definition whose existence my father and her
> mother were already arguing between dancing to the
> gramophone at the workers' club. (*BD*,123)

What unites these two young women is that they are both daughters of the dissident white community, implying that even friendship is predetermined: "[T]he necessity remains", as Rosa realises, "for the few white revolutionaries to be provided with a role" (*BD*,126), but she would rather leave this to Clare's mother than to Clare herself. During this encounter Rosa grows aware of "an unpleasant strength bearing upon her from me" at her refusal to lend Clare the key she needs to photocopy the open letter to Vorster (*BD*,123). At this stage in her life, Rosa definitely

feels intellectually and sexually superior to Clare. She has a "body with the assurance of embraces, as cultivated intelligence forms a mind" (*BD*,121), whereas Clare is "something sad rather than ugly, a woman without sexual pride" (*BD*,123). Rosa's animosity towards Clare, and thus, as she later perceives, towards herself, is made manifest when Rosa says

> she mistook the heat of my determination for warmth
> between us - but that I feel only for her mother and
> father. She felt she had established fresh contact,
> other than the outgrown childhood one. Attracted by
> the possibility of friendship with me [...] she
> forgot I had failed her - us - our way of life. (*BD*,128)

This "warmth" is Rosa's determination to convince Clare, as she wishes to convince herself that "[p]arents and children don't understand each other - there's nothing to say, between them. Some sort of natural insurance against repetition" (*BD*,127). Apparently, there is no such insurance for Rosa and Clare: "What conformists: the children of our parents". Clare's defence of her parents betrays her misreading of Rosa's remark, which Rosa selects to include: "Dick and Ivy conformists!" The ensuing conversation, in which Rosa challenges the cornerstone of Clare's faith, demonstrates the intercalation of experiencing and narrating self, the mocking Rosa of the past versus the critical and more knowledgeable Rosa of the present:

> She was excited now, had the gleam of someone
> who feels she is gaining influence, drew back
> the unfallen tears through her nose in ugly
> snorts. *It's axiomatic the faults you see in*
> others are often your own; the critical are
> the self-despising But this's something
> different. Not a mote in the eye. That girl
> whom I pitied, at whom my curiosity was
> directed, so different from me in the
> 'unimportant' aspects - I watched her as
> if she were myself I wanted something from
> the victim in her and perhaps I got it. (*BD*,127)

Rosa was attracted by Clare's undoubting enthusiasm and resolve to serve the "family" and its cause, which she now realises undermines her own cynicism and resistance. This fault in Clare,

detected through ugly physical signs, is and was her own. As Clare puts it "In this country, under this system, looking at the way blacks live - what has the choice to do with parents? What else could you choose?" (*BD*,127) A simple statement perhaps, but it is essentially the conclusion Rosa reaches upon her return to South Africa. As we have seen, there are many mirror images, whether of reflection or reversal, such as this between Clare and Rosa, throughout *Burger's Daughter*. Even though they often serve quite different purposes in their various contexts, all help to develop Rosa's critical consciousness of her relationship to language, power and meaning

I have explored these two encounters in some depth because Marisa and Clare are members of this female community to which Rosa returns once she has reached a greater understanding of herself, her sexuality and her gender after her sojourn in France. While Rosa, for obvious reasons, despises Clare, she is inspired by Marisa and the three are detained. Felski argues that the "representation of a female collectivity in the feminist narrative and indeed in feminist discourse itself typically draws upon a crucial opposition between 'community' and 'society' as involving qualitatively different modes of human interaction" (1989,139).

This distinction has been elaborated and synthesized by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies, who counterposes two "ideal types" of association between individuals: *Gemeinschaft*, "a vision of harmonious community grounded in nonexploitative relations" and an alienated *Gesellschaft*, grounded in "an association governed by rational will" (Felski 1989,140) Variations of this opposition have inspired a number of oppositional political movements and also appeals to the ideal of sisterhood The models of female community built on this ideal do not, Felski goes on to explain, "simply function as a utopian vision projected into an unforeseeable future, but are perceived as a potential reality within the present social order, prefigured in the feminist narrative in the dominant role of women in the protagonist's development". The title *Burger's Daughter* makes it clear that at least one woman will play a dominant role, if ironically a daughter, but it is

never as clear as in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, for example, that women will play a dominant role in this daughter's development. What is evident, however, is that part of the hidden agenda of the novel is to propose the formation of such a community, in which the women think back through their mothers, even as they resist such an idea. In this respect, *Burger's Daughter* is a feminist *Bildungsroman* that "narrates a story of development toward [a more] coherent selfhood through a process of moving into a wider community", that is, a community constructed on different grounds (Felski 1989,140).

One of the characteristics of this kind of *Bildungsroman* is that the "figure of a female friend or lover", in the examples Felski studies, "plays a symbolically important role in the protagonist's development" (1989,138). We have already seen how Clare, as reflection and reversal, gives Rosa an insight into herself. Rosa eventually understands that what binds her to Clare is this sense of community. Whatever personal war is waged, it cannot interfere, however much Rosa opposes the idea as experiencing self, with "the work to be done":

> It is only people who wallow in the present who submit. My mother didn't, as Lily Letsile demanded, 'fill up that hole' where my brother drowned. The swimming pool remained to give pleasure to other people, black children who had never been into a pool before could be taught to swim there by my father. (*BD*,128)

Rosa's exemplification of her premise is interesting for several reasons. The swimming pool is one of the most important symbolic spaces in the narrative: as we have seen, from it emerge many of the central conflicts in Rosa's experience The tragic accident shows how the patriarch, driven by the desire to indoctrinate everyone by teaching them how to swim, could not save his own son. the personal was tragically subordinated to the political purpose. Rosa would wish to avoid this when filling that hole with her silent narration - giving "nothing away". She chooses the most painful experience in her mother's life to demonstrate her own mother's true revolutionary spirit.

Even in these circumstances, her mother refused to submit Nevertheless, on account of her mother's death, it is the antithetical relationships of intimacy, inspired by her mother, between Rosa and Marisa and between Rosa and Katya which "serve the symbolic function as an affirmation of self, of gendered identity". Two female friends become "the most important guiding figures" in the protagonist's act of survival, her revisionary struggle and "critical examination of the unquestioned assumptions by which her previous existence has been governed" (Felski 1989,138-39)

One of the central ironies in *Burger's Daughter* is that for Rosa "to be free is never to be free of the survival cunning of concealment" (*BD*,142) Secrecy - or adaptation on occasions - is her means of survival. Thus, when she meets Marisa she does not tell Conrad, nor does she tell him that she and Orde Greer know "one another better than by sight" (*BD*,144), Marisa is one of the secrets they share as members of the dissident family. Even as Rosa records Marisa's ambivalent feelings towards her ("I don't trust you. We should stick together, Rosa" (*BD*,154)), she experiences

> a dangerous surge of feeling, a precipitation
> towards Marisa. [...] A longing to attach myself
> to an acolyte destiny; to let someone else use me,
> lend me passionate purpose, propelled by meaning
> other than my own. (*BD*,155)

Awareness of exclusion does not yet mean acceptance. One alternative, it appears to Rosa, is to be used as a puppet in the conversation, as she is by Greer who "produces" her as the daughter of the man who died in jail. She explains to Conrad:

> I don't know how I look when I'm being used, an
> object of inquiry, regarded respectfully, notebook
> in hand, or stripped by you and my Swede to assess
> my strength like a female up for auction in a slave
> market. Perhaps I smiled 'offensively' before Duma
> and Orde Greer, you complained of that in the cottage -
> I produce a privacy so insulting that those well-

> disposed towards me don't feel themselves worthy of
> rebuff; even the slap of the 'cold fish' is withheld.
> (*BD*,159)

This hostility towards men's treatment of her must surely augment Rosa's attraction to Marisa, who, when rebuking Dhladhla, expresses "tolerance [,] the professionalism of the imprisoned leader's proxy, aware that the younger generation must be wooed against the day when he returns" (*BD*,163). Rosa's vision of Marisa at this moment almost raises her to an ideal:

> Yet she was innocently motherly, if overwhelming
> sexual charm can ever be subordinate to any other;
> he was, after all, one of her own, her rebuke was
> confident. She's ready to move at the head of
> Dhladhla's students like the splendid bare-breasted
> Liberty in Delacroix's painting, when the time comes.

Once again, as so often throughout this narrative, Rosa makes a telling analogy with a European master's painting, which on this occasion reveals another stereotype Rosa perhaps aspires to. Is this for the benefit of Conrad and his kind? In this respect, might these analogies be a move on the part of the narrator behind Rosa (the 'I' behind the 'I') to show that the narrating self, who now tells Conrad about Marisa, can never escape her cultural inheritance and conditioning? Or possibly one of Gordimer's tricks of personal censure to guarantee narrative survival?

Even a simple question - "So there was a raid in town today?" - becomes a loaded one, as Rosa is reproached for concealing information

> She assumed I had been as unaware as she And
> in this company I understood it was strange,
> some sort of lapse, from the norm established
> in me from the beginning of my life, that I
> should not have told her at once, when we met
> in the shop. (*BD*,167)

Rosa wants to be used, to be given passionate purpose, and yet she does not. She is invited to stay, but she is still concerned about a sense of commitment she cannot feel: "The vanity of being loved and belonging with them offered itself. But I know it can't be taken for nothing. Offered

freely - yet it has its price, that I would have to settle upon for myself .."(*BD*,169) Afterwards, she mulls over the significance of this party, speaking to Conrad:

> Silkworms of soft rain munching the leaves at
> two in the morning.
> But I hadn't forgotten the red knitted hat; I
> have that, I put it away in a drawer - the temptation -
> before I went to bed that Saturday, just as the mild
> storm reached the white suburbs. (*BD*,170)

The temptation, symbolised by the red hat, remains with her, it is a part of her universe she rejects, but finds difficult to resist. Given to her by a small boy, the red hat, crocheted by his grandmother, gives rise to a touching scene, which brings the women of the household together At first, Rosa confesses she does not understand the gesture. "What does he want? - I signalled to Margaret and saw the grandmother's gums bared at me in pleasure. But Marisa understood". There is no doubt about the understanding between grandmother and 'granddaughter' here. Rosa gradually begins to understand the significance of the gift. "The grandmother was presenting Lionel's daughter with her handiwork I pulled it on and Marisa set it right for me", pushing "all my hair up under it, both of us protesting and giggling" (*BD*,168-69). An African ancestress asks her grandson, one of this generation, to pass on her art, a sign of cultural exchange, to one of her descendants; it is up to Marisa to ensure that Rosa puts it to proper use. However, the hat is hidden away, until that future date when Rosa can relate to it meaningfully.

The model of female community that emerges in this text provides Rosa with a means of access into society by linking her "to a broader social group and thus rendering explicit the political basis of private experience" (Felski 1989,139). This serves to attenuate the clash between "individual ideals and oppressive social forces", which, to Felski's mind, "typifies the novel of bourgeois individualism". When Rosa defies the authorities to attend a "women's liberation meeting" - one of those "harmless liberal activities" William Donaldson allowed his wife Flora to

participate in (*BD*,199) - Rosa is introduced to bourgeois women at lunch: Mrs. Eunice Harwood, a white lawyer, "so perfectly groomed she appeared to be under glaze" and Mrs. Daphne Mkhonza, "a vast expanse of navy blue crimplene, patent shoes, gilt costume jewellery, like an Afrikaans cabinet minister's wife at the opening of Parliament" (*BD*,197). BOSS would be at the meeting in one guise or other, but so long as Rosa conceals herself and does not discuss the "political rights" of women as the "faithful" see them, that is "the oppression of black women primarily by race and only secondarily by sex discrimination", she would be safe: she is William's guest (*BD*,199). Although Rosa's position at this meeting is ambiguous, there is no doubting that Rosa feels her loyalties are with these women: "I am a presence. In this country, among them I do not speak" (*BD*,200). This community of women represents the principal groups, as Rosa makes sure to point out: "After the addresses of the white woman lawyer and a black social welfare officer, a pretty, syrup-eyed Indian with a soft roll of midriff flesh showing in her seductive version of the dress of Eastern female subjection, spoke about uplift and sisterhood" (*BD*,202). Even if some non-white speakers from the floor were "suddenly set apart by the gift of tongues", the mood of this meeting evokes those taking place in the United States in the sixties, organised by middle-class white heterosexual women for middle-class white heterosexual women. *Or, so it seems, as Rosa perceives it:*

> black women in wigs and two-piece dresses [..]
> had come through the front door but the logic was
> still of the back door. They didn't believe they'd
> get anything but what was cast-off; they didn't, any
> of them, believe there was anything else to be had
> from white women, it was all they were good for. (*BD*,203)

The enormous contradictions of this gathering of women who are there simply because of, as Flora protests, "the common possession of vaginas, wombs and breasts, the bearing of children and awful compulsive love of them", are most aptly described by Rosa's sense of smell: "The

cosmetic perfumes of the middle-class white and black ladies and the coal-smoke and vaginal odours of old poor black women [. .], a deep breath in Flora's living-room took this draught inside me" (*BD*,204). This is interesting· Rosa takes these contradictions into her innermost being. Once the meeting is over, Flora whispers in Rosa's ear a word of warning about entering the townships and Rosa concludes: "Prescient about what she did not know [that Rosa has obtained a passport], she was preoccupied with concern at the temptation presented. She looked suddenly alone among her knot of smiling, hand-shaking women; she watched me go with a vividness of attention secret to me" (*BD*,205). This reveals Rosa's compassion as she plays with the temptation. As experiencing self, if she were to succumb to it and were caught, she would lose her passport; as narrating self, she realises it is an illusion, for, like Flora Donaldson, Ivy and Clare Terblanche, she is excluded.

In light of the whole of the second section, this meeting is significant. Rosa has "lost connection" (*BD*,172) and, as she says, she does things "without a connection made by intention or decision" (*BD*,205). There is the political necessity to redefine her actions, but, sensing an entrapment within a system she cannot identify with, she has to learn first what it is like to defect On the Riviera, Rosa joins a group of people who, having run away from life, live a narcissistic "treadmill" existence Their decadence and her own anonymity are a welcome relief from the racist, political and social tensions of everyday life in South Africa In terms of a quest for a meaningful identity, her trip to France is a positive move; this space is so different, it gives her the freedom to question and compare. Certainly, the sense of "community" as opposed to "society" is well developed and Rosa grows aware of this Marilyn French describes group solidarity which inspires resistance and not private resignation in *The Women's Room*: "It is a vision of community. Of the possible. Of the person merged with the group, yet still separate. Of harmony" (1977,368). Although most of Katya's friends have resisted the system by which they were ruled in the past,

they have reached an age of cheerful resignation, which helps Rosa to overcome the overwhelming temptation to re-engage with the struggle on outdated terms It is perhaps surprising that Gordimer should have placed Rosa in a community of affluent outcasts, which is so different from anything Rosa knows, but it is effective as a textual strategy. Her immersion in a predominantly female community brings it home to her that this mode of life is one of the alternatives open to her.[35] Above all, it enables her to mourn the death of her father without feeling his constant presence obliging her to carry out what she thought to be his dying wish.

Teresa de Lauretis has spoken many times about the bind in which women place themselves when opposing male to female. She quotes Michèle Barrett as saying: "In terms of sexual *differences*, [.] what has to be grasped is, precisely, the *production* of differences through systems of representation; the work of representation produces differences that cannot be known in advance" (Lauretis 1987,7) Both Gordimer and Rosa are obviously working with systems of representation. The question of (self-)representation on the Riviera (and elsewhere for that matter) in *Burger's Daughter* is not straightforward. What is important in this discussion of the female community is that Rosa tends to represent herself and other women firstly as types and her return to South Africa is determined partly by the image of that woman wandering in the street This makes her think:

> No one can defect
> I don't know the ideology:
> It's about suffering.
> How to end suffering.
> And it ends in suffering Yes, It's strange to
> live in a country where there are still heroes.
> Like anyone else, I do what I can. I am teaching
> them to walk again, at Baragwanath Hospital (*BD*,332)

This metaphor of suffering anticipates a future neither Rosa nor Gordimer could contemplate. As Rosa says, it was not Zwelinzima who sent her back to South Africa, but the image of this

woman. Rosa gives purpose to a difference that could not have been known in advance It is only through her own emergence that she has learned to understand the systems of representation Whether it be the woman on the treadmill of existence or "Ronald Ferguson, 46, ex-miner, died on a park bench" (*BD*,332), Rosa comes to understand that gender, among other things, is a socio-cultural construct. As many postmodernists have argued, the socio-culturally construed subject, whatever the sex, is the agent that has to be accounted for in discourse. Once one begins to think of ways in which to construct the subject, one immediately realises that difference is as important as equality. And this goes beyond sexual differences. Rosa's experience in France and England (her conversation with Zwelinzima) has completely changed her perception of her own peoples. However, at this stage in Rosa's emergence especially, the "female collectivity", whatever its kind, makes more of an impression on her than the male. The memory of this woman haunts her and her bonding with women is clear.

Dissolving from identity to identity and hiding behind "layers of concealment", Rosa has suffered from the predicament "facing the inheritor of a revolutionary tradition in the context of South Africa in the mid-1970s" (Clingman 1986,174). What Clingman - and the Burgers - seem to forget is that Rosa is a living human individual, a woman: her parents are so firmly convinced of their own difference as revolutionaries that they find it difficult to recognise Rosa's difference of view as their daughter who also needs warmth and understanding and as an individual from another generation who might have ideas and responses other than those she had been trained to imitate. Intent on *their* construction of Rosa's revolutionary self, they tend to kill the woman in the text. Rosa suffers a multiplicity of oppressions, which include her particular location as a white South African woman bearing the Afrikaner name Burger, her exploitation and circulation as the daughter of a revolutionary, her inherited sense of betrayal and guilt, and her confrontation with theoretical abstraction that frequently dismisses her need for love, affection and sexual passion

as 'sentimentality'. It takes strength and courage to break away from the chain of events, but Rosa, who has defected and returned, is now fully aware that the answer does not lie with her parents or the "faithful" - her father's disciples. Unlike Katya, whom Rosa claims "was surely uneducable" in a political sense, Rosa has, despite the concealment denying her an "open political education" (*BD*,329), had an education which has taught her to question "the structures of domination and how they function". Her self-awareness enables her to imagine at least new "strategies for change and transformation" (hooks 1989,108).

Upon her return to South Africa, Rosa joins an oppositional political movement, which, as she has made quite clear, will not be that of her parents The legacy she does inherit from her father is his Hippocratic oath and his "passion-beyond-passion", as she determines to play a part in curing the dis(-)ease in her country by treating the black victims of the Soweto Riots. Her imprisonment is, in a sense, a liberation At last, she has realised the significance of women's bonding and resistance under the shadow of patriarchy. In prison, she, her fellow prisoners and their guards form a "sisterhood": "Where Rosa and Clare Terblanche found themselves held there were also Coloured, Indian and African women" (*BD*,354). There is still racial discrimination, we are told by a third-person narrator when Rosa's voice is withdrawn, but the prison was so old

> that physical barriers against internal communication were ramshackle and the vigilance of the female warders, mini-skirted novices dedicated to the Chief Matron as to the abbess of an order, could not prevent messages, the small precious gifts of prison economy [...] from being exchanged between the races (*BD*,354)

Marisa is there, singing hymns and freedom songs in Xhosa and "occasionally bursting into Miriam Makeba's click song":

> Marisa was at once the most skilled of political old lags and the embodiment, the avatar of some kind of authority even Matron could not protect herself

> against: Marisa got permission to be escorted to Rosa's cell twice weekly for therapeutic exercises for a spinal ailment she said was aggravated by sedentary life in prison. (*BD*,355)

Here Rosa gains an insight into the value of "a harmonious community grounded in non-exploitative relations" (Felski 1989,140). Gordimer might well be proposing a certain kind of *utopian socialism*, as an alternative to white exclusion, to women's exclusion from the upper echelons of dissident politics and to the racist, classist and sexist practices in South Africa. This model of female community envisages the possibility of forging personal bonds, which, in Felski's words, "may serve to challenge the instrumental rationality of social relations in a male-defined public sphere" (1989,140). In these circumstances, the oppositional community, if imprisoned (both warders and detainees) at this moment, "seeks to challenge and alter the basis of existing social values" By withdrawing these dissidents from public life, Gordimer seems, on the one hand, to be respecting others' understanding of the political necessity of the moment, and, on the other, putting her hope in those who are imprisoned, such as Nelson Mandela

The feminist *Bildungsroman* narrates a story of development towards a sense of "coherent selfhood", by finally coming into contact with a wider community (Felski 1989,140). This process entails an optimistic view of history, which in this novel emphasises the particularity of female experiences and interests. Rosa enjoys her "hobby", attempting to learn how to draw still lifes and "the naive imaginary landscape", which "represented, in a number of versions, a village covering a hill with a castle on the apex, a wood in the foreground, the sea behind." She has trouble with the colouring of the stone houses, is more successful with the "gray flags on the battlements" and the "bright sails", although "through some failure of perspective they were sailing straight for the tower" (*BD*,355) This imaginary landscape anticipates her own act of narration, as she struggles with perspective, colours and representation in different versions. It also recalls Gordimer's reply

to Stephen Gray's question about her exploration of the internal landscapes of character.

> Insofar as it's aesthetic, it has to do with finding the right means to express what I am discovering Perhaps it's got more to do with the degree to which we conceal ourselves here. It's part of living in South Africa, having these incredible layers of concealment, [...] I've always said, and I still feel, that style is something that is dictated by the subject; it comes about through looking for the right way to deal with a particular subject, or an aspect of a subject. (Gray 1990,178)

Looking "for the right way to deal with a particular subject", both author and protagonist rehearse similar techniques.

The wardresses praise her work, using "their mother tongue [Africaans], which was also hers" (*BD*,355). Her Christmas card was a scene "banally familiar to Chief Warder Cloete" of "a group of carol singers", which the recipients could recognise as "Marisa, Rosa, Clare and an Indian associate of them all" (*BD*,356). Yet this sketch, evoking Rosa's description of the women's meeting, contains other meanings and provides one more example of how women's relationship to society is "mediated", as Felski argues, "by a female community that allows for both integration and separation, which enables public activity yet asserts the irreducible reality of gender difference" (1989,141) The card also represents "a private language constructed to express their connection with each other and of their separation from the authorities" (Roberts 1983,49).

Burger's Daughter proposes a female counter-community as an alternative notable for its absence in Gordimer's next novel, *July's People*, which seeks vainly to organise any kind of community from the surviving fragments of chaos upon the outbreak of civil war. However, it becomes a mark of Gordimer's work in three later novels, *A Sport of Nature*, *My Son's Story* and *None to Accompany Me*, another transition novel: "Their time with politics has come - the time

of women", Ettin eventually recognises when discussing *My Son's Story* (1993,136). If we dispose of the debate between realism and modernism in feminist politics, the doors are open "to an alternative politics of the text which can critically address the emancipatory potential of a range of cultural forms in relation to the historical emergence of a feminist counter-public sphere" (Felski 1989,154).

Two issues are central to this debate: women-centred narratives have challenged the traditional emplotment of women's lives and identity formation is indebted to "a concept of community", of collectivity. As we have seen, these two issues are also central to *Burger's Daughter*. Through her autobiographical narration, Rosa has posed the problems surrounding gender identity and role· her growth as a revolutionary and an artist has made her realise that her concept of community differs from that of the "family". She has been exploited and circulated like a commodity, but the "synthesis of revelation" experienced when she sees the woman turning on her treadmill alerts her to the necessity for action, for political commitment. Rosa moves from her time of luxury in Europe, to curing the crippled bodies and, subsequently, to treating Marisa, the embodiment of one way forward. the category of a feminist counter-sphere provides a useful means for "theorizing the existence of an oppositional discursive space within contemporary society grounded in gender politics" (Felski 1989,155) Might this be, at least on one level, the discourse of the curing of dis(-)ease?

The space for women's discourse has, as we have seen, been eventually recognised in South Africa: in such a highly politicised society this is perhaps possible. The problem Gordimer encountered was an illusion. as she must have discovered, she was at the heart of gender politics, while her "western" sisters trailed far behind her. When Adrienne Rich referred her audience to South Africa texts in 1984, she said:

We often find it difficult to separate race from

> class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced *simultaneously*. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual ... We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives (1987,218).

Portraying her perception of "historical consciousness" during the writing of each of her novels, Gordimer grapples with these issues, even if her class consciousness is somewhat blinkered at times: perhaps Rosa's generation will discover a consciousness more appropriate to the times. After all, Gordimer is still conditioned by that "false consciousness" of a former age. What is perhaps most exciting about Felski's argument is that it can apply to many kinds of "oppositional politics"; one might argue that the oppression of women could equally apply, with the obvious differences, to other muted groups. However, by foregrounding gender politics, she has given it its true place as a powerful politics of resistance Thus, Gordimer's emphasis on the women's sphere, on a *feminist* counter-sphere, literally working from within to challenge and resist state ideology, produces alternatives, already practised, on different terms, by other dissident groups.

Seen in the light of Felski's study, Gordimer's proposal reveals one way in which the revolution has conquered the bedroom and posed a rearrangement of intimacy that may change the "habits of domestic living" and help men to move away from the old formulations. It is a transitory stage, designed not to exclude men but to include them in the new phase of the struggle. This phase will, or so the establishment of this feminist community suggests, recognise women's discourse on equal terms, as soon as the struggle moves beyond the important stage of black empowerment. Once the different muted groups in South Africa are empowered, there can be no other way forward than civil war or the dismantling of apartheid, leading, as it did, to multiracial elections

5. Concluding Remarks

Burger's Daughter is, according to Felski's study, a novel of self-discovery, self-knowledge, awakening and emergence under the umbrella term of the *Bildungsroman*, these forms do not necessarily coexist, but they may. Its feminist focus, which proposes a model for reading, writing and socio-political resistance in the South African situation, attempts to free the imagination from preconceptions and prejudices and transform the consciousness of those who read [36] As Gordimer reminds us, during these years of distorted word and thought "the aim, the responsibility of the writer was to cause the audience, the reader, to be astonished at the circumstances under which he or she was living and functioning" (1997,32) [37] Reading work written in what Gordimer calls circumstances of war places a great burden on the audience, who have "to complete the camouflaged or truncated meanings" from those layers of concealment, one of the devices imposed on the writer by his or her political necessity to make his or her opposition to tyranny heard (Kunene 1989,17) Bill Ashcroft mentions this silencing in the South African context when discussing Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1986), which, situated within the discourse of resistance, provides an example "of the silence into which the colonized consciousness is driven by the cultural conditions of South Africa and by the state control over the means of communication" (1989,83-6). While arguably highlighting the contradictions underlying the former and the latter, *Burger's Daughter* provides an example of the silence into which the *colonial* consciousness is eventually driven. The consciousness of Gordimer's era explored in this novel is that of dissident politics as perceived by white South Africans. Thus, the camouflaged meanings readers are left to interpret necessarily remain "truncated". Not least of these are the different ways in which the politics of race and gender politics affect the life and thoughts of the main textual (and extratextual) figures, epitomised, for example, by the sense of imprisonment and the discourse of dis(-)ease, which both pervade the text on every level. Like *The Story of an*

African Farm, *Burger's Daughter* is, to use Gordimer's words, "one of those open-ended works whose strength lies at the level where human lives - our own and the book's characters' - plunge out of grasp" (1976,103). As Gordimer and Rosa search for "ways of trying to take hold" (*BD*,171), so they are Levi's metamir or metaphysical mirror I mentioned earlier, thereby becoming "subjects of our own narrative, witnesses to and participants in our own experience, and, in no way coincidentally, in the experiences of those with whom we have come in contact" (Morrison 1989,9). This exchange, essential to any open-ended work, is one of the great qualities of *Burger's Daughter*, a quality Gordimer attributed to *The Story of an African Farm* (1961,49) and defined through the words of the stranger in the book itself, who says of the wood-carving Waldo makes for his father's grave:

> ... the whole of the story is not written there,
> but it is suggested And the attribute of all true
> art, the highest and the lowest, is this - that it
> says more than it says, and takes you away from itself
> (Schreiner 1976,155).

Burger's Daughter is not a novel of closure but of exposure. "To read imaginative literature by and about us", Morrison continues, "is to choose to examine the centers of the self and to have the opportunity to compare these centers with the 'raceless' one with which we are, all of us, most familiar"(1989, 19). By directly addressing the world of its readers, who have different ideological and political convictions, *Burger's Daughter* challenges them to take this choice. Thus Rosa's awakening becomes the readers' awakening

At times it might seem almost as if Gordimer, like Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen among others, "were required to adopt", as Patricia Beer argues of these writers, a subject and attitude which forced her "along paths which were not familiar to [her], and often not congenial" (1996,14). This would, in part, account for the contradictions in Gordimer's writings which endow a primary poetic and aesthetic urge with a sense of socio-political commitment - reaching such

intensity of tension in *Burger's Daughter* - perhaps discovered through an impossibility of satisfying that primary urge in her situation As Gordimer writes, when discussing the "aesthetic exploration of the word" during apartheid:

> it could not be disdainfully abandoned [when taken out of its 'velvet casket'] Certainly not by any writer of integrity to the art as well as to his or her social and political convictions. For whatever is written, for whatever purpose, whether to express the struggle for freedom or the passion of a love affair, can only reach towards the power of truth in the measure in which the writer is capable of exploring the splendour of language brought into its service (1997,32).

Some paid a dear price for creating works "that asserted the truth against continuing to write with official lies". For this reason, Rosa is paradoxically observed in a prison cell, framed as it were, putting pen to paper, but only addressing narratees in her mind. Gordimer undoubtedly reached an awareness of gender politics even before she discovered the great South African lie, as she called it, that whites were trying to conceal the fact that blacks were people (JanMohamed 1983,84). It thus seems particularly significant that it should be a community of women who has given Rosa the political commitment to assert the truth as she perceives it.

The first sentence of an autobiographical essay Gordimer wrote under the title of "That World That Was the World", in which she revisits many of the conflicts traced in her fiction and earlier essays from a post-election perspective, states. "More than three hundred years of colonization of modern times (as distinct from the colonization of antiquity) have come to an end" (1995,114-115).[38] She suggests the "grand finale of the age of colonization" took place in South Africa from 1991 to 1994 when the country emerged "amazingly, a great spectacle of human liberation, from double colonization". After a brief explanation concerning the allegedly unique situation of her country, which passed from colonization from without to "perpetuated

colonization from within", she locates herself within this milieu of injustice, ruled by "the theory that there are genetically inferior races", as she claims, almost in the same breath, that she will never write an autobiography because she is "much too jealous of her privacy ". And yet:

> I begin to think that my experience as a product of this social phenomenon has relevance beyond the personal: it may be a modest part of alternative history if pieced together with the experience of other writers. And it has a conclusion I did not anticipate would be reached in my lifetime, even when I became aware of my situation.

She humbly lays before us the battle of a lifetime she, like so many other writers, have waged within and beyond the text. Her subsequent autobiographical stance, in which she very frankly and honestly explains her own awakening as a dissident writer, combines those two elements she considers so essential to a writer· "creative self-absorption" and "conscionable awareness"

Needless to say, the title of the essay is ambiguous. In terms of individual location and loyalty, "that other world" was at once England and South Africa. Gordimer was plagued by such questions as· What was my place? Could it know me? Since her mother had come from England when she was six years old and her father from Latvia at thirteen, they obviously "could not talk about a common 'home' across the water". Gordimer was brought up on "English picture books" and South Africa's allegiance, as a "sovereign independent state", was to the British Crown. England, "the so-called mother country" was "the focus of inculcated loyalty, of allegiance, identification for English-speaking South Africans" (1995, 116). Yet she was born in South Africa, at the bottom of the map, and woke up every morning in her suburban home to the sound of languages and lives she did not understand. In retrospect, she has realised that like Jacques in Camus' *Le Premier Homme*, she was a "Colonial: that's the story of who I am" (Gordimer 1995, 120) Only when the process of decolonization was finally achieved in 1994, when apartheid had been totally dismantled, at least in the eyes of the law, did she feel she could disclaim this status,

as she writes at the end of this essay.

> I am a small matter; but for myself there is something immediate, extraordinary, of strong personal meaning. That other world that was the world is no longer the world. My country is the world, whole, a synthesis. I am no longer a colonial I may now speak of 'my people'. (Gordimer 1995, 134)

The "synthesis of revelation" she has always sought in her writing is now applied to her country as it enters what Flaubert called "the most difficult and least glamorous of all tasks: transition". This is, in the opinion of Gordimer, "the reality of freedom. This is the great matter".

Her initiation into that "other world that was the world", that is, the world of literature, which she regards not as an escape but as a quest, lies at the heart of her personal awakening and transformation As an adolescent, she felt "a vague but menacing risk", living a life "ordered, defined, circumscribed by the possession of white skin"· that of "bondage, not bonding". She gradually reached the realisation that she had the same necessity as Jacques, her colonial other, "to *make myself*, in the metaphor of The First Man, without coherent references [but with gender differences, as she says], up on his own two legs, no model on how to proceed"(Gordimer 1995, 121-29). The other world of Europe and America had been constructed through reading and films, but then she turned to such writers as Rilke, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Proust and Yeats for models Each in his own way roused her, giving her an insight into the passions and mysteries of humankind and helping her to make an "artificial construct" of herself, built on "European ideas, mores".

When she began to write, her writing became "the means to find what [her] truth was, what was there to bond with, how I could manage to become my own First Man, woman-man, human being". An early story, "The Defeated" reveals, as do so many of Gordimer's works since then, "that important phenomenon whereby the balance of oppression is maintained not just by

laws, but in every situation of social intercourse". However, "the story makes too much of an equation between the defeated": the shopkeeper (a poor white) and the black miner were "*not* in the same social pit" Such experiments as these, perhaps rather surprising for someone from such a sheltered background, gave her the opportunity to start "to live in the country to which, until then, I had no claim but the fact of birth" The move to Johannesburg was decisive. Eventually plucking up the courage to leave home, to "break away" from that particular "bondage", she was brought closer "to the discovery of what could be my own country; closer to the appropriation that was all that I rightfully could begin to lay claim to". She and other young aspiring intellectuals (from black and white communities) embarked on their adventure of undermining apartheid - "a prelude to commitment to revolution" - as they shared a sense of "*learning how to think* outside the way our society was ordered" This bonding with blacks involved Gordimer in a personal revolution that had, as she says, "no other issue but to lead me into theirs; to find myself there".

In another essay, "Adam's Rib", Gordimer quotes Toni Morrison's proposition: "'The ability of writers to imagine what is not the self .. is the test of their power'" (1995,14) Picking this up later, Gordimer says that once she had freed herself of the "whitewash" (Morrison 1989) that had so narrowed her comprehension of life, she could "keep open the multiple vision that the fly's eye of the writer had brought [her]" (1995,131). Only by "making herself" and building that true construct through her writing, could she, as Rosa does in *Burger's Daughter*, "bring together what had been deliberately broken and fragmented; fit together the shapes of living experience, my own and that of others, without which a whole consciousness is not attainable"(Gordimer 1995, 130-134) Learning to think "otherhow" (DuPlessis 1990) had brought her in touch with other realities, all part of that consciousness, in which she discovered "human drives and emotions" previously unknown to her The example she gives is courage, which she had formerly associated with illness or war: however, in "the life of clandestine involvement with black men and

women, one found that [it] was a daily commodity". This knowledge gave her a new lease on life as she became more politically active and informed her writing with an unprecedented vitality because she was now "open to it".

> [It] affirmed in fiction - the truth that is in fiction -
> the reality that was rising beneath the repression.
> The expression in art of *what really exists* beneath
> the surface is part of the transformation of a society
> What is written, painted, sung, cannot remain ignored.

This sense of resurrection through art mirrors the rebirth experienced when all South Africans finally went to the polls. Gordimer anticipated this text when the dead black body, which rose to the surface in the third pasture (the new order?) in *The Conservationist*, emerged as an empowered and active consciousness in her novels after this one, until completely taking over the narrative in *My Son's Story*: the story of the colonised consciousness, imagined from Gordimer's perspective, which is finally decolonised in *None to Accompany Me*.[39]

This truly rounded autobiographical essay, if selective, reveals the close connection between the revolutionary and the artistic gesture, between life and art. Or, as Gordimer said of character in "Adam's Rib":

> this fictional creature is brought into the
> synthesis of being by the writer's imagination
> alone, is not cloned from some nameable Adam's
> rib or Eve's womb. Imagined: yes. Taken from life:
> yes. (1995,4)

"The writer is the Adam's rib of character", she explains Of woman born? Milan Kundera once said in interview: "'there is a limit beyond which the novelist can theorize no further on his own novels and whence he must know how to keep his silence'" (Gordimer 1995,12). Gordimer has reached that limit. On that note, I end this study, other than to say that, however open-ended this text and Gordimer's essay may be, they, like *Burger's Daughter*, reach a positive point of closure in which 'bonding' rather than 'bondage' is proposed as the way forward.

Notes

1. Nadine Gordimer's "The Essential Gesture" was first given as the Tanner Lecture on Human Values at the University of Michigan, 12 October 1984 and in a slightly different version at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in May 1989. Published in various places in slightly different versions, the version quoted is included in Stephen Clingman (1988,285-300). The original date of publication of each of Gordimer's essays referred to is placed in the body of this study Confusing, perhaps, but interesting in that it shows how she develops and changes her ideas *in time - and this time was obviously not 1988, when she and Clingman published this collection.*

2 Gordimer writes that "autobiography can't be written until one is old" (1988,20); she had been reticent about her upbringing until she gave the interview published in *The Paris Review*. Dancing was her passion, but after a heart ailment was discovered "the dancing stopped like that, which was a terrible deprivation for me". Her doting and clinging mother managed to take her out of school completely at this time:

> For a year I had no education at all But I read
> tremendously. And I retreated into myself. I became
> very introspective. She changed my whole character [...]
> It was such a terrible loneliness - it's a terrible
> thing to do to a child.

Her passion for dancing lives on in her writing as does the obsessive theme of the relationship between mother and child.

3 I borrow this final line from Gordimer's "Living in the Interregnum" (1982) She tells her audience she is going, for the first time, to allow personal experiences to interrupt the theoretical flow of the address: "...because this interaction - this essential disruption, this breaking in upon the existential coherence we call concept - is the very state of being I must attempt to convey" (1988,263).

4. Her reading experience - at least the books she refers to - would be an interesting topic for discussion in itself. She claims, for example, to have been influenced at an early age by Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, which must have given her an insight into the simultaneity of oppression affecting the underprivileged working person's life her literary foremothers simply could not grasp As she told Beata Lipman in interview, "I began to think about these mine workers that I saw and was taught as a child to be afraid of" (1984,108)

5 All references to this novel appear parenthetically in the text. The Wang Yang-ming quotation is the epigraph to the second section of *Burger's Daughter*, which narrates Rosa's experience in France once she has succeeded in getting a passport to leave South Africa

6 Harold Bloom says: "Poetic influence, as I shall more frequently term it, poetic misprision, is necessarily the study of the life-cycle of the poet-as-poet. When such study considers the context in which that life-cycle is enacted, it will be compelled to examine simultaneously the relations between poets as cases akin to what Freud called the family romance". In this study, he intends "to center upon intra-poetic relationships as parallels of family romance. Though I employ these parallels, I do so as a deliberate revisionist of some of the Freudian emphases" (1975,7-8). In very broad terms, in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar argue the case for women writers

of the nineteenth century who simply do not fit into the Freudian scheme of the family romance, as studied by Bloom.

7 Judie Newman explains that Wilhelm Reich is generally identified as the first Freudo-Marxist to relate the ideological to the psychological process: "Where Freud held that society is founded upon repression and that nature and culture are always in opposition, Reich argued that instinct is good until adulterated by repressions, and that freedom from repression would lead to social progress. [...] For Reich all political revolutions, whether of the Right or the Left, will fail if they are only political and economic and do not extend to the repressive morality of everyday life". It is interesting that Reich should envisage "man" as instinctual and therefore insist "upon the supreme role played by irrationality as opposed to class or economic interests in history". Furthermore. "In his argument repression is the result of the establishment of authoritarian patriarchy, with the family envisaged as the factory in which the state's structure and ideology are moulded. The inhibition of sexuality renders the child docile, obedient and fearful of authority. In consequence, revolutions fail because rebels see authority figures, unconsciously, as their own childhood fathers" (1988,40-41).

8.Other feminisms have also been inspired by South African women's struggles of resistance. For example, Adrienne Rich writes: if women in South Africa have "played a major role alongside men in resisting apartheid, I have to ask myself why it took me so long to learn these chapters of women's history, why the leadership and strategies of African women have been so unrecognized as a theory in action by white Western feminist thought. (And in a book by two men, entitled *South African Politics* and published in 1982, there is one entry under 'Women' [franchise] and no reference anywhere to women's political leadership and mass actions)" (1987, 227-28). Of course, this book is not the only one.

9. In this respect, she argues that we [women] should explore literature written by men alongside that written by women.

10 Writing at a time of theoretical transition in feminist thought, Kolodny, like other feminists of the period, argues that we have been taught how to read a text from a male perspective, even if our teachers are not men. Feminists' initial counter-argument was based on the biological sex of the reader, that is whether the person was male or female. Our gender (masculine/feminine) is a matter of culture, whereas sex is grounded in the laws of nature. Although there is much debate concerning the matter, gender is generally placed in opposition to the concept of sex. What is crucial is that biology need not be assumed to determine gender, which varies from culture to culture So Kolodny's argument is that a person's interpretative strategies depend, among other things, on a) the concept of biological sex and b) the concept of gender. In 'A Jury of Her Peers', for example, the men go to the Wrights' house to look for a motive for the murder of Mr. Wright and the women to gather some necessities for Mrs. Wright who has been detained as prime suspect. All enter the Wrights' kitchen, but the men interpret the sex-coded kitchen things as insignificant because of their socio-cultural conditioning, when, in fact, as the women discover, they are exceedingly meaningful.

11. This is taken from Kamuf's "Writing like a Woman" (1980,298). Although published some time ago, we should remember that *Burger's Daughter* was published in 1979.

12. Ann Scott is a young English feminist. Ruth First, who was killed by a letter bomb in 1981, was a South African radical activist, thinker and writer who went into exile in Britain but later returned to southern Africa to teach at the Eduard Mondlane University in Mozambique (Nadine Gordimer (1983,14-19)). The first biography was written by Olive Schreiner's husband and appeared four years after her death, "as if Olive Schreiner were a figure of the highest importance" (Woolf 1988, 180).

13 Several critics have discussed the rather embarrassing problem of Schreiner's racism and quote such passages as the following from "The Native Problem": "I would die for the right of our Kaffir boys to decent treatment as I would for our splendid oxen. But I would not dream of making my home with them. Our Dutchmen with all their faults have never been guilty of cohabitation with the Kaffir women as too many of your British slave owners and soldiers have". Although there can be no excuse for this, First and Scott remind us that such "references as there are to South Africa's indigenous people are firmly rooted in the racist stereotypes of contemporary ethnology which she was clearly unable to transcend" (1989,195).

14.Unless identified otherwise, all these quotations come from "Selecting My Stories".

15.I follow Paz's argument simply to elucidate Gordimer's argument.

16.In relation to this, Stead writes: "This easy adoption of different masks, different voices, is one of the principal skills on which her success as a fiction writer rests" (1977,16-17).

17 Another model might have been Gillian Slovo, the daughter of leading members of the South African Communist Party Joe Slovo, who died in 1995, and Ruth First. When reviewing G. Slovo's *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country* (1997), Benson quotes the bitter reproach from Mandela's daughter to her father, which he then cited to Gillian and her sisters upon their father's death: "'You are the father to all our people, but you never had time to be a father to me'". "'There it was'," Gillian adds, "'the one against the other: their work, our needs, their commitment, our lives .. And yet, and yet - what else could they have done?'" (Benson 1997,48).

18.I am indebted to Sue Spaull and Elaine Millard for their illuminating synthesis of Gilbert and Gubar's lengthy and scholarly discussion in their chapter on "The Anxiety of Authorship".*Cf.* Sara Mills, Lynne Pearce, Sue Spaull, Elaine Millard (1989).

19.Gordimer would never have made such an appeal, for she condemned Millin as "a monster" on account of her performance "as a passionate defender of apartheid, and a tragi-comic pariah among her peers in South Africa and abroad" (Ettin 1993,24).

20.Doris Lessing returned to the subject of Africa in 1992 with the publication of *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe* and in 1994 when she started her autobiography with *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949*

21.The balance achieved in *Burger's Daughter* is, according to JanMohamed, undermined in *July's People*, which returns "to an exploration of subjective experience". However, unlike the subjectivity in the work of her literary foremothers Cary and Dinesen, "which derives its intensity from the desire to maintain a coherent self, in Gordimer's fiction it is a product of her willingness to embrace incoherence in order to root out unconscious biases and desires". This is an important

point, whether these "unconscious biases and desires" be of, to use JanMohamed's words, a social, personal, cultural or historical nature (1983,272-73)

22.Timoteo, the main character in Levi's "The Mirror Maker", invents a "Metamir", which, "the size of a calling card", was "meant to be applied to the forehead" of another person It would reflect the image this person had of you. What he discovers is "that no two images coincided: in short, a real Timoteo did not exist (Levi 1991, 49-51).

23. The turn of phrase comes from Joseph Conrad, whom Gordimer quotes as saying. "what the writer does is 'rescue work carried out in darkness ... this snatching of vanished phases of turbulence'. 'What is a novel', he asks, 'if not a conviction of our fellow-men's existence strong *enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality*'" *(1995,6-7).*

24.Gordimer had expressed doubts, in 1980, as to whether the love relationship was one of those real feminist issues that goes right "into the heart of the racial problem" (Gardner 1990,165). This is surprising, since her novels and short stories so often foreground the interrelationship between race and gender, as Newman and others have observed.

25. Dominic Head writes that Viktor Link considers her story "The African Magician" (1963) "to be a commentary on [..] Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* One can also discern an implicit reference to the Conrad novella in 'Inkalamu's Place'" (1971) (1994,163-64).

26.Gordimer might agree with the opinion of the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, who told Abdul R. JanMohamed in interview that "*Heart of Darkness* is quite simply an objectionable racist book. What Africa stands for in Conrad's mind is very, very clear" (1983,153). Among others, Achebe and Edward Said have written at length about the racist implications in this text

27.Head says that Liscio considers the possibility of a link between Katya and the writer Colette: "The most significant aspect of Liscio's claim is that there is a similarity between the third-person narrator in part two and Colette's style" (1994,202).

28.ANC stands for African National Congress, BPC for Black People's Convention, PAC for Pan-African Congress: all were underground opposition movements at that time.

29.Events so overtook Gordimer that she included the original document written by the students in the text

30.The echoes of Gordimer's next novel, *July's People*, are unmistakable in the passages quoted in this paragraph.

31.This rondavel evokes a very different response from Rosa - and the reader - from that when she left the cottage and lived alone without "social responsibility". Rootedness, so to speak, takes the place of escapism. Gordimer's characters are on the move, particularly from *Burger's Daughter* onwards, showing the instability of the situation in South Africa and the need to strike back at the system by whatever means. The significance of this motif changes in *None to Accompany Me*, but it is still a striking narrative pattern.

32.Gordimer opens her moving essay, "Why Did Bram Fischer Choose Jail?" (1966) with the following sentence: "In South Africa on May 9 1966, Abram Fischer, Queen's Counsel, a proud Afrikaner and self-affirmed Communist, was sentenced to imprisonment for life" (1988,68).

33.Gordimer first engaged this genre and mode of narration in *The Lying Days*, at the end of which Helen Shaw says: "All this came back to me in shock and turbulence, not the way I have written it here, but in a thousand disconnected images" (*TLD*,366). As she recognises the discontinuity of her narration, so she recognises, "discontinuity as the principle of her female existence. Rather than developing in a coherent fashion, Helen has merely assumed different self-images In consequence Helen now lays claim to her own story in order to emphasize its disjunctures and its episodic development" (Newman 1988,21).

34. It has been suggested that Marisa is based on Winnie Mandela; a tempting suggestion, which might fall under what Gordimer calls "the business of in-jokes, never mind in-inferences [which] may come up naturally among my characters", even though she does not seek them consciously (Gray 1990,181). Unlike Rosa's father, Fischer chose to defy his would-be jailors by disappearing on January 25, 1965. He left a letter to the court in which he wrote: "I can no longer serve justice in the way I have attempted to during the past thirty years. I can do it only in the way I have now chosen" (Gordimer 1988,75). He eluded a police hunt for ten months; in 1966 he was sentenced to life imprisonment and died of cancer in 1975. Lionel Burger 'died' in prison

35. At this time of great frustration produced not only, of course, by the Black Consciousness Movement's exclusion of white dissidents from the struggle, but also by the increasing strictures imposed by the apartheid regime, this also gives Gordimer the chance to explore the possibility open to her if she were to decide to leave South Africa We should remember that *Burger's Daughter* was banned in South Africa, even though the censors did not mention among their reasons that Lionel Burger was an Afrikaner. *Cf.* Nadine Gordimer, John Dugard *et. al.* (1980).

36.It is worth remembering that this model, captured in fiction by Gordimer, has been used by many courageous women throughout the century. The important point here is that Gordimer renders it visible not only for the daughters of dissidents but for readers in general, as she tries to come to terms with her own sense of exclusion.

37.Arguing that the writer wrote to be read, Gordimer goes on to say: "no matter how badly and carelessly [he or she] used the treasure of the word, wrote his or her language, the work was praised because it was published in opposition to tyranny".

38.The essays included in *Writing and Being* were originally delivered as the Charles Eliot Norton lectures in 1994.

39 I exclude her *Guest of Honour* because it is not set in South Africa. In hindsight, it seems to foresee the struggle between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party before and after the 1994 elections.

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ANXIETY OF AUTHORSHIP AND THE BILDUNGSROMAN:

THE HIDDEN NARRATIVE IN *BURGER'S DAUGHTER.*

Charlotte Broad Bald