I. Introduction

Nadine Gordimer is a renowned South African novelist and short-story writer, who received Nobel Prize for literature in 1991. Most of her works deal with the moral and psychological tensions of her racially divided home country. She was a founding member of Congress of South African Writers, and even at the height of the apartheid regime, she never considered going into exile. Most of her texts are concerned with South African social reality. Exploitation of black majority by white minority is vividly pictured in her books; her main concern is to reveal the psychological consequences of a racially divided society. She has depicted the real picture of colonial South Africa in her writings. Gordimer tries to liberate the black people and their territory from the grip of white colonizer by making people conscious through her writings.

Gordimer has written numerous novels and short stories. Her first story, *Come Again Tomorrow*, appeared in the children's section of the Johannesburg magazine Forum when she was only fourteen. By her twenties, Gordimer had had stories published in many of the local magazines. In 1951, the New Yorker accepted a story, publishing her ever since.

Her first collection of short stories, *Face to Face* (1949), which is not listed in some of her biographies, Gordimer has revealed the psychological consequences of a racially divided society. The novel *The Lying Days* (1953) was based largely on the author's own life and depicted a white girl, Helen, and her growing disaffection toward the narrow-mindlessness of a small-town life. Other works in the 1950s and 1960s include *A World of Strangers* (1958), *Occasion for Loving* (1963) and *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966). In these novels, Gordimer studied the master-servant

relations, spiritual and sexual paranoiacs of colonialism, and the shallow liberalism of her privileged white compatriots.

Occasion for Loving was concerned with the line in a statute book - South Africa's cruel racial law. In the story, an illicit love affair between a black man and a white woman ends bitterly. Ann Davis is married to a gentle Jew called Boaz Davis, a dedicated scholar who has traveled all over the country in search of African music. Gideon Shibalo, a talented painter, is a black. He has a marriage and several affairs behind. The liberal Mrs. Jessie Stilwell is a reluctant hostess to the law-breaking lovers. Boaz, the cuckold, is on the side of the struggling South African black majority and Ann plays with two men's emotions.

Gordimer won early international recognition for her short stories and novels. *The Conservationist* (1974) juxtaposed the world of a wealthy white industrialist with the rituals and mythology of Zulus. *Burger's Daughter* (1979) was written during the aftermath of Soweto uprising. In the story a daughter analyzes her relationship to her father a martyr of the antiapartheid movement. *July's People* (1981) was a futuristic novel about a white family feeing from war-torn Johannesburg into the country, where they seek refuge with their African servant in his village. Gordimer's early short story collections include *Six feet of the Country* (1956), *Not For Publication* (1965) and *Living Stone's Companions* (1971).The historical context of the racially divided society has also been the fundamental basis of her short stories. In *Oral History from A Soldier's Embrace* (1980) the village chief has chosen the side of the oppressors. After his village is destroyed he commits suicide. Gordimer examines the actions of her protagonist, linking the tragic events in the long tradition of colonial policy. In the background of the story is the war of independence in Zimbabwe (1966-1980). Gordimer uses the mopane tree as a symbol of life and death - the chief hangs

himself in the mopane, the dead are buried in the mopane, and finally the tree becomes a means of consolidation. In *The House Gune* (1998), Gordimer explored the complexities of the violence ridden post-apartheid society through a murder trial. Two white privileged liberals, Harald and Claudia Lindgard, face the fact that their architect-son, Duncan, has killed his friend Carl Jesperson.

In *The Pickup* (2001), the basic setting reminds in some points the famous film Les Parapluies de Cherbourg (1962), starring Catherine Deneuve and Nino Castelnuovo. Julie is the daughter of a rich investment banker. Her car breaks down, and at a garage she meets Ibrahim, an illegal immigrant from an Arab country. The two young people from different cultures start a love affair. Although their background separates them, sex crosses all the cultural barriers, but does not stop Ibrahim striving for money and success, the good things of life that the West can offer.

Her Booker Prize winner novel *The Conservationist* belongs to an overwhelmingly industrial period in postwar South Africa, a period of accelerated economic growth which changed the face of country and city alike. The characters, images, and setting of the novel all reflect very closely South African life in the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially life in the expanding industrial conurbation on the Witwatersrand reef. The unnamed city on which the urban scenes of *The Conservationist* are modeled is undoubtedly Johannesburg, where Gordimer lives. For whites during the relatively peaceful interlude between the Sharpeville shootings (1960) and the Soweto riots (1976), Johannesburg underwent a massive, almost geological transformation. This was the period of high-rise super-blocks like the fifty-floor Carlton Center, whose controversial “Panorama” deck opened in 1973 amid elaborate maneuvers to separate white and black access.

Mehring, the white protagonist of the novel, buys 400 acres of land nearby in a country area. He owns a pig iron factory in the city and buys farm in order to give new life to his folk's old dream of possessing land. One day, a dead body is found in his newly bought farm. No body knows who he is but some say that he is a city slicker. Mehring is quite upset by this, he immediately informs the police. Police shallowly buries the body in his own farm saying that they don't have the vehicle right now to carry it, and they will come tomorrow to take the body away. The corpse of African who keeps surfacing from the fields at each flood, like a ghost coming back to teach a lesson and give the news that white people seem unable to absorb and retain: to say, in fact, that the land belongs to black people, Africa to the Africans, and those Europeans who settled there are but temporary and transient guests, inevitably alienated and excluded from a true ownership of the land.

Mehring is really a myopic capitalist of colonial mentality, who originally purchases the farm for the purpose of seduction of Antonia the women of whose most private thoughts he constantly claims ownership. As a whole he takes the farm as a place to bring the women and to indulge in romance with them. He doesn't want to invest his capital and make the land more productive but to leave it as it is and takes the land as a means to lose tax. He visits this farm only in the weekend. Jacobus, his herdsman, takes care of farm. Almost all workers are black in his farm. Mehring has a homosexual son who stays with his mother outside Africa. He doesn't have good relationship with his family. There is an Indian's store near his farm. Though Indian and Mehring have sound relationship, the Indian thinks white man superior to them and they both take the blacks as mindless stupid people.

At last, his own workers give the formal interment to the decaying body of so called "city slicker", who is the symbol of South African land. Mehring, a sexually

indulgent, racially prejudiced urban South Africans, searching for a new, “rooted” relationship with a rural South Africa overwhelmingly populated by blacks who unexpectedly develops a strong attachment to the land, seduces a hitch-hiking Portuguese girl and flees to another country thus adopting a new identity and establishing a new territory for him. Jacobus becomes the owner of the farm.

Gordimer paints a fascinating portrait of The Conservationist left only with the possibility of self preservation, a subtle and detailed study of the forces and relationships that seethe in South Africa today. Nadine Gordimer observes South Africa’s decay largely through the internal monologues of a wealthy businessman disconnected from life. He cultivates empty affairs with the land he owns with an eye toward profit and loss.

This book has elicited much response and criticism from many critics positioning their interpretation of the novel in relation to the female exploitation and colonialism.

Providing the information on African literature and observing the protagonist Mehring, Brian Macaskill, in “Interrupting the Hegemonic: Textual critique and Mythological Recuperation from the White Margins”, says, "Mehring's fundamental notion of preservation finally extends no further than self-preservation, and the text emphasizes this as a specifically masculine notion by linking his colonialist exploitation of the land to the exploitation of women." (16) Here he problematizes the relationship between preservation and violation which extends far beyond Mehring’s attempts to conserve the guinea fowl on the farm or the imperfect conservation of traditional Zulu myth. He buys 400 acres of land in South African country just to fulfill his old dream of possessing the land. But he doesn’t want to make the land more productive; in this condition his preservation is nothing more than a violation.

Examining the novel and interpretations concerning it critically, Coundouriotis, in “Rethinking Cosmopolitanism in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*”, says, "Gordimer uses the land as a metaphor for history and national identity, exploring her Protagonist’s racial anxieties as well as his impatience with his liberal social milieu" (28). He means that Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* is a critique of white liberalism in South Africa during the height of apartheid era. The protagonist, a wealthy capitalist, takes on the identity of an environmentalist, when he buys a farm as a weekend get-away and unexpectedly develops a strong attachment to the land. Gordimer maps through the ideas of conservationism a cosmopolitan ethic that anticipates the breakdown of the rigid social and spatial boundaries set up by apartheid.

Further, Tamlyn Monsoon, in “Conserving the Cogito: Reading Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*”, writes, “[F]or Mehring, the farm does not have an existence beyond its service to him, he takes it as a "Place-to-get-away-to from the context of stuffy airports, duty-free drinks and cutlery cauled in cellophane, or as a “place to bring women" (5). He takes the farm only as a place to indulge in sexuality and to get relief from his city life.

Similarly, Gorak, “Libertine Pastoral: Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*”, gives his view regarding the novel *The Conservationist* is mainly used to generate an ambiguous set of markers on Mehring's unstable sexuality. “When he flies back to Johannesburg from a business trip the focus is less on his place in a global network of economic interests than on his intimate explorations of the underage Portuguese girl in the next seat. When he travels to the country to look at a vacant farm, the focus is lesson the transformation of rural communities by investment capital than on the sexually attractive but (to Mehring) politically repellent

Antonia, who accompanies him from the city" (6). He emphasizes on the white colonizers' sexuality who think that sex is only the boon of life. Even being an industrialist, he gives more importance to ladies than his business. He even initially buys farm to impress Antonia and to impress her.

Regarding the novel in relation to women and land, Judie Newman, in her article "Gordimer's *The Conservationist*: That Book of Unknown Signs", says, " The scene can be read as an example of Mehring's sexual fascism; he is a sexual colonialist no women is safe from his hand or eye"(36). Here he opens that when Mehring is returning from a business trip he seduces a Portuguese girl and at the time of seduction he compares the body of the girl with land as Mehring locates it, explores and explicitly compares her flesh to water in the desert, experiences the "grain" of the skin, guesses his location, and moves over the terrain, exploring the ridges of her anatomy. The airplane, an enclosed world outside time and place, veiled in sandstorms, allows Mehring to ignore social, sexual and class taboos. Moreover, his colonialism extends to the whole of reality.

Researching upon the metaphoric use of women for land, Rosalie Otero writes, "Even the description of characters is often merged with the land. In the ambiguous final pages, Mehring picks up a girl hitchhiking. When they stop at an out-of-the-way spot to eat, they engage in sexual intercourse. Although the woman is representative of the land, she is not a paradise conserved but an ecological disaster" ("Doctoral dissertation on the novels of Nadine Gordimer's The Conservationist" 2). The point being made here is not, however, only a feminist one. Female exploitation and exploitation of the land are linked; sexual guilt functions as a surrogate to colonial guilt.

Jill Piggott in his article “An unparalleled story of an African farm”, writes that Gordimer’s Booker-prize winning novel is one of the least overtly political of her works—at least in the most traditional understanding of ‘political fiction’ (fiction about the machinations of state power). Yet the book remains a forceful, intricate exploration of power, as timely today as it was in 1974, as relevant to contemporary America as it was to minority – ruled South Africa (An unparallel story of an African farm” 5). He emphasizes on the beauty and its old hound truth nowhere else in contemporary English-language fiction has such subtle exploration of self. Gordimer always provides the reader with stunning, vivid descriptions and living imagery. She describes the life on the South African veld, the contrast between city and country life, and relationship among people.

In the same way, Daniel Weiss writes in *Virginia Quarterly Review* that Nadine Gordimer has written a masterpiece in *The Conservationist*, a brilliant study of a wealthy, white industrialist in South Africa, a dealer in base metals, whose self-definition depends upon random and unsuitable sexual encounters, unlimited meditations upon death, and alienation from his family while his so-called primitive neighbors play out their lives among their kin in labor, custom, and ceremony (*Virginia Quarterly Review1*). He says that a dominating South African industrialist moves to preserve his way of life, his power and his possessions in the massive injustice and suffering. He suffers in his life due to his own colonial and unstable sexuality.

Speaking primarily of the relationship between the Indians and the blacks, Clingman makes a similar point: “Within the black world, then, there is an effective political economy of consciousness, a chain of exploitation whereby those who are excluded from privilege are constrained to exclude others” (*Novels* 156). In the

country like South Africa where apartheid is the only governing force, most of black people are under privileged. Only white Africans were allowed to go to important places like libraries restaurants and so on. Racism was based on the differences of physical features. In the novel, Mehring is the most privileged one and Indians, who are the immigrants, are more privileged then the blacks. Here, we can see the chain of suppression Indians are suppressed by whites and blacks by both. Being the aboriginals of the South Africa they are excluded from each and every privileges of nation.

Brain Macaskill, in “Interrupting the Hegemonic: Textual critique and Mythological Recuperation from the White Margins”, argues that “An alternative is sorely needed, for the reader has come to know this “conversation” though Mehring’s insistent evocation of the farm as an income tax advantage and a “good place to bring a woman”; conservation in such terms is obviously an emblem of wider patterns of exploitation—capitalist, sexual, and colonialist exploitation” (7). He points out the different between Mehrings’ and the blacks claim to the land his is a colonial one and the blacks claim, on the other hand, is a meta-material one dependent on a sense of belonging and continuity. Mehrings’ intention is not to invest his capital on the land, make it more productive and give the juice of fruit to the country but rather to leave it as it is, so that he can avoid his income tax and take it as a place to bring women and indulge in romance with them. In another words he takes this place only as his favorite hangout.

Similarly, Michael Thorpe, in *Common Wealth Literature* writes that Gordimer has aggravated her task by casting as her protagonist Mehring as the one who combines the most often rive characteristics of the master race, he is a pig-iron millionaire, an intelligent cynic who probes ruthlessly the soft underside of

'liberalism'; a temperamental paternalist and a compulsive philanderer. Despite these obvious drawbacks, Gordimer so powerfully renders his sensitivity-to the land of – Africa-and his inner life that he becomes, if not sympathetic, an intelligible being of his time, place and race(*Common Wealth Literature* 533). Here he mentions that in Gordimer we find the representation of colonial solutions as tragic failure and deadlock, to which she adds the unacceptability of the dispossession of the land. The wealthy Afrikaner, who wants to possess the land just for his hobby, leaves the country struggling with a black corpse at last.

The aforementioned critics have analyzed this novel from, feminist, mythical, pastoral, psychoanalytic, historical and Marxist point of views. But the present researcher is going to analyze this novel from postcolonial feminist perspective. The study will concentrate on the issues of African land and women who were exploited by the white colonizers during the apartheid era. The study will be based on textual analysis supported by theoretical tools. The study will derive insights from discourses on postcolonial feminism to form the theoretical tools for the analysis of the text.

II. Feminism and Postcolonialism: A Theoretical Modality

Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies of the colonized territories. As originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms of the post-colonial state, 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the late 1970s. The term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization.

Although the study of the controlling power of representation in colonized societies had begun in the late 1970s with texts such as Said's *Orientalism*, and led to the development of what came to be called colonialist discourse theory in the works of critics such as Spivak and Bhabha, the actual term 'post-colonial' was not employed in these early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape and form opinion and policy in the colonies and metropolis. Spivak, for the first time, used the term 'post-colonial' in the collection of interviews and recollections entitled *The Post-colonial Critic* published in 1990. Although the study of the effects of colonial representation were central to the work of these critics, the term 'post – colonial' per se was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles. The term has subsequently been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies.

At last, the term postcolonial in its various uses carries a multiplicity of meaning that needs to be distinguished for analytical purposes. The uses of the term seem to be especially prominent: (a) as a literal description of conditions in formally colonial societies, in which case the term has concrete referents, as in postcolonial societies or postcolonial intellectuals, (b) as a description of a global condition after the period of colonialism, in which case the usage is somewhat more abstract and less concrete in reference comparable in it's vagueness to the earlier term. Third world, for

which it is intended as a substitute, (c) as a description of a discourse on the above named conditions that are informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of those conditions.

On the other hand, feminism is concerned with the marginalization of the women that is, with their position of being relegated to a secondary position. It presents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. Feminism is a political movement which has become successful in giving due place to writing of previously non-canonical women writers. Feminism comes into practice as an attack against female marginalization as our society is pervasively patriarchal, it is male-centered and controlled and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as a feminine. Feminism refers to all those who seeks to end women's subordination. It is an aggressive conscious feeling of women, reject their passivity. Feminism came in to existence for the sake of women rights and human equality.

The identification of women with the body is a familiar idea in the western tradition. Great scholars and philosophers were also biased in defining women. They depicted women as inferior, immature, incomplete in their intellectual potentialities. We have seen that Plato seems very firm in his insistence on the destructiveness of the body to the soul and he always assigned body to the female. In doing so, he holds up for our ridicule and scorn those lives devoted to bodily pursuits. Over and over, women's lives are depicted as being such lives. The body is seen as the source of all the undesirable traits a human being could have, and women's lives are spent manifesting those traits. Regarding his view on women, Plato, in his story "Phaedo",

says, “Look at the lives of women. It is woman who gets hysterical at the thought of death” (60). Their emotions have overpowered their reason, and they can’t control themselves. Plato, in his *Republic*, says, “the worst possible model for young men could be a woman, young or old or wrangling with her husband, defying heaven, loudly boasting, fortunate in her own conceit, or involve in misfortune or possessed by grief and lamentation –still less a women that is sick, in love, or in labor” (605c-d).

So, the contradictory sides of Plato’s views about women are tied to the distinction he makes between soul and body and the lessons he hopes to teach his readers about their relative value. While preaching about the overwhelming importance of the soul, he can’t but regard the kind of body one has as of no final significance. So, there is no way for him to assess differently the lives of women and men; but while making gloomy pronouncements about the worth of the body, he points an accusing finger at a class of people with a certain kind of body –women- because he regards them, as a class, as embodying. The very traits he wishes no one to have. In this way, women constitute a deviant class in Plato’s philosophy. In the sense that he points to their lives as the kinds of lives that are not acceptable philosophically: they are just the kinds of lives no one, especially philosophers, ought to live. Similarly, Aristotle declared that “the female is female by virtue of certain lack of qualities” (Selden 134) and the “misbegotten males” (Ruth 96). St. Thomas Aquinas believed that “woman is an imperfect man” (Selden 134).To the puritan conviction, “Women are less intelligent than men” (qtd. in Laurent 270).In this way, women have been misinterpreted in socio-political cultural, biological, religious world and in the works of art and literature by generations of people to justify and maintain patriarchal system. And feminism revolts are against such misinterpretation.

The issues of feminism and post colonialism are integrally tied to the project of literary postcolonialism and its concerns with the critical reading and interpretation of colonial and postcolonial texts. A postcolonial feminist perspective requires that one learn to read literary representation of women with attention both to the subject and to the medium of representation. Gender occupied and still occupies a prominent and constitutive quality in the colonial project where by all the native, colonized people in the mainstream colonial discourses are characterized as 'feminine'. No less significant is the way in which the status of native women was used to justify the colonial project as a civilizing mission. Until recently, feminist and postcolonial theory has followed what Bill Ashroft *et al*. call "a path of convergent evolution" (Ashroft *et. al* 249). Both bodies of thought are concerned with the study and defense of marginalized 'others' within repressive structures domination and, in so doing, both have followed a remarkably similar theoretical trajectory. Deepika Bihari says, "feminist theory and postcolonial theory are occupied with similar questions of representation, voice marginalization, and the relation between politics and literature" (201) Given that both critical projections employ multidisciplinary perspectives, they are each attentive, at least in principle, to historical co-ordination of the subject in question, while there is oblivious harmony and overlapping between the two, tensions and divergence, are no less in evidence.

Feminists sometimes complain that analysis of colonial or postcolonial texts fail to consider gender issues adequately, bracketing them in favor of attention to supposedly more significant issues such as empire building, decolonization, and liberation struggle in the colonial context, and nation building in the postcolonial context. The implications of these tensions are many. Postcolonial feminism is thus a dynamic discursive field which integrates the premises of post colonialism as much as

those of feminism. Within the broader work of mainstream feminist postcolonial perspective that focuses on race and ethnicity are often perceived as forces that liquidate the global feminist alliance. These critics' focuses on the failure of mainstream feminism to incorporate issues of race, its tendency to stereotype as over generalize the case of the 'third world' woman. Bell hooks claims that "white women who dominate feminist discourse today rarely question whether or not their perspective on women's reality is true to the lived experiences of women as collective group" (3). The field of knowledge called postcolonial feminist studies, thus, clearly indicates the relational identity of the field, suggesting that it exists as a discursive configuration in dialogue with dominant First-World constructions even when it is in tension with them.

The most significant collision and collusion of postcolonial and feminist theory occur around the contentious figure of the 'third-world woman'. Some feminist writers, however, have misgivings about terms like "Third World" for they point out the inclination of this indiscriminate label to lump diverse women, cultures and places together in to a single monolithic grouping. Such a grouping is constituted in ways that may ironically replicate the vantage point of imperial definitions in presuming to name the vastly differentiated character of the supposedly 'non- western' as singular and simply marginal outsider. Some feminist postcolonial theorists have cogently argued that "a blinkered focus on racial politics inevitably elides the 'double colonization' of women under imperial conditions" (Gandhi 83), and postulates the 'third-world women' as victim par excellence the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies.

While it is impossible to ignore the feminist challenge to the gender blindness of anti-colonial nationalism, critics such as Sara Suleri and Mohanty are instructive in

their disavowal of the much too eager “coalition between postcolonial and feminist theories, in which each term serves to rectify the potential pietism of him other” (Suleri 274). The imbrications of race and gender as Suleri goes on to argue “invests the ‘third-world woman’ with an iconicity which is almost ‘too good to be true” (273). Suleri’s objection to the post colonial feminist merger is a refusal to surrender the ‘third-world woman’ to the sentimental and often opportunistic enamourment with marginality which has come to characterize the metropolitan cult of ‘oppositional criticism’. As Spivak writes, “[I]f there is a big word in cultural critique now, it is marginality” (55). Such consistent invocation of the marginal has helped reform the aggressive canonicity of high western culture. We can now take it as a trust that the consistent invocation of the marginal subjugated has helped reform the aggressive canonicity of high western culture. There are two problems, even as the margins thicken with political significance; there are two problems which must give pause. Firstly, as Spivak insists, the prescription of non-Western alterity as a tonic for the ill health of western culture heralds the perpetration of a ‘new orientalism’. Secondly, the metropolitan demand for marginality is also a troublesome a command which consolidates and names the non-west as interminably marginal. In a sense, the third world has become a stable metaphor for the ‘minor’ zone of non culture and underdevelopment. The margin, as Gayatri Spisvak suggests, remains at the service of the center, she argues that “when a cultural identity is thrust upon because the center wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center” (55). These critics attempt to shake up the heavy imperialist weight of the center/periphery binary associated with apparently opposed terms like First World /Third World by reconfiguring the marginal as not simply offering an outsider positioning but simultaneously an integral vantage point.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her influential article “Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses”, discerns that the play of a discursive colonialism in the “production of the “Third world women” as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (western) feminist texts” (196). Although there are some important terminological difficulties, it, as Mohanty claims, is helpful to continue to make use of the label , ‘third-world women’ because, “rather than referring to a commonality of color or radical identification, the term is better employed to indicate a common context of struggle and resistance to sexist, racist and imperial structures” (7).

Many of the feminist critics within postcolonial feminist studies are struggling to establish identity as relational and historical rather than essential or fixed, even as it attempts to retain gender as a meaningful category of analysis. To be precise, postcolonial feminism is congruent with broad postcolonial perspective. The emphasis tends to be placed on the collusion between patriarchy and colonialism. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, insisting on the heterogeneity of the lives of third world women, pleads for an inter-relational analysis that does not limit the definitions of the female subject to gender and does not bypass the social, class and ethnic co-ordinates of those analyzed. The Egyptian writer, Nawal El Saadawi, in *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*”, just like Chandra Mohanty, argues that oppression of women, the exploitation and social pressures to which they are exposed, are not characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or countries of the ‘Third World’ alone . Instead, a universalistic theory of women’s oppression should note that such oppressions constitute an integral part of the political economic and cultural system, preponderant in most of the world whether that system is backward or feudal in

nature, or a modern industrial society that has been submitted to the far reaching influence of a scientific and technological revolution.

In recent years, as suggested by Saadawi, there has been a shift of focus away from cultural issues to the status of women in an international arena defined by globalization. She links women's oppression in general and third-world women's oppression in particular to the global capitalist system and warns that under expanding capitalism and ensuing globalization, these women face a whole range of new problems resulting from the social changes to which they are exposed. Dissatisfied with the First-world preoccupation with question of tokenism, identity politics, and the politics of location, feminist scholars, in both the First world and the Third world, are producing a more dialectical and praxis-oriented understanding of postcolonial feminism that links labor sites in the First and Third worlds and emphasizes the international division of labor as a major concern. Sunder Rajan and Park claim that, "many transnational feminists identify the international division of labor –rather than cultural conflicts or transactions-as the most important defining feature of postcoloniality" (58). The growing importance of the global as the context for feminist scholarship has given new vitality and often new shape to debates about representation, location, and the category of 'Third-world women', as Chandra Mohanty claims this category, even if it is reliant on a dualistic politics, retains an heuristic value, particularly under globalization. Mohanty here draws attention to the ways in which issues of spatial economy gain fundamental importance for feminist analysis.

The concept of transnational feminist practice is also developed by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. For them the relationship between postcolonial and transnational studies is one of specific feminist trajectories that have always focused

on the “inequalities generated by capitalist patriarchies in various eras of globalization” (139). The structure of a transnational feminist responsibility is as follows:

> Examining the politics of location in the production and reception of theory can turn the terms of inquiry from desiring, inviting, and granting space to others to becoming accountable for one’s own investments in cultural metaphors and values. Such accountability can begin to shift the ground of feminist practice from magisterial relativism (as if diversified cultural production simply occurs in a social vacuum) to the complex interpretive practices that acknowledge the historical roles of meditation, betrayal, and alliance in the relationships between women in diverse location. (Kaplan 139)

Kaplan’s flexible grid for a transnational feminist politics begins to sketch out the terms of transnational engagement without the grandiose project of erasing inequalities or the prospect of being paralyzed by them. In the arena of global theory, transnationalist feminist practice rejects the untenable dichotomy between masculinist grand theories of globalization that ignore gender as an analytical lens and local empirical studies of globalization in which gender takes center stage. Such a practice assumes local processes and small-scale actors as the very fabric of globalization.

The transnational feminist politics initiates a dialogic process of modification and rehabilitation of a third world women in a colonial-patriarchal historical context and the critique of colonialism and patriarchy allows the transnational feminist to open up a third space of possibility and embody an unsettling location which insists on continuous mobility and fluidity to avoid entrapment in the webs of power whether colonial or patriarchal. Mohanty remarks that “experience must be historically

interpreted and theorized if it is to become the basis of feminist Solidarity and struggle, and it is at this moment that an understanding of politics of location proves crucial" (*Feminist* 87). It obliges us to recognize the complexities of subject construction everywhere-whether Caribbean, Indian, or African- and to learn to read the world through, what Deepika Bhari refers to as the 'logic of adjacence', a logic that could be applied to the general orientation of postcolonialism. In this way, a meaningful transnational feminist literacy requires recognition of the location of readers and of reading as a socialized activity within a particular context.

Tsitsi Dangarembga, a famous Zimbabwean woman writer, engages herself in the production of transnational feminist location by first misidentifying with the mythic fantasy of a harmonious homestead underpinning the local Shona patriarchal structure, and second, by condemning the colonial ideology and it's practices in Southern Rhodesia, including the dispossession of the Shona, the deployment of colonial tropes, and the institution of colonial education. These two strategies demonstrate that the construction of femininity under colonial and patriarchal ideologies increases the vulnerability of women to silence and violence. Such African feminist praxis, on the one hand, acknowledges the heterogeneity of black female experience, while, on the other hand, it recognizes that women's politics of location is constructed at the intersection of different, conflicting narratives of identity – race, gender, class, education, family, colonialism, religion, and language. In addition, this African feminist praxis depends on unraveling a tradition of female solidarity by reconfiguring the notion of community in which these women live inclusively in the society which can also embrace men given that they dissocialize themselves from the masculine colonial values they have been subscribing to.

In this context, we can associate Frantz Fanon's work on the psychological

condition of the native, which Jean-Paul Sartre identified in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), from the viewpoint of the colonized women. Fanon theorizes the psychology of the (male) colonized in terms of cultural indeterminacy and split subjectivities. Fanon accredits these pathologies to the condition of permanent tension, or the state of nervous condition, engendered by the violent mechanism of colonial culture. Although degraded and violated by colonial aggression, the colonized envies colonial privilege and "never ceases to dream of…substituting himself for the settler" (52). Fanon's discussion of the pathological effects and psycho-social impacts of colonization on the colonized foregrounds the sense of anxiety that the Manichean logic of colonialism generates in the colonized. Fanon argues that when the colonized is "confronted with the colonial order of things, he is in a state of permanent tension" (52). Moreover, Fanon mentions two major factors that generate this anxious condition. First, although the colonizer represents the colonial environment as a function of hostility, antagonism, and the negation of the native, the colonized perceives this cosmology in an ambivalent economy: "[T]he settler's world is a hostile world, which spurns the native, but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious" (52). The colonized, then, never ceases to fantasize about inhabiting whiteness and imperial privilege, substituting himself for the settler. The imperial psychic economy is 'a space of splitting' not 'a neat division' but a "doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (44). Fanon calls these spaces "hell and paradise, the site of damnation and seduction" (52-53).

Fanon argues "The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier" (53). Thus, both the material conditions of vertical violence as well as the symbolic practices, necessary for decoding colonial signifiers,

generate the nervous condition, “a tonicity of muscles” (53), among the colonized. To release his tension and nervousness, the colonized engages in acts of horizontal aggression, which he directs inwards towards other (male) natives. Fanon observes that at this stage, “you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother” (54). Fanon argues that there can be no reconciliation in this Manichean structure: cultural civility is replaced with colonial violence, brutality and terror. This constitutes vertical violence, which trickles down to police and enforces the integrity of the borderlines of the imperial symbolic economy. Therefore, the colonized does not want to trespass, or transgress the limits of colonial borders and incur colonial vengeance for his unforgivable guilt. As such, the colonized never stops from decoding the colonial signifiers that demarcate this borderline.

On the other hand, Dangaremba multiplies the paradigmatic condition into condition within the context of gender, race, and class politics, which ruptures the homogenization of African pathological bodies as male. In her re-visioning of Fanon. Dangarembga redefines the category native to include the colonized women, for there is an urgent need, she implies, to institutionalize the investigation of the psychological effect of colonialism on women. Therefore, Fanon’s reduction of female pathologies to a function of biology, as child birth and menstruation, needs to be reconsidered here in favor of an examination of female trauma and nervousness as necessarily symptomatic of the collaboration of both the patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist conditions. Dangarembga manages this way to emphasize the vertical violence between colonizers and colonized which is transvalued as horizontal violence that the colonized directs towards his house and family. Unable to manifest a violent stance

towards their masters, as a result of their desires to prove their humanity to the colonizer by subscribing to their ideologies, colonized men turn their mechanism of oppression and domination towards their wives or sisters. As evident in Dangarembga's revision of Fanon, the relationship between the black female individual and her African community has been the subject of a hot controversy in African literary circles. The emergence of a strong feminist voice in African women's writings posed an ethical and a political dilemma for these writers. Beatrice Stegman explicates the black female's dilemma in negotiating the pressures of community and subjectivity:

> African communalism implies a standard or value of submergence rather than self-realization. In traditional African societies, the role of each citizen is to perpetuate the status quo, to assure continuity of the clan, to work within tradition […] The "new woman," or feminist, rebels against such traditionalism because she evinces a theory of personhood where the individual exist as an independent entity rather than a group member, where she is defined by her experience rather than her kinship relations, where she has responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into stereotyped tradition. (90)

Feminist concerns were trivialized or dismissed by the national male intelligentsia, who demanded the valorization of race and national struggle over the divisive issue of gender politics. Besides the squabble and disagreement over the appropriate locution to describe African feminism as a women's movement, the whole community and

subjectivity debate was complicated by two problems. First, the general suspicious sentiments towards Western feminism in Africa. For many male intellectuals, the practice of feminism in Africa has been usually denounced as a reproduction of western imperialist ideologies. These intellectuals argue that those Western feminists are on a crusade to prosecute and execute African communal values. Moreover, western feminists were condemned for co-opting African women's texts, in order to privilege the western thematic of individuality, antagonism to men, militant separatism, the politics of the female body, and the value of motherhood . As such, for many African women the label feminist becomes a referent a referent, to de-Africanization (betrayal and rejection of African identity). In fact, in an interview with Kristen Holst Peterson, Dangarembga states that "women in Zimbabwe are very wary of being called feminists. It is really a very dirty word" (347). Second, this debate has been exacerbated by the representation of black female subjectivity in African male texts. The female voice in male literary production is generally absent and deemed not worthy of the grand narrative of literary production, and talking about women is branded as divisive and superfluous to the national/colonial debate. Abdualrazak Gurnah, for example explains the erasure of gender and the apathy towards patriarchy in African male textuality to the exigency for negating correcting the colonial denigration of the African mind, thought, and culture. He writes, "In respect of patriarchy, the African text was engaged in establishing the potency of African thought and culture to itself and to the world and, at best, it spoke for women without giving them voice" (xi). Only when they are displaced in the trope of Great Mother/Mother Africa that women resurface in this literature, but only as metonymic markers of the purity and innocence of the pre-colonial continent/nation or as signifiers of resistance to colonialism.

Afro-centric discourses, the Negritude movement in particular, insisted not only on feminizing Africa and displacing the embodied female subject, but also on reproducing the African motherland in the female body. These writers glorified the materiality of the female body as metaphor for a mythological continent and as a container of the core values of the motherland that the colonialist could not have access to. As such, African women are hence denied any claim to freedom, as it was taken for granted that the African women do not need to be liberated; she has been free for many thousands of years. Thus, the communal pressure on African female authors seems to demand that they overlook the dynamics of their displacement and metaphorization and, valorize deference to race, nation, community, and tradition over their loyalties to women's freedom. However, some feminist interventions proposed to bridge this seemingly irreconcilable dichotomy by synthesizing the African demands with the feminist claims. These synthetic interventions remained, nonetheless, limited to the agendas of demonstrating that in Lindsay Aegerter's words, "African's women's autonomy is predicated upon and inseparable from her place within her community" (233). Such a synthetic approach locates a communal ethics at the center of African feminism and finds it impossible for black female subjectivity to inhabit any space outside her African community. In *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*, Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves reconfigure African feminism as "a hybrid of sorts, which seeks to combine African concerns with feminist concerns" (12). Accordingly, African feminism is expected to recognize African men not as antagonistic but as comrades, and to challenge them to become conscious of female oppression in Africa. Whether this challenge also means exposing these men's complicity in the subjugation of women not only to local patriarchy but also to colonialism and capitalist rationality remains

unanswered. Moreover, while maintaining that African feminism recognizes misogynist traditions but accepts institutions of value for women. Davies and Graves do not consider the male role in reinforcing these same unjust traditions and institutions. They want African feminism to get rid of the author's suggestion that only colonialism "reinforced traditional inequalities and introduced others" (9).

Drawing on extensive archival material emanating mainly from various nineteenth-century and early twentieth century protestant missionary societies, and particularly those associated with female missionaries, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, argue that during that period, sexuated body of Indian women was a necessary ground for the imposition of colonial state power. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, in "Mapping The Colonial Body: Sexual Economies and the State in Colonial India" argue that "although our detailed analysis does not extend through to Independence, in our conclusion we draw on material unaddressed here to suggest ways in which the sexual economies of the female body were (re)-presented in the power/knowledge nexus of twentieth-century colonialism" (388). The analysis they offer is not predominantly materialist nor overtly 'historical' but is centered on the production and manipulation of certain discursive meanings which came to centre on India. But they neither deny the reality of certain practices nor downgrade the substantive political and economic forces at work in Indian society at time. It reflects Said's argument in *Orientalism,* "It is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a creative body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment" (Said 1978:6).

In their concern on the female body as the paradigmatic site of colonial power/knowledge, Foucault's analysis of the focus of regulatory power in the emergence of the modern western society can be equally useful in the understanding

of how those societies mapped their domination of others. In their material about the colonial India, what is preeminent is a discursive concentration on female sexuality. In Foucault's expositions, unless he is talking specifically about the hystericisation of the body, he is most often gender-neutral in his approach, "as though 'truths' about the male and female body were really constructed in an undifferentiated way" (Foucault 1990:48). He seems to take for granted that we are all equally both subject and subjected in that discourse. In contrast, Price and Shildrick argue that women are always already in a different relation to their bodies as sexed, not in the sense of that being the source of rigid givens, but in the sense that there is overlap but never identity between the lived experience of women and men. Further, the construction of meaning through which we 'know' the body consistently privilege the male for his supposed capacity to transcend his embodiment, to become the subject in, rather than of, discourse. Men then are both in and out of their bodies, while women simply are their bodies, "to be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault 1975:136). Then Foucauldian category of hystericisation is for them not the special case, but the very condition of being female.

Once the construction of Indian women as indissolubly tied to their sexuated bodies had originally focused on their identities as virgins, wives, and widows, the dominant representation of the twentieth century was to be as mothers. The period of British power did undoubtedly see some individual state interventions which worked to the advantage of limited numbers of women, but the primary motivation throughout was to extend and consolidate colonial power. On the one hand, women missionaries remained obsessed with charting the aberrant socio-sexual customs, of emphasizing the 'otherness' of the Indian women in whose lives they intervened. At the same time, they offered rescue and relief extending the hand of sisterhood to Indian women

whom they saw as their special responsibility. This simultaneous approach to both difference and sameness is the characteristic move of western discourse and flags that Indian women at least were already positioned within a normative economy of the same. As Jewitt-Robinson says, “Comparing the Hindu female with the women of England, it must be acknowledged that her darker complexion is only a veil of shadow, more or less dense over equal loveliness”(Jewitt-Robinson) 1860:3). What served to justify intervention and to guarantee the self-authorized, self-present voices of the missionaries and their colonial allies was the construction of the unified and different, silenced other who paradoxically calls for help and rescue. In other words, the discourse on Indian women, and more generally on the Orient arose, as Said puts it, “according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, instruments and projections” (Said 1978:8).

In rereading the authorized British maps, rather than the contours of resistance, Janet and Margrit have shown that the potentially divergent discourses in play functioned to legitimize a series of regulatory practices directly grounded on the bodies of women, and indirectly privileging the political interest of what Irigaray would call the hom(m)osexual economy. In its colonial form, the mapping of the body was an essential and essentialist move in the power/knowledge configuration of the state.

Similarly, in *Mothers of the Revolution,* Meggi Zingani points out that the language of egalitarianism, which was urgent to mobilize every Zimbabwean as “comrades” during the guerrilla wars, got eventually displaced in post-colonial times: “But now people are still behaving in the same way. So the village and district committees were formed to teach people, especially mothers, to behave like mothers. The women were the most affected” (134). In “Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in

Zimbabwe", Elilzabeth Schmidt explicates, "the economic-namely, obtaining cheap labor-and the political motivations that is, maintaining law, order, and respect for all forms of authority, behind the collaboration between colonialism and local male leadership in their mutual subordination of Zimbabwean women" (742). Colonialism endeavored to strengthen the base of patriarchal dominance through the enactment of laws and regulations that would restrict the movement and production of Shona women. Indigenous patriarchy, on the other hand, sought to reclaim authority over women's labor and production to consolidate the market economy and capitalist rationality of colonial rule. Hence, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism conspired to keep women totally dependent on their husbands and to deprive them of equal access to land, children, and capital economy. Schmidt quotes a native commissioner who admonished: "Unless the government supported African men in exercising their rights over the wives, not only the family but the whole existence of a nation could be placed in jeopardy as well" (741).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's theories on the effect of colonial education which he expounds in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1981). With the institutionalization of English as the language of communication, wa Thiong'o conceives of this colonial relation as a steady progression of the substitution of native self for a colonial subjectivity: "Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from our selves to other selves, from our world to other worlds" (27). The curricula and objective of this education are designed to produce an extreme form of alienation, estrangement, and self-hatred, for within the alienation trap everything native will be viewed as inferior, worthless, and superfluous. This is, of course, the ultimate sign of the dehumanization of the natives, their tradition, cultures, and languages. Moreover, wa Thiong'o claims that this alienation emerges in the context of colonial education in two interlinked

modalities: first an ambivalence towards one's own system of reference. Second, an enthusiastic assimilation to the "most external to one's environment" (27), that is, the colonial economy that suppresses and negates the existence of the colonized. This process of alienation he explains in the following ways:

> Starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a large social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. (28)

In *The Conservationist* also the natives' inclination towards white man's language is shown through Jacobus, the chief herdsman of the farm, who tries to imitate Mehring's language.

Elizabeth Schmidt, in her *Peasants, Traders, and Wives* argues that "colonial education for indigenous women resulted in their domestication and deprived them of cultivating any skills" (10). The primary object of domestic education was to make local women better wives and mothers in ways that suit their native needs and traditional lifestyle at rural homesteads only. Underlying this ideology, of course, was the desire to posit African traditions as normal and natural. Moreover, in their attempt to reinvent African womanhood along the lines of middle-class Victorian housewives, colonizers and missionaries reconfigured the referent of the civilizing mission to signify the ideology of domesticity. Integrating these women into the civilizing mission ensured that native women would raise the good and healthy Christian children necessary for the preservation of the colonial and capitalist systems.

The domestication of women, therefore, entailed not the direct inculcation of traditional feminine constructs like nurturance and service but also the regulation of female sexuality. Moreover, this domestication means that these native women were precluded from inhabiting any European space, for to become Europeanized would entice these women into moving to urban areas which would destabilize both patriarchal and colonial structures. Women are directly associated with religious ideologies mostly in developing and underdeveloped countries, by taking a specific version of Islam as the Islam. Jeffery attributes a singularity and coherence to it. Modares notes, Islamic Theology then becomes imposed on a separate and given entity called women. A further unification is reached: women (meaning all women), regardless of their differing positions within societies, come to be affected or not affected by Islam Marnia Lazreg makes a similar argument when she addresses the reductionism inherent in scholarship on women in the Middle East and North Africa:

> A ritual is established whereby the writer appeals to religion as the cause of gender inequality just as it is made the source of underdevelopment in much of modernization theory. In an uncanny way, feminist discourse on women from the Middle East and North Africa mirrors that of theologians' own interpretation of women in Islam. The overall effect of this paradigm is to deprive women of self-presence, of being. Because women are subsumed under religion presented in fundamental terms, they are inevitably seen as evolving in non-historical time. They virtually have no history. Any analysis of change is therefore foreclosed. (Marnia Lazreg 25)

While Jeffery's analysis does not quite succumb to this kind of unitary notion of religion (Islam), it does collapse all ideological specificities into economic relations, and universalizes them on the basis of this comparison.

Most of Gordimer's texts are concerned with the apartheid era of South Africa. We can find the psychological and social realism of South Africa in the apartheid era in the writings of Andre Brink, Athol Fugard and J.M Coetzee. Brink's *Rumors of Rain*, Fugard's *Master Harold…and the boys* and Coetzee's *Disgrace*, strongly oppose the institutionalized segregation laws which constitute apartheid. In *The Conservationist*, Gordimer has shown the exploitation of both the African land and females by the white colonizer. She has shown the suppression of women in the pretext of custom and tradition within their own community. On the basis of the theoretical modality discussed in this chapter, the text in question will be analyzed in the following chapter.

III. Parallelism between the Woman and the Land

In *The Conservationist*, we can see the pathetic condition of the female characters. Patriarchal society, colonial system and tradition, custom and value of South African society are the main factors which are pushing women to the margins. Phineas' wife, Indian's wife, young Portuguese girl and even Antonia are victimized by their society. Mehring, a white South African, is the central character of the novel. He perceives the female only from sexual point of view. He even buys the 400 acres of land in rural South African veld to impress Antonia, his mistress and to indulge in romance with her. In the same way, all female members of the Indian family are submissive to the male members. The business is handled by males and household activities are assigned to the females.

The physical and metaphysical territory of *The Conservationist's* protagonist, the industrialist and landowner, Mehring, is delineated by the symbolic violence of a narrative stream of consciousness. It is a compelling depiction of the movement that constitutes the self through the reduction of infinity to comprehensible phenomena within the controlling discourse of the same. In Mehring's reading of the land upon which his farm is situated, for example, his own identity- that of industrialist and womanizer- clearly precedes, and constitutes the condition for, the identities of all things exterior. Mehring's farm is "a good investment" (41), not only because it serves tax purposes, but also because it provides conservational currency with which to charm, entertain, or impress business associates. Already, at once, the impromptu burial by police of an anonymous corpse discovered on his farm is reduced to "a story to be told over drinks and at the dinner table" (27). For Mehring, the farm does not have any independent existence beyond its service to him. He takes it as a place to

bring a woman in order to seduce her. In this way, the African land and females both are victimized by the white colonizers.

We can explain how the women are ritualized in South African society by the account of the feast celebrating the initiation of Phineas's wife. The account of her possession follows the pattern of Zulu possession. The subject is haunted by dreams involving animals as ancestors, feels pain between the shoulder blades, rejects different foods, and fears metamorphosis into an animal. Phineas's wife experiences these symptoms and is also described as coming from Pondoland. The initiation ceremony involves sacrifice of a goat and dancing which is believed to cause the ancestral spirit to materialize; the test of the initiation is the ability to find hidden objects, here the goat. The underlying idea is that ancestors are tormenting the subject, complaining that he or she is no longer true to their culture. Interestingly, spirit possession is much more common among Zulu women than men. Social power is gained by the possessed person, who is given presents and feasts, ostensibly for the spirits. To become diviners, for pagan Zulu women, is the only socially recognized way of escape from an impossible situation in family life; it is also the only way an outstanding woman can win general social prestige. The phenomenon is more common among rural Zulu women. It is also associated, in Lee's analysis, with sexual and family conflicts: lack of children, an engagement to marry which is resisted, or confusion of goals at the menopause. Phineas's wife "had no living children" and is "somewhere around the end of childbearing age" (164). Her fear is of turning into a lizard: "She used the name isalukazana, the lizard that is a little old woman. She is certainly becoming an old woman" (165). She is even said no longer to sleep with her husband. By becoming a diviner, then, the woman escapes from the pressures of her culture and her sex.

In her ravings, Phineas's wife conjures up visions of flood: "In her sleep there were also elephants and hyenas and full rivers, all coming near to kill her" (166). Her initiation precedes the flood which is seen as a female revenge: "The weather came from the Mocambique channel. Space is conceived of as trackless but there are beats about the world frequented by cyclones given female names" (232). One of these hits South Africa, washing the ground clean of the fire ashes, unearthing the body of the dead man, and regenerating the burnt area. In the final of the novel, the conflict appears to be resolved: "Phinease's wife's face was at peace, there was no burden of spirits on her shoulders" (267). In the background stand the female members of the sect of Zion, a breakaway from orthodox Christianity, in which Christian tenets have been adapted to indigenous patterns of thought. Zionist churches represent the old divination cult in a new form, involving sacred dancing, speaking in tongues, food taboos, and possession by the Holy Spirit often described as an ancestor.

The closing of the novel, therefore, offers a quasi-resolution of white and indigenous culture. The unconscious life of the women shapes formally her actions in society. Through Zulu myth, Gordimer gives formal shape to the novel, articulating a different consciousness from that of the public rhetoric of South Africa. In the language of Zulu culture, possession is non-material, passive, a means of resolving social and sexual conflicts. The murdered black from the location represents change and is therefore spiritualized and controlled by the blacks, just as Christianity, a threat to their culture, is assimilated into the old divination cult. The cult offers a therapy for social deprivation, a catharsis for the Zulu woman in a subservient role.

Significantly, a woman comes to express Zulu culture and resolves its problems. The conjunction of woman and land is repeated in the fore grounded events. Phinease's wife may have achieved some independent status in her society,

but the other women are visibly getting the worst of it. Dawood's Indian wife longs for Durban, Mehring's mistress is forced to flee, the Portuguese immigrant girl is molested, and even the Afrikaans-speaking daughter-in-law and grand-daughter of old De Beer are thoroughly cowed and described as vacant turnips. The point made here is not only a feminist one. We can see the link between female exploitation and exploitation of the land in the same way. Sexual guilt functions as a surrogate for colonial guilt.

Mehring's delimitation of the farm within his personal narrative of its function and value is further demonstrated by his disregard for the lives of its worker inhabitants, and by his narcissistic outrage at the minor inconveniences caused by the indifferent cycles of nature. His "conservation" is very specifically oriented towards maintaining the identity he has assigned to the land: "There are too many cats," he complains, despite Jacobus's pragmatic reminder that this is because there are "too many rats" (69). He complains of the "bloody dogs" (20) that, he believes, kill his guinea fowl, and the workers' children who, he suspects, pick up their eggs, reducing the population. Revealingly, the only scenario that Mehring finds acceptable for the killing of guinea fowl, is for the table" (109), that is, for his table, which seats the women and business associates whom Mehring conceives as separate categories that the farm functions to impress. Certainly, his conservation does not mean protecting the fowl for their own sake nothing is entitled to an existence in itself within Mehring's territory. When Jacobus assures him that he sees "plenty guinea fowls here on the farm, early in the morning" (28), Mehring reflects on his dissatisfaction that "he isn't there early in the morning" (28).

Mehring's industrialist capitalism makes the judgment that "[n]o farm is beautiful unless it's productive" (70). And asserts that "[t]he farm, to justify its existence and that of those who work in it, must be a going concern. These are the facts" (82). The workers are revealed as mere props to this solipsistic reality—indeed, Mehring prides himself on neutralizing the negativity they introduce, congratulating himself on the fact that "[e]ven their neglect is something he can afford to allow himself"(155). Acknowledging the medicinal value his lily bulbs hold for the workers, Mehring nevertheless prioritizes his own truth the farm is a place to bring a woman, and the medicinal value of the plants is thus subordinate to their function as tools for seduction: "Jacobus ought to be told that medicine or no medicine, these bulbs mustn't be taken" (175), he insists, because "any woman would go crazy over the multiple-headed lilies" (174). Within his sensualist conception of the world, Mehring wields the same reductive power over every landscape, interpreting desert dunes as "golden reclining nudes" (103) and describing the weather as "of the temperature and softness that will bring out women flimsy dresses" (202). His description of the irrigation jets as they "ejaculate tirelessly over the Lucerne" (155) is certainly not incidental.

Mehring claims the intimate understanding and knowledge of his foreman, his mistress, his son, and even arrogates their very thoughts. He presents Antonia, his activist mistress, as entirely predictable: "He knew all the answers she could have given, knew them by heart, had heard them mouthed by her kind a hundred times" (70-71). Listening to her talk, he reflects, "[I]t's easy to plot a graph of the reactions of your kind. I know what you're thinking" (155). He believes her thoughts to be entirely transparent to him, and describes her "ingesting, digesting and exercising moral problems clearly as a see-through gheko" (179).

The fantasy-ideal form of the relationship to woman and land occurs in the incident on board of the airplane. Returning from a business trip, Mehring is forced to travel tourist class and during the night engages in sexual play with his neighbor, a young Portuguese immigrant girl. Mehring's mind moves into the event through his perception of land below him, which he sees as "soft lap after lap" of sand and desert –the opening phrase, "[g]olden reclining nudes of the desert" (126), refers as much to the dunes as to any sunning tourist. The body of the land becomes the land –as Mehring locates it, explores, explicitly compares its flesh to water in the desert, experiences the grain of the skin, guesses his location, and moves over the terrain, exploring the ridges of her anatomy. The airplane, an enclosed world outside time and place, veiled in sandstorms, allows Mehring to ignore social, sexual, and class taboos. The events are "happening nowhere" (129). Moreover, Mehring's colonialism extends to the whole of reality. The closed world of the airplane communicates an impression of consciousness operating in a void, dissociated from the world beneath, annihilating reality. Mehring's sexual fascism can be read in these lines through which we can say him a sexual colonialist:

> In the cozy dark of presences, in the intimacy like the loneliness of the crowd, the feel of flesh is experienced anew, as the taste of water is recognized anew in the desert. The finger went against the grain of fine down-yes, the flash admits that it belongs to the Latin races, often hairy-and reached the warmth of the two legs pressed together. The skin was tacky, almost damp. It clung to his fingers with a message of excitement and pleasure. He felt how she kept her head absolutely still and knew he was forbidden to look at her face. Tucked, sucked in

> between the neatly parallel thighs his finger stirred only slightly, just a murmur. (128-129)

Beneath him, the desert sand becomes “an infinite progression of petrified sound waves” (131), which he watches while caressing the girl, equally soundless, echoing back to him his own activity. Sexual activity is described as linguistic-as a monologue, as delicate phrasing, delicate questioning, and finally entry into the “soundless O of the little mouth” (130). The relationship goes on and on in an endless night of solipsistic communication which does not advance, merely making Mehring overaware of “the bounds of himself” (130), of his confinement within his own vision of reality. The erotic quality of the experience is fundamentally autoerotic, the girl utterly passive. The method of narration is infinitely oblique. The questions—“who spoke first? Was it at all sure that it was he? (127)—go unanswered, even unasked. The girl’s body “takes up the narrative” (128); Mehering’s hand “took up the thread of communication” (128) but without actual utterance. The two collaborate in a surreptitious relationship, never fully articulated, relying on the convention that they are utterly separate while enjoying a close intimacy. Their relation is “not without tenderness, but who is ever to know that is part of scandal” (132)—just as Mehring’s relationship to his land and his boys is not without tenderness but nonetheless a scandal. Sexual fantasy as a surrogate to colonial lusts is extended in ontological terms. As a white South African male, Mehring can give relation to women only as a form of slumming—even without crossing the race or class lines. His activity, then, can give him only his own image. The sterile desert beneath, “echoing itself since there was no organic renewal by which life could be measured” (131). Solipsism prevents change and renewal of the external world. Another culture beyond Mehring’s carries the burden of renewal and rebirth.

Mehring's activities on the airplane are presented as a flashback, framed by two images of fathers and sons—the Indians whose shop is near the farm, and the visit of Mehring's own son, Terry. The first episode takes place in an enclosed space, a circumscribed world like Mehring's airplane. The last one leaves the closed world for a desert of space. The Indian's shop is surrounded by dogs in a ring of savagery, behind a stockade which Bismillah continually repairs, a conservationist of a more defensive kind. The image of a culture deliberately walling itself in refusing to communicate across the lines drawn by apartheid, even collaborating with it, is also the image of a walled-of consciousness. When Dorcas's husband opens the stockade doors, the dogs do not escape, "as if for them the pattern of closed gates are still barred across their eyes" (125). Within the Indian's house, Dawood and his young bride are seen crammed into one room with her dowry furniture, a further space within a space, a space which Dawood sees as paradise. His father comments, "The boy will be happy anywhere he can be touching the first woman he has all to himself. Anywhere. The room is paradise" (118). In the shop, the closed world does not intersect in any meaningful way with the world of the customers. Bismillah, speaking in Gujerati with his father, enjoys total privacy. To the blacks, he employs "the semantics of the trade" (119), saying one thing to mean another, cagily unwilling to say more than the absolute minimum. The rhythm of their speech is like the rhythm of Mehring's conversation on the plane: "Demand. Response. Counterdemand. Statement" (119).

When Dorcas's husband challenges Bismillan, the latter deliberately distances him by communicating only through William, although Dorcas's husband is perfectly intelligible. The incident demonstrates how each closed culture mimics the one above it, absorbing and passing on the aggression. Bismillah is thinking aloud, at this point,

imagining Mehring's probable reaction to his business proposition: "And go to hell, and who you bloody think you are" (122). The words are directed at Dorcas's husband, who then tears up the paper receipts of the Christmas Club. The paper counters in a linguistic currency which merely exploits him. The episode dramatizes the lack of consensus in South Africa, the separate existence of different codes and circumscribed worlds which communicate only crudely, underhandedly, or violently. In a society, which is bound up by both apartheid and patriarchy, the condition of female is pathetic.

Mehring's separate peace is presented in the visit of his son, Terry, in another guise, that of exile. Terry's rucksack with its peace symbol looms large in the enclosed space of Mehring's car. The action again centers on problems of sexuality and communication. An ominous silence echoes beneath the text of the conservation. Father and son speak different languages: "Where they referring to the same things when they talked together?" (134). Neither is engaged with the real subject—Terry's impending military service. Indeed, the "real subject" is uncertain, existing only as a mysterious block to communication. The conversation begins beside a sign in three languages—"No throughfare. Geen Toegang. Akunandlela Lapha" (140)—and takes them to the point in the fields, where Mehring previously tore up a letter to Terry, a dead end.

At one point Mehring considers the use of the term "Namibia": "Why that and not another invention expressive of a certain attitude towards the place?" (138). Namibia is chosen as a neutral term, one which will not suggest that the land belongs to any of the tribes occupying it and will not conjure up jealousy. Language attempts to say nothing here, to be neutral—an impossible and pointless task. Moreover, the discussion of Namibia takes place not between Terry and Mehring but in the

Mehring's memory between him and his white mistress. For him Namibia does conjure up jealous visions—of his mistress and, as a result of Terry's disaffection, of his wife. The rhythm of the passage is continued attempt and failure to guess the unspoken thoughts of the other and to trap him into revelation. Mehring seizes on a book published by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality as a possible answer, a reality beneath their speech: "Could this be the subject?" (151). Whether or not Terry is homosexual remains uncertain, though in Mehring's terms he might be as well. Africa and woman are so identified that rejection of one implies rejection of the other.

The quotations themselves are already in a sense contaminated by their source—a missionary enterprise recording the prior and "mistaken" religious beliefs of the heathen. Gordimer reminds us of this source by including one of Callaway's more patronizing editorial glosses in the quotation she uses to introduce the Amatongo: "We cannot avoid believing that we have an intimation of an old faith in a Hades or Tartarus, which has become lost and is no longer understood" (Callaway 163). Ultimately, the world evoked by the quotations shares crucial similarities with Mehring's mental world: Callaway's informant's and the gods and spirits about whom they inform are equally and assertively male and might have been so even before receiving the additional imprint of Callaway's white, Christian and male God, a "deity" who survives in the novel—is allowed to survive—in the person of the irreligious white farmer himself. When Mehring and his son Terry meet a party of people making their way to the ceremony, they stop and acknowledge a greeting from one of the men: "[T]he women neither greet nor expect to be greeted, they do not see themselves at all in the eyes of the white man and white boy" (145). In this sense, the quotations reveal a world in which Mehring would have no great difficulty negotiating the terms of his own existence, a point again subtly suggested by the text:

immediately prior to the introduction of the Amatongo, when Mehring listens to the drumming and experiences a feeling of atonement to the farm, the narrative –once again equivocal about the pronoun referent—tells us that "he is at one with it as an ancestor at one with his own earth" (161). The condition in which women even cannot expect to give or receive greeting to the white colonizer, there is no hope of them getting any rights from this society, in which women are taken nothing more than a sexual object.

Mehring's "hankering to make contact with the land" is "bred of making money in industry" (22). This extract from Callaway stresses the difference between his and the blacks' claim to the land. He claims on the land to boast about it while blacks claim in the sense of their belongingness and continuity. Mehring takes the farm as an income tax advantage and a "good place to bring a woman"; in such a term his claim of conservation is nothing more than capitalist, sexual, and colonialist exploitation. Mehring sees women nothing more than a body, "women expect something then –a caress, an endearment—they often don't seem to know what. You were like the others, although you were going on about my 'historical destiny'" (176).In his conversation with Antonia, he says, "I could see your bright little female brain working as one can see the innards in the bodies" (178). From this sentence, we can say how he generalizes the females. He acts as if he knows each and every feminine aspect. Even being a lover of Antonia, he links each and everything with body. We can't find his relationship with anybody who is bound with love and selflessness, which can be observed in his monologue:

> Coming downstairs, she looks under her eyelids at her stomach; it is her moment of giving herself away. She watches herself. She flaunts early grey hairs but she fears, too–a slack belly. It is true that

> she is not flat, when you lie on her you do not feel, anymore, that ass's jawbone thrust forward down there. When you look down on her, there is no smooth concave pinned on either side by a hipbone, that charming reminder of a nakedness beyond nakedness, a nakedness so complete it goes beyond flesh right to the bone, that some young girl show in bikini, with cover over only the little padded beak that brings the female body to a point. She did not have a particularly beautiful body even then, five years ago, before she need really have begun to worry about what will happen to it, what happens to them all, around the waist. (103)

From these sentences, we can say how Mehring is sticking to female body. Once he even told Antonia that he rather liked to buy a woman now and then—to think, she's doing this because he has paid for her. All this shows Mehring's sexual fascism. For him female body is nothing more than a stuff which he can buy with his money and use at his own interest.

In *The Conservationist*, Nadine Gordimer shows the change in the society through the natural process. Mehring contemplates a plover. He thinks that "it's exquisitely neat black and white markings takes his eye into visual discipline" (79), but the landscape around is tonal, softened, as a result of the fire, which leaves particles of smoke in the air. Drought has a similar effect: "Dust has the effect on the distant hills of a pencil sketch over with a soft rubber" (108). The cyclone, dissolving the normal landscape, is associated with a social change. When the road is washed away, Mehring is separated from the farm, and the Africans have to cope without him—as though he were dead. Jacobus opens cupboards "as possessions must be sorted after a death, putting objects aside like words of a code, or symbols of a life

that will never be understood coherently, never explained now" (238). Gordimer offers a vision of Africa without the white man –and at the same time a different form of vision. Rain dissolves the normal paths and ways of society, washing out both social domination and a way of seeing: "The sense of perspective was changed" (233). When Mehring becomes subconsciously aware of the black corpse beneath his feet, the muddy surface of the third pasture becomes molten, almost sucking him under. He struggles to free himself from the "soft cold black hand" (228) of the mud, freeing himself less from a real threat than from his own projections. The black functions here as alter ego, so that Mehring feels "as if part of him is still buried" (227). The black as image of the subconscious is associated with the melting surface beneath him. A sexual vibration is also present in the corncob which Mehring tries, slicing through—"the tight bandage of ribbed leaves that escapes it like a mummy"—to penetrate: "The white nubs so young they are not quite solid, and their white milky substance flows under the nail" (227-28). When the car is washed away in the flood, Gordimer's own account - "It was seen to float a moment and then engage with some solid surface again—just as it was about to gain the rise something burst out there" (234) - is contrasted with the public rhetoric of the newspapers, with their nine-year-old photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Loftus Coetzee, vanished "without a trace before the horrified eyes of astonished witnesses" (235). The white rhetoric is washed away just as Witbooi's references from his white employers have been wiped out by the rain; the peace symbol on the water tower has been undermined and is about to collapse. The dependence of realism on materialism is undermined as matter flows and language changes. As a connecting medium the land of Africa is as unreliable as its language

Nowhere is reality more in question than in the final pages of the novel. We can grasp a tangible surface in the events occurring between Mehring and the anonymous woman. Mehring's mind appears to have lost its grip on reality shortly before his "death." After having coffee with a friend's daughter in Johannesburg, a girl he lusts after, news reaches him that she has been found gassed in his car, the result of a financial scandal. Mehring's reaction is obsessively guilty: "It's me. Drawn up he has been seized, he is going to be confronted at last!" (188). The expression "It's me" is the daughter's unspoken greeting, the expression of his arrested mistress on the telephone, and the horrid spectre of the Portuguese girl: "one immigrant girl in a city full of girls, she is there somewhere all the time" (194). The train of associations leads Mehring to confront the colonial guilt beneath the sexual, as the coffee he has just drunk turns to poison: "Some of them take poison. A dose of cyanide, it's quicker" (195). The phrase "It's me" refers also to Mehring, equally implicated in the financial scandal of South Africa, equally guilty. Cyanide, we remember, is "the stuff that is used in the most effective and cheapest process for extricating gold….It is what makes yellow the waste that is piled up …where the road first leaves the city" (195). The denouement situates Mehring in the same symbolic landscape—"a dirty place, an overgrown rubbish dump between mounds of cyanide waste" (258).

At last, Mehring's irony turns to himself. Formerly, Mehring expresses his separate peace as an ability to see the "joke" in South Africa, to convert, for example, the dead African into "a story to be told over drinks" (27). Mehring's irony is continually scoring points off the white South Africans, as well as the Boers and the blacks. Towards the close of the novel, however, he is unable to maintain his ironic detachment. The girl takes his cinema invitation as a joke. Jacobus sees the invitation

to see in the New Year as a joke. Mehring suffers a double rejection, by woman and black, and becomes a double prisoner, unable to communicate across the sexual and racial divide and unwilling to accept the mechanical surface communication of Johannesburg society. He is left enclosed in his room, paralyzed beside the telephone answering device, receiving its message but unable to respond: “The machine simply stops listing. Just as he gives no answer” (200). Mehring is hiding in his room to avoid his friend’s funeral. The psychological logic is clear. Mehring converts the dead black into a “story” to amuse white South Africa. The black is buried without honor. White South Africa then reads the newspaper story his friend’s death, and Mehring refuses to honor him. The events of the subplot boomerang back into the main plot. Mehring’s “story” is akin to the black burial without honor. He tidies up an awkward reality, which remains just beneath the surface ready to erupt again at any point. Mehring’s irony neutralizes the black, but the dead man comes back to plague him from the guilty depths of his own consciousness.

The scene of the ambiguous closing pages of the novel shows the car journey of the Mehring through a landscape which function as a mental topography. He is no longer responding to normal signs and has “an awful moment looking at a green light and not knowing what it means. Jeers of horns are prodding at him. Blank” (125). He clings to familiar landmarks in an attempt to hang on to his version of reality, picking out bus stops and beer cartons—“ticking off a familiar progression of objects can be used to restore concentration” (252). Although the woman is once again a representative of the land, she is not a paradise conserved but an ecological disaster. Her face is like a cyanide dump: “The grain of the skin is gigantic, muddy and coarse. A moon surface, 264) Grey-brown with layers of muck that don’t cover the blemishes” (260). In her person she sums up all the women of the book—she babbles

like a schoolgirl, reminds Mehring of his mistress, has an accent which suggests she is Afrikaans-speaking and "could be Portuguese" (262). She may even be black: "That hair's been straightened and that shallowness isn't sunburn" (261). Mehring's abandonment of her prefigures abandonment of Africa:

> He is going to leave her to them…he's going to make a dash for it, a leap, sell the place to the first offer…He's going to run, run and leave them to rape her and rob her. She'll be all right. They survive everything. Coloured or poor-white, whichever she is, their brothers or fathers take their virginity good and early. They can have it, the whole 400 acres. (264).

As Mehring is about to possess the woman, he becomes aware "as of a feature in a landscape not noticed before" (261) of a pair of male calves in the background. Two possibilities are entertained: the man is a thug in conspiracy with the girl to beat him up and rob him, or he is a member of the police enforcing the race laws. On the level of Mehring's subconscious, he is the Freudian censor, interrupting his sexual activities. On the political level, he recalls the police at the start of the novel, who bury the black gangster: "These are the bastards who shove ked him in as you might fling a handful of earth on the corpse of a rat. Dispose of the body and so you dump your rubbish on somebody's private property" (263). The black man, the body, the body of woman, and the rubbish dumps form one massive image of colonial guilt. Mehring is in the reverse position to that of Phineas' wife. Her unconscious life shapes her society. His unconscious life is formally shaped and repressed by his society. The final words of the chapter are those of other people inside Mehring's head: "Come and look, they're all saying. What is it? Who is it? It's Mehring. It's Mehring down there" (265). His society is repressive, not expressive.

A lack of normality, shared language, or vision is the problem posed by South Africa which is already bounded by apartheid. At the end of the novel, he picks up a hitchhiking girl and they travel down a side-road to a quiet place in the mine dumps. The scene at the clearing among the old mine-dumps is replete with Mehring's desperate, and futile, desire to escape the situation, embodied in symbolic refusals empty of meaning. "I don't want to sit," he says; nevertheless, "[h]e sits" (258). "What he desperately needs to convey is that she is presumptuous, that he is being held up on his way" (258), yet he is incapable of conveying it. His capacity to master his surroundings, his agency, is mortally eroded, and extends to the inability of his language to mean. Displaced from his farm, unhomed from the comfort of epistemological certainty, he finds himself in a no-man's land with a woman whose wants and intentions he cannot fathom in significant distinction to his former power and certitude. We later learn that Mehring has fled to "one of those countries white people go to "(266), thus adopting a new identity and establishing a new symbolic territory for himself.

IV. Conclusion

In *The Conservationist*, Nadine Gordimer tries to show how females are victimized by the white colonizers, patriarchal society and by their own custom and tradition in South Africa. In this text, she tries to reveal the sterility of culturally masculine attitudes amongst the white and black South Africans, which can be seen through the initiation led by Phineas's wife. This initiation also serves as a festival for Solomon's recovery. She has been touched by genuine visitations of the old faith- she calls herself the lizard that is a little woman, feels the amatongo in her shoulders, and dreams of snakes that are men. Nevertheless she is conceived as a poor creature, a nuisance to everyone, a woman to whom people laughed at privately. During her initiation dance, people get restless and begin to shift and talk. They can not concentrate themselves on her dance. Phineas's wife has no living children and is around the end of child bearing age and she no longer sleeps with her husband. In this condition, she has no option than to be a diviner. In Zulu culture, it is the only socially recognized way of escaping from the impasse of the family life and to win general social prestige. She wants to escape from the pressures imposed on her by the culture and her sex.

The initiation of Phineas's wife precedes the flood, which can be seen as a feminine revolution: one of those cyclones given the female names sweeps from the Mozambique Channel. The cult offers a therapy for social deprivation which is a catharsis for the Zulu woman in a subservient role. The initiation of Phineas' wife can be seen as her social struggle to be prestigious and independent. The female characters except her can't raise their voice against suppression and exploitation meted out to them. A young Portuguese girl is molested, Antonia is forced to flee and daughter-in- law and grand daughters of old De Beer are threatened.

Insertion of bodies into systems of utility-be they at the service of capitalism or patriarchy, develops on forms of power that are localized over the singular body, and that rely not on brute force but on quasi-voluntary acquiescence. Female bodies are the privileged target of all disciplinary practices, but also state-defined disability mirrors the phenomenological experience of women generally. Given that all women are positioned in relation to and measured against an inaccessible body ideal, in part determined by a universalized male body.

In *The Conservationist*, Gordimer has shown the relationship between land and woman. Mehring takes land as nothing more than his hobby and female nothing more than body. He only uses the resources of the Africa land but never thinks of using his capital to make the land more productive. Similarly, he seduces the female but never takes the responsibility of them. The ideal form of the relationship between woman and land occurs in the incident on board the airplane. Returning from the business trip, Mehring, during the night, is engaged in sexual play with his neighbour, a young Portuguese girl. The scene can be read as an example of Mehring's sexual fascism, thus he is a sexual colonialist. During his play he compares the female body with the land below him.

In a society which is bound up by colonialism and patriarchy, a woman thinks it's better to remain silent than to raise voice against such system, which can be seen in the activities of a Portuguese in airplane. When Mehring forwards his hands towards her body, the immigrant Portuguese girl remains indifference to the explorations of his finger. Her soundlessness confirms the extent of her victimization. At the end of the novel, Mehring seduces a woman, who is a poor white, South African parlance for an inferior member of the so called superior race. Mehring soon begins to worry that his lover may be coloured and, fearful of punishment under the

immoral acts. We later learn that Mehring has fled to one of those countries, where white people go, thus adopting a new identity and establishing a new symbolic territory for himself. At last, *The Conservationist* suggests that the whole cultural ethos must be changed as they project the female nothing more than the body. The role of the woman, as suggested by this culture, is to give pleasure to males and they should submit themselves to each and every norm of the society. Any society or nation as a whole, however, can progress only if women have freedom and equality of opportunity. This text, thus, undercuts the idea that freedom of any nation is not possible until and unless women are liberated.

II. Feminism and Postcolonialism: A Theoretical Modality

Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies of the colonized territories. As originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms of the post-colonial state, 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the late 1970s. The term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization.

Although the study of the controlling power of representation in colonized societies had begun in the late 1970s with texts such as Said's *Orientalism*, and led to the development of what came to be called colonialist discourse theory in the works of critics such as Spivak and Bhabha, the actual term 'post-colonial' was not employed in these early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape and form opinion and policy in the colonies and metropolis. Spivak, for the first time, used the term 'post-colonial' in the collection of interviews and recollections entitled *The Post-colonial Critic* published in 1990. Although the study of the effects of colonial representation were central to the work of these critics, the term 'post – colonial' per se was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles. The term has subsequently been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies.

At last, the term postcolonial in its various uses carries a multiplicity of meaning that needs to be distinguished for analytical purposes. The uses of the term seem to be especially prominent: (a) as a literal description of conditions in formally colonial societies, in which case the term has concrete referents, as in postcolonial societies or postcolonial intellectuals, (b) as a description of a global condition after the period of colonialism, in which case the usage is somewhat more abstract and less concrete in reference comparable in it's vagueness to the earlier term. Third world, for

which it is intended as a substitute, (c) as a description of a discourse on the above named conditions that are informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of those conditions.

On the other hand, feminism is concerned with the marginalization of the women that is, with their position of being relegated to a secondary position. It presents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. Feminism is a political movement which has become successful in giving due place to writing of previously non-canonical women writers. Feminism comes into practice as an attack against female marginalization as our society is pervasively patriarchal, it is male-centered and controlled and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as a feminine. Feminism refers to all those who seeks to end women's subordination. It is an aggressive conscious feeling of women, reject their passivity. Feminism came in to existence for the sake of women rights and human equality.

The identification of women with the body is a familiar idea in the western tradition. Great scholars and philosophers were also biased in defining women. They depicted women as inferior, immature, incomplete in their intellectual potentialities. We have seen that Plato seems very firm in his insistence on the destructiveness of the body to the soul and he always assigned body to the female. In doing so, he holds up for our ridicule and scorn those lives devoted to bodily pursuits. Over and over, women's lives are depicted as being such lives. The body is seen as the source of all the undesirable traits a human being could have, and women's lives are spent manifesting those traits. Regarding his view on women, Plato, in his story "Phaedo",

says, “Look at the lives of women. It is woman who gets hysterical at the thought of death” (60). Their emotions have overpowered their reason, and they can’t control themselves. Plato, in his *Republic*, says, “the worst possible model for young men could be a woman, young or old or wrangling with her husband, defying heaven, loudly boasting, fortunate in her own conceit, or involve in misfortune or possessed by grief and lamentation –still less a women that is sick, in love, or in labor” (605c-d).

So, the contradictory sides of Plato’s views about women are tied to the distinction he makes between soul and body and the lessons he hopes to teach his readers about their relative value. While preaching about the overwhelming importance of the soul, he can’t but regard the kind of body one has as of no final significance. So, there is no way for him to assess differently the lives of women and men; but while making gloomy pronouncements about the worth of the body, he points an accusing finger at a class of people with a certain kind of body –women- because he regards them, as a class, as embodying. The very traits he wishes no one to have. In this way, women constitute a deviant class in Plato’s philosophy. In the sense that he points to their lives as the kinds of lives that are not acceptable philosophically: they are just the kinds of lives no one, especially philosophers, ought to live. Similarly, Aristotle declared that “the female is female by virtue of certain lack of qualities” (Selden 134) and the “misbegotten males” (Ruth 96). St. Thomas Aquinas believed that “woman is an imperfect man” (Selden 134).To the puritan conviction, “Women are less intelligent than men” (qtd. in Laurent 270).In this way, women have been misinterpreted in socio-political cultural, biological, religious world and in the works of art and literature by generations of people to justify and maintain patriarchal system. And feminism revolts are against such misinterpretation.

The issues of feminism and post colonialism are integrally tied to the project of literary postcolonialism and its concerns with the critical reading and interpretation of colonial and postcolonial texts. A postcolonial feminist perspective requires that one learn to read literary representation of women with attention both to the subject and to the medium of representation. Gender occupied and still occupies a prominent and constitutive quality in the colonial project where by all the native, colonized people in the mainstream colonial discourses are characterized as 'feminine'. No less significant is the way in which the status of native women was used to justify the colonial project as a civilizing mission. Until recently, feminist and postcolonial theory has followed what Bill Ashroft *et al*. call "a path of convergent evolution" (Ashroft *et. al* 249). Both bodies of thought are concerned with the study and defense of marginalized 'others' within repressive structures domination and, in so doing, both have followed a remarkably similar theoretical trajectory. Deepika Bihari says, "feminist theory and postcolonial theory are occupied with similar questions of representation, voice marginalization, and the relation between politics and literature" (201) Given that both critical projections employ multidisciplinary perspectives, they are each attentive, at least in principle, to historical co-ordination of the subject in question, while there is oblivious harmony and overlapping between the two, tensions and divergence, are no less in evidence.

Feminists sometimes complain that analysis of colonial or postcolonial texts fail to consider gender issues adequately, bracketing them in favor of attention to supposedly more significant issues such as empire building, decolonization, and liberation struggle in the colonial context, and nation building in the postcolonial context. The implications of these tensions are many. Postcolonial feminism is thus a dynamic discursive field which integrates the premises of post colonialism as much as

those of feminism. Within the broader work of mainstream feminist postcolonial perspective that focuses on race and ethnicity are often perceived as forces that liquidate the global feminist alliance. These critics' focuses on the failure of mainstream feminism to incorporate issues of race, its tendency to stereotype as over generalize the case of the 'third world' woman. Bell hooks claims that "white women who dominate feminist discourse today rarely question whether or not their perspective on women's reality is true to the lived experiences of women as collective group" (3). The field of knowledge called postcolonial feminist studies, thus, clearly indicates the relational identity of the field, suggesting that it exists as a discursive configuration in dialogue with dominant First-World constructions even when it is in tension with them.

The most significant collision and collusion of postcolonial and feminist theory occur around the contentious figure of the 'third-world woman'. Some feminist writers, however, have misgivings about terms like "Third World" for they point out the inclination of this indiscriminate label to lump diverse women, cultures and places together in to a single monolithic grouping. Such a grouping is constituted in ways that may ironically replicate the vantage point of imperial definitions in presuming to name the vastly differentiated character of the supposedly 'non- western' as singular and simply marginal outsider. Some feminist postcolonial theorists have cogently argued that "a blinkered focus on racial politics inevitably elides the 'double colonization' of women under imperial conditions" (Gandhi 83), and postulates the 'third-world women' as victim par excellence the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies.

While it is impossible to ignore the feminist challenge to the gender blindness of anti-colonial nationalism, critics such as Sara Suleri and Mohanty are instructive in

their disavowal of the much too eager “coalition between postcolonial and feminist theories, in which each term serves to rectify the potential pietism of him other” (Suleri 274). The imbrications of race and gender as Suleri goes on to argue “invests the ‘third-world woman’ with an iconicity which is almost ‘too good to be true” (273). Suleri’s objection to the post colonial feminist merger is a refusal to surrender the ‘third-world woman’ to the sentimental and often opportunistic enamourment with marginality which has come to characterize the metropolitan cult of ‘oppositional criticism’. As Spivak writes, “[I]f there is a big word in cultural critique now, it is marginality” (55). Such consistent invocation of the marginal has helped reform the aggressive canonicity of high western culture. We can now take it as a trust that the consistent invocation of the marginal subjugated has helped reform the aggressive canonicity of high western culture. There are two problems, even as the margins thicken with political significance; there are two problems which must give pause. Firstly, as Spivak insists, the prescription of non-Western alterity as a tonic for the ill health of western culture heralds the perpetration of a ‘new orientalism’. Secondly, the metropolitan demand for marginality is also a troublesome a command which consolidates and names the non-west as interminably marginal. In a sense, the third world has become a stable metaphor for the ‘minor’ zone of non culture and underdevelopment. The margin, as Gayatri Spisvak suggests, remains at the service of the center, she argues that “when a cultural identity is thrust upon because the center wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center” (55). These critics attempt to shake up the heavy imperialist weight of the center/periphery binary associated with apparently opposed terms like First World /Third World by reconfiguring the marginal as not simply offering an outsider positioning but simultaneously an integral vantage point.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her influential article “Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses”, discerns that the play of a discursive colonialism in the “production of the “Third world women” as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (western) feminist texts” (196). Although there are some important terminological difficulties, it, as Mohanty claims, is helpful to continue to make use of the label , ‘third-world women’ because, “rather than referring to a commonality of color or radical identification, the term is better employed to indicate a common context of struggle and resistance to sexist, racist and imperial structures” (7).

Many of the feminist critics within postcolonial feminist studies are struggling to establish identity as relational and historical rather than essential or fixed, even as it attempts to retain gender as a meaningful category of analysis. To be precise, postcolonial feminism is congruent with broad postcolonial perspective. The emphasis tends to be placed on the collusion between patriarchy and colonialism. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, insisting on the heterogeneity of the lives of third world women, pleads for an inter-relational analysis that does not limit the definitions of the female subject to gender and does not bypass the social, class and ethnic co-ordinates of those analyzed. The Egyptian writer, Nawal El Saadawi, in *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*”, just like Chandra Mohanty, argues that “oppression of women, the exploitation and social pressures to which they are exposed, are not characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or countries of the ‘Third World’ alone” (p) . Instead, a universalistic theory of women’s oppression should note that such oppressions constitute an integral part of the political economic and cultural system, preponderant in most of the world whether that system is backward or feudal

in nature, or a modern industrial society that has been submitted to the far reaching influence of a scientific and technological revolution.

In recent years, as suggested by Saadawi, there has been a shift of focus away from cultural issues to the status of women in an international arena defined by globalization. She links women's oppression in general and third-world women's oppression in particular to the global capitalist system and warns that under expanding capitalism and ensuing globalization, these women face a whole range of new problems resulting from the social changes to which they are exposed. Dissatisfied with the First-world preoccupation with question of tokenism, identity politics, and the politics of location, feminist scholars, in both the First world and the Third world, are producing a more dialectical and praxis-oriented understanding of postcolonial feminism that links labor sites in the First and Third worlds and emphasizes the international division of labor as a major concern. Sunder Rajan and Park claim that, "many transnational feminists identify the international division of labor –rather than cultural conflicts or transactions-as the most important defining feature of postcoloniality" (58). The growing importance of the global as the context for feminist scholarship has given new vitality and often new shape to debates about representation, location, and the category of 'Third-world women', as Chandra Mohanty claims this category, even if it is reliant on a dualistic politics, retains an heuristic value, particularly under globalization. Mohanty here draws attention to the ways in which issues of spatial economy gain fundamental importance for feminist analysis.

The concept of transnational feminist practice is also developed by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. For them the relationship between postcolonial and transnational studies is one of specific feminist trajectories that have always focused

on the “inequalities generated by capitalist patriarchies in various eras of globalization” (139). The structure of a transnational feminist responsibility is as follows:

> Examining the politics of location in the production and reception of theory can turn the terms of inquiry from desiring, inviting, and granting space to others to becoming accountable for one’s own investments in cultural metaphors and values. Such accountability can begin to shift the ground of feminist practice from magisterial relativism (as if diversified cultural production simply occurs in a social vacuum) to the complex interpretive practices that acknowledge the historical roles of meditation, betrayal, and alliance in the relationships between women in diverse location. (Kaplan 139)

Kaplan’s flexible grid for a transnational feminist politics begins to sketch out the terms of transnational engagement without the grandiose project of erasing inequalities or the prospect of being paralyzed by them. In the arena of global theory, transnationalist feminist practice rejects the untenable dichotomy between masculinist grand theories of globalization that ignore gender as an analytical lens and local empirical studies of globalization in which gender takes center stage. Such a practice assumes local processes and small-scale actors as the very fabric of globalization.

The transnational feminist politics initiates a dialogic process of modification and rehabilitation of a third world women in a colonial-patriarchal historical context and the critique of colonialism and patriarchy allows the transnational feminist to open up a third space of possibility and embody an unsettling location which insists on continuous mobility and fluidity to avoid entrapment in the webs of power whether colonial or patriarchal. Mohanty remarks that “experience must be historically

interpreted and theorized if it is to become the basis of feminist Solidarity and struggle, and it is at this moment that an understanding of politics of location proves crucial" (*Feminist* 87). It obliges us to recognize the complexities of subject construction everywhere-whether Caribbean, Indian, or African- and to learn to read the world through, what Deepika Bhari refers to as the 'logic of adjacence', a logic that could be applied to the general orientation of postcolonialism. In this way, a meaningful transnational feminist literacy requires recognition of the location of readers and of reading as a socialized activity within a particular context.

Tsitsi Dangarembga, a famous Zimbabwean woman writer, engages herself in the production of transnational feminist location by first misidentifying with the mythic fantasy of a harmonious homestead underpinning the local Shona patriarchal structure, and second, by condemning the colonial ideology and it's practices in Southern Rhodesia, including the dispossession of the Shona, the deployment of colonial tropes, and the institution of colonial education. These two strategies demonstrate that the construction of femininity under colonial and patriarchal ideologies increases the vulnerability of women to silence and violence. Such African feminist praxis, on the one hand, acknowledges the heterogeneity of black female experience, while, on the other hand, it recognizes that women's politics of location is constructed at the intersection of different, conflicting narratives of identity – race, gender, class, education, family, colonialism, religion, and language. In addition, this African feminist praxis depends on unraveling a tradition of female solidarity by reconfiguring the notion of community in which these women live inclusively in the society which can also embrace men given that they dissocialize themselves from the masculine colonial values they have been subscribing to.

In this context, we can associate Frantz Fanon's work on the psychological

condition of the native, which Jean-Paul Sartre identified in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), from the viewpoint of the colonized women. Fanon theorizes the psychology of the (male) colonized in terms of cultural indeterminacy and split subjectivities. Fanon accredits these pathologies to the condition of permanent tension, or the state of nervous condition, engendered by the violent mechanism of colonial culture. Although degraded and violated by colonial aggression, the colonized envies colonial privilege and "never ceases to dream of…substituting himself for the settler" (52). Fanon's discussion of the pathological effects and psycho-social impacts of colonization on the colonized foregrounds the sense of anxiety that the Manichean logic of colonialism generates in the colonized. Fanon argues that when the colonized is "confronted with the colonial order of things, he is in a state of permanent tension" (52). Moreover, Fanon mentions two major factors that generate this anxious condition. First, although the colonizer represents the colonial environment as a function of hostility, antagonism, and the negation of the native, the colonized perceives this cosmology in an ambivalent economy: "[T]he settler's world is a hostile world, which spurns the native, but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious" (52). The colonized, then, never ceases to fantasize about inhabiting whiteness and imperial privilege, substituting himself for the settler. The imperial psychic economy is 'a space of splitting' not 'a neat division' but a "doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (44). Fanon calls these spaces "hell and paradise, the site of damnation and seduction" (52-53).

Fanon argues "The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier" (53). Thus, both the material conditions of vertical violence as well as the symbolic practices, necessary for decoding colonial signifiers,

generate the nervous condition, “a tonicity of muscles” (53), among the colonized. To release his tension and nervousness, the colonized engages in acts of horizontal aggression, which he directs inwards towards other (male) natives. Fanon observes that at this stage, “you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother” (54). Fanon argues that there can be no reconciliation in this Manichean structure: cultural civility is replaced with colonial violence, brutality and terror. This constitutes vertical violence, which trickles down to police and enforces the integrity of the borderlines of the imperial symbolic economy. Therefore, the colonized does not want to trespass, or transgress the limits of colonial borders and incur colonial vengeance for his unforgivable guilt. As such, the colonized never stops from decoding the colonial signifiers that demarcate this borderline.

On the other hand, Dangaremba multiplies the paradigmatic condition into condition within the context of gender, race, and class politics, which ruptures the homogenization of African pathological bodies as male. In her re-visioning of Fanon. Dangarembga redefines the category native to include the colonized women, for there is an urgent need, she implies, to institutionalize the investigation of the psychological effect of colonialism on women. Therefore, Fanon’s reduction of female pathologies to a function of biology, as child birth and menstruation, needs to be reconsidered here in favor of an examination of female trauma and nervousness as necessarily symptomatic of the collaboration of both the patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist conditions. Dangarembga manages this way to emphasize the vertical violence between colonizers and colonized which is transvalued as horizontal violence that the colonized directs towards his house and family. Unable to manifest a violent stance

towards their masters, as a result of their desires to prove their humanity to the colonizer by subscribing to their ideologies, colonized men turn their mechanism of oppression and domination towards their wives or sisters. As evident in Dangarembga's revision of Fanon, the relationship between the black female individual and her African community has been the subject of a hot controversy in African literary circles. The emergence of a strong feminist voice in African women's writings posed an ethical and a political dilemma for these writers. Beatrice Stegman explicates the black female's dilemma in negotiating the pressures of community and subjectivity:

> African communalism implies a standard or value of submergence rather than self-realization. In traditional African societies, the role of each citizen is to perpetuate the status quo, to assure continuity of the clan, to work within tradition […] The "new woman," or feminist, rebels against such traditionalism because she evinces a theory of personhood where the individual exist as an independent entity rather than a group member, where she is defined by her experience rather than her kinship relations, where she has responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into stereotyped tradition. (90)

Feminist concerns were trivialized or dismissed by the national male intelligentsia, who demanded the valorization of race and national struggle over the divisive issue of gender politics. Besides the squabble and disagreement over the appropriate locution to describe African feminism as a women's movement, the whole community and

subjectivity debate was complicated by two problems. First, the general suspicious sentiments towards Western feminism in Africa. For many male intellectuals, the practice of feminism in Africa has been usually denounced as a reproduction of western imperialist ideologies. These intellectuals argue that those Western feminists are on a crusade to prosecute and execute African communal values. Moreover, western feminists were condemned for co-opting African women's texts, in order to privilege the western thematic of individuality, antagonism to men, militant separatism, the politics of the female body, and the value of motherhood . As such, for many African women the label feminist becomes a referent a referent, to de-Africanization (betrayal and rejection of African identity). In fact, in an interview with Kristen Holst Peterson, Dangarembga states that "women in Zimbabwe are very wary of being called feminists. It is really a very dirty word" (347). Second, this debate has been exacerbated by the representation of black female subjectivity in African male texts. The female voice in male literary production is generally absent and deemed not worthy of the grand narrative of literary production, and talking about women is branded as divisive and superfluous to the national/colonial debate. Abdualrazak Gurnah, for example explains the erasure of gender and the apathy towards patriarchy in African male textuality to the exigency for negating correcting the colonial denigration of the African mind, thought, and culture. He writes, "In respect of patriarchy, the African text was engaged in establishing the potency of African thought and culture to itself and to the world and, at best, it spoke for women without giving them voice" (xi). Only when they are displaced in the trope of Great Mother/Mother Africa that women resurface in this literature, but only as metonymic markers of the purity and innocence of the pre-colonial continent/nation or as signifiers of resistance to colonialism.

Afro-centric discourses, the Negritude movement in particular, insisted not only on feminizing Africa and displacing the embodied female subject, but also on reproducing the African motherland in the female body. These writers glorified the materiality of the female body as metaphor for a mythological continent and as a container of the core values of the motherland that the colonialist could not have access to. As such, African women are hence denied any claim to freedom, as it was taken for granted that the African women do not need to be liberated; she has been free for many thousands of years. Thus, the communal pressure on African female authors seems to demand that they overlook the dynamics of their displacement and metaphorization and, valorize deference to race, nation, community, and tradition over their loyalties to women's freedom. However, some feminist interventions proposed to bridge this seemingly irreconcilable dichotomy by synthesizing the African demands with the feminist claims. These synthetic interventions remained, nonetheless, limited to the agendas of demonstrating that in Lindsay Aegerter's words, "African's women's autonomy is predicated upon and inseparable from her place within her community" (233). Such a synthetic approach locates a communal ethics at the center of African feminism and finds it impossible for black female subjectivity to inhabit any space outside her African community. In *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*, Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves reconfigure African feminism as "a hybrid of sorts, which seeks to combine African concerns with feminist concerns" (12). Accordingly, African feminism is expected to recognize African men not as antagonistic but as comrades, and to challenge them to become conscious of female oppression in Africa. Whether this challenge also means exposing these men's complicity in the subjugation of women not only to local patriarchy but also to colonialism and capitalist rationality remains

unanswered. Moreover, while maintaining that African feminism recognizes misogynist traditions but accepts institutions of value for women. Davies and Graves do not consider the male role in reinforcing these same unjust traditions and institutions. They want African feminism to get rid of the author's suggestion that only colonialism "reinforced traditional inequalities and introduced others" (9).

Drawing on extensive archival material emanating mainly from various nineteenth-century and early twentieth century protestant missionary societies, and particularly those associated with female missionaries, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, argue that during that period, sexuated body of Indian women was a necessary ground for the imposition of colonial state power. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, in "Mapping The Colonial Body: Sexual Economies and the State in Colonial India" argue that "although our detailed analysis does not extend through to Independence, in our conclusion we draw on material unaddressed here to suggest ways in which the sexual economies of the female body were (re)-presented in the power/knowledge nexus of twentieth-century colonialism" (388). The analysis they offer is not predominantly materialist nor overtly 'historical' but is centered on the production and manipulation of certain discursive meanings which came to centre on India. But they neither deny the reality of certain practices nor downgrade the substantive political and economic forces at work in Indian society at time. It reflects Said's argument in *Orientalism,* "It is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a creative body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment" (Said 1978:6).

In their concern on the female body as the paradigmatic site of colonial power/knowledge, Foucault's analysis of the focus of regulatory power in the emergence of the modern western society can be equally useful in the understanding

of how those societies mapped their domination of others. In their material about the colonial India, what is preeminent is a discursive concentration on female sexuality. In Foucault's expositions, unless he is talking specifically about the hystericisation of the body, he is most often gender-neutral in his approach, "as though 'truths' about the male and female body were really constructed in an undifferentiated way" (Foucault 1990:48). He seems to take for granted that we are all equally both subject and subjected in that discourse. In contrast, Price and Shildrick argue that women are always already in a different relation to their bodies as sexed, not in the sense of that being the source of rigid givens, but in the sense that there is overlap but never identity between the lived experience of women and men. Further, the construction of meaning through which we 'know' the body consistently privilege the male for his supposed capacity to transcend his embodiment, to become the subject in, rather than of, discourse. Men then are both in and out of their bodies, while women simply are their bodies, "to be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault 1975:136). Then Foucauldian category of hystericisation is for them not the special case, but the very condition of being female.

Once the construction of Indian women as indissolubly tied to their sexuated bodies had originally focused on their identities as virgins, wives, and widows, the dominant representation of the twentieth century was to be as mothers. The period of British power did undoubtedly see some individual state interventions which worked to the advantage of limited numbers of women, but the primary motivation throughout was to extend and consolidate colonial power. On the one hand, women missionaries remained obsessed with charting the aberrant socio-sexual customs, of emphasizing the 'otherness' of the Indian women in whose lives they intervened. At the same time, they offered rescue and relief extending the hand of sisterhood to Indian women

whom they saw as their special responsibility. This simultaneous approach to both difference and sameness is the characteristic move of western discourse and flags that Indian women at least were already positioned within a normative economy of the same. As Jewitt-Robinson says, “Comparing the Hindu female with the women of England, it must be acknowledged that her darker complexion is only a veil of shadow, more or less dense over equal loveliness”(Jewitt-Robinson) 1860:3). What served to justify intervention and to guarantee the self-authorized, self-present voices of the missionaries and their colonial allies was the construction of the unified and different, silenced other who paradoxically calls for help and rescue. In other words, the discourse on Indian women, and more generally on the Orient arose, as Said puts it, “according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, instruments and projections” (Said 1978:8).

In rereading the authorized British maps, rather than the contours of resistance, Janet and Margrit have shown that the potentially divergent discourses in play functioned to legitimize a series of regulatory practices directly grounded on the bodies of women, and indirectly privileging the political interest of what Irigaray would call the hom(m)osexual economy. In its colonial form, the mapping of the body was an essential and essentialist move in the power/knowledge configuration of the state.

Similarly, in *Mothers of the Revolution,* Meggi Zingani points out that the language of egalitarianism, which was urgent to mobilize every Zimbabwean as “comrades” during the guerrilla wars, got eventually displaced in post-colonial times: “But now people are still behaving in the same way. So the village and district committees were formed to teach people, especially mothers, to behave like mothers. The women were the most affected” (134). In “Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in

Zimbabwe", Elilzabeth Schmidt explicates, "the economic-namely, obtaining cheap labor-and the political motivations that is, maintaining law, order, and respect for all forms of authority, behind the collaboration between colonialism and local male leadership in their mutual subordination of Zimbabwean women" (742). Colonialism endeavored to strengthen the base of patriarchal dominance through the enactment of laws and regulations that would restrict the movement and production of Shona women. Indigenous patriarchy, on the other hand, sought to reclaim authority over women's labor and production to consolidate the market economy and capitalist rationality of colonial rule. Hence, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism conspired to keep women totally dependent on their husbands and to deprive them of equal access to land, children, and capital economy. Schmidt quotes a native commissioner who admonished: "Unless the government supported African men in exercising their rights over the wives, not only the family but the whole existence of a nation could be placed in jeopardy as well" (741).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's theories on the effect of colonial education which he expounds in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1981). With the institutionalization of English as the language of communication, wa Thiong'o conceives of this colonial relation as a steady progression of the substitution of native self for a colonial subjectivity: "Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from our selves to other selves, from our world to other worlds" (27). The curricula and objective of this education are designed to produce an extreme form of alienation, estrangement, and self-hatred, for within the alienation trap everything native will be viewed as inferior, worthless, and superfluous. This is, of course, the ultimate sign of the dehumanization of the natives, their tradition, cultures, and languages. Moreover, wa Thiong'o claims that this alienation emerges in the context of colonial education in two interlinked

modalities: first an ambivalence towards one's own system of reference. Second, an enthusiastic assimilation to the "most external to one's environment" (27), that is, the colonial economy that suppresses and negates the existence of the colonized. This process of alienation he explains in the following ways:

> Starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a large social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. (28)

In *The Conservationist* also the natives' inclination towards white man's language is shown through Jacobus, the chief herdsman of the farm, who tries to imitate Mehring's language.

Elizabeth Schmidt, in her *Peasants, Traders, and Wives* argues that "colonial education for indigenous women resulted in their domestication and deprived them of cultivating any skills" (10). The primary object of domestic education was to make local women better wives and mothers in ways that suit their native needs and traditional lifestyle at rural homesteads only. Underlying this ideology, of course, was the desire to posit African traditions as normal and natural. Moreover, in their attempt to reinvent African womanhood along the lines of middle-class Victorian housewives, colonizers and missionaries reconfigured the referent of the civilizing mission to signify the ideology of domesticity. Integrating these women into the civilizing mission ensured that native women would raise the good and healthy Christian children necessary for the preservation of the colonial and capitalist systems.

The domestication of women, therefore, entailed not the direct inculcation of traditional feminine constructs like nurturance and service but also the regulation of female sexuality. Moreover, this domestication means that these native women were precluded from inhabiting any European space, for to become Europeanized would entice these women into moving to urban areas which would destabilize both patriarchal and colonial structures. Women are directly associated with religious ideologies mostly in developing and underdeveloped countries, by taking a specific version of Islam as the Islam. Jeffery attributes a singularity and coherence to it. Modares notes, Islamic Theology then becomes imposed on a separate and given entity called women. A further unification is reached: women (meaning all women), regardless of their differing positions within societies, come to be affected or not affected by Islam Marnia Lazreg makes a similar argument when she addresses the reductionism inherent in scholarship on women in the Middle East and North Africa:

> A ritual is established whereby the writer appeals to religion as the cause of gender inequality just as it is made the source of underdevelopment in much of modernization theory. In an uncanny way, feminist discourse on women from the Middle East and North Africa mirrors that of theologians' own interpretation of women in Islam. The overall effect of this paradigm is to deprive women of self-presence, of being. Because women are subsumed under religion presented in fundamental terms, they are inevitably seen as evolving in non-historical time. They virtually have no history. Any analysis of change is therefore foreclosed. (Marnia Lazreg 25)

While Jeffery's analysis does not quite succumb to this kind of unitary notion of religion (Islam), it does collapse all ideological specificities into economic relations, and universalizes them on the basis of this comparison.

Most of Gordimer's texts are concerned with the apartheid era of South Africa. We can find the psychological and social realism of South Africa in the apartheid era in the writings of Andre Brink, Athol Fugard and J.M Coetzee. Brink's *Rumors of Rain*, Fugard's *Master Harold…and the boys* and Coetzee's *Disgrace*, strongly oppose the institutionalized segregation laws which constitute apartheid. In *The Conservationist*, Gordimer has shown the exploitation of both the African land and females by the white colonizer. She has shown the suppression of women in the pretext of custom and tradition within their own community. On the basis of the theoretical modality discussed in this chapter, the text in question will be analyzed in the following chapter.

III. Parallelism between the Woman and the Land

In *The Conservationist*, we can see the pathetic condition of the female characters. Patriarchal society, colonial system and tradition, custom and value of South African society are the main factors which are pushing women to the margins. Phineas' wife, Indian's wife, young Portuguese girl and even Antonia are victimized by their society. Mehring, a white South African, is the central character of the novel. He perceives the female only from sexual point of view. He even buys the 400 acres of land in rural South African veld to impress Antonia, his mistress and to indulge in romance with her. In the same way, all female members of the Indian family are submissive to the male members. The business is handled by males and household activities are assigned to the females.

The physical and metaphysical territory of *The Conservationist's* protagonist, the industrialist and landowner, Mehring, is delineated by the symbolic violence of a narrative stream of consciousness. It is a compelling depiction of the movement that constitutes the self through the reduction of infinity to comprehensible phenomena within the controlling discourse of the same. In Mehring's reading of the land upon which his farm is situated, for example, his own identity- that of industrialist and womanizer- clearly precedes, and constitutes the condition for, the identities of all things exterior. Mehring's farm is "a good investment" (41), not only because it serves tax purposes, but also because it provides conservational currency with which to charm, entertain, or impress business associates. Already, at once, the impromptu burial by police of an anonymous corpse discovered on his farm is reduced to "a story to be told over drinks and at the dinner table" (27). For Mehring, the farm does not have any independent existence beyond its service to him. He takes it as a place to

bring a woman in order to seduce her. In this way, the African land and females both are victimized by the white colonizers.

We can explain how the women are ritualized in South African society by the account of the feast celebrating the initiation of Phineas's wife. The account of her possession follows the pattern of Zulu possession. The subject is haunted by dreams involving animals as ancestors, feels pain between the shoulder blades, rejects different foods, and fears metamorphosis into an animal. Phineas's wife experiences these symptoms and is also described as coming from Pondoland. The initiation ceremony involves sacrifice of a goat and dancing which is believed to cause the ancestral spirit to materialize; the test of the initiation is the ability to find hidden objects, here the goat. The underlying idea is that ancestors are tormenting the subject, complaining that he or she is no longer true to their culture. Interestingly, spirit possession is much more common among Zulu women than men. Social power is gained by the possessed person, who is given presents and feasts, ostensibly for the spirits. To become diviners, for pagan Zulu women, is the only socially recognized way of escape from an impossible situation in family life; it is also the only way an outstanding woman can win general social prestige. The phenomenon is more common among rural Zulu women. It is also associated, in Lee's analysis, with sexual and family conflicts: lack of children, an engagement to marry which is resisted, or confusion of goals at the menopause. Phineas's wife "had no living children" and is "somewhere around the end of childbearing age" (164). Her fear is of turning into a lizard: "She used the name isalukazana, the lizard that is a little old woman. She is certainly becoming an old woman" (165). She is even said no longer to sleep with her husband. By becoming a diviner, then, the woman escapes from the pressures of her culture and her sex.

In her ravings, Phineas's wife conjures up visions of flood: "In her sleep there were also elephants and hyenas and full rivers, all coming near to kill her" (166). Her initiation precedes the flood which is seen as a female revenge: "The weather came from the Mocambique channel. Space is conceived of as trackless but there are beats about the world frequented by cyclones given female names" (232). One of these hits South Africa, washing the ground clean of the fire ashes, unearthing the body of the dead man, and regenerating the burnt area. In the final of the novel, the conflict appears to be resolved: "Phinease's wife's face was at peace, there was no burden of spirits on her shoulders" (267). In the background stand the female members of the sect of Zion, a breakaway from orthodox Christianity, in which Christian tenets have been adapted to indigenous patterns of thought. Zionist churches represent the old divination cult in a new form, involving sacred dancing, speaking in tongues, food taboos, and possession by the Holy Spirit often described as an ancestor.

The closing of the novel, therefore, offers a quasi-resolution of white and indigenous culture. The unconscious life of the women shapes formally her actions in society. Through Zulu myth, Gordimer gives formal shape to the novel, articulating a different consciousness from that of the public rhetoric of South Africa. In the language of Zulu culture, possession is non-material, passive, a means of resolving social and sexual conflicts. The murdered black from the location represents change and is therefore spiritualized and controlled by the blacks, just as Christianity, a threat to their culture, is assimilated into the old divination cult. The cult offers a therapy for social deprivation, a catharsis for the Zulu woman in a subservient role.

Significantly, a woman comes to express Zulu culture and resolves its problems. The conjunction of woman and land is repeated in the fore grounded events. Phinease's wife may have achieved some independent status in her society,

but the other women are visibly getting the worst of it. Dawood's Indian wife longs for Durban, Mehring's mistress is forced to flee, the Portuguese immigrant girl is molested, and even the Afrikaans-speaking daughter-in-law and grand-daughter of old De Beer are thoroughly cowed and described as vacant turnips. The point made here is not only a feminist one. We can see the link between female exploitation and exploitation of the land in the same way. Sexual guilt functions as a surrogate for colonial guilt.

Mehring's delimitation of the farm within his personal narrative of its function and value is further demonstrated by his disregard for the lives of its worker inhabitants, and by his narcissistic outrage at the minor inconveniences caused by the indifferent cycles of nature. His "conservation" is very specifically oriented towards maintaining the identity he has assigned to the land: "There are too many cats," he complains, despite Jacobus's pragmatic reminder that this is because there are "too many rats" (69). He complains of the "bloody dogs" (20) that, he believes, kill his guinea fowl, and the workers' children who, he suspects, pick up their eggs, reducing the population. Revealingly, the only scenario that Mehring finds acceptable for the killing of guinea fowl, is for the table" (109), that is, for his table, which seats the women and business associates whom Mehring conceives as separate categories that the farm functions to impress. Certainly, his conservation does not mean protecting the fowl for their own sake nothing is entitled to an existence in itself within Mehring's territory. When Jacobus assures him that he sees "plenty guinea fowls here on the farm, early in the morning" (28), Mehring reflects on his dissatisfaction that "he isn't there early in the morning" (28).

Mehring's industrialist capitalism makes the judgment that "[n]o farm is beautiful unless it's productive" (70). And asserts that "[t]he farm, to justify its existence and that of those who work in it, must be a going concern. These are the facts" (82). The workers are revealed as mere props to this solipsistic reality—indeed, Mehring prides himself on neutralizing the negativity they introduce, congratulating himself on the fact that "[e]ven their neglect is something he can afford to allow himself"(155). Acknowledging the medicinal value his lily bulbs hold for the workers, Mehring nevertheless prioritizes his own truth the farm is a place to bring a woman, and the medicinal value of the plants is thus subordinate to their function as tools for seduction: "Jacobus ought to be told that medicine or no medicine, these bulbs mustn't be taken" (175), he insists, because "any woman would go crazy over the multiple-headed lilies" (174). Within his sensualist conception of the world, Mehring wields the same reductive power over every landscape, interpreting desert dunes as "golden reclining nudes" (103) and describing the weather as "of the temperature and softness that will bring out women flimsy dresses" (202). His description of the irrigation jets as they "ejaculate tirelessly over the Lucerne" (155) is certainly not incidental.

Mehring claims the intimate understanding and knowledge of his foreman, his mistress, his son, and even arrogates their very thoughts. He presents Antonia, his activist mistress, as entirely predictable: "He knew all the answers she could have given, knew them by heart, had heard them mouthed by her kind a hundred times" (70-71). Listening to her talk, he reflects, "[I]t's easy to plot a graph of the reactions of your kind. I know what you're thinking" (155). He believes her thoughts to be entirely transparent to him, and describes her "ingesting, digesting and exercising moral problems clearly as a see-through gheko" (179).

The fantasy-ideal form of the relationship to woman and land occurs in the incident on board of the airplane. Returning from a business trip, Mehring is forced to travel tourist class and during the night engages in sexual play with his neighbor, a young Portuguese immigrant girl. Mehring's mind moves into the event through his perception of land below him, which he sees as "soft lap after lap" of sand and desert –the opening phrase, "[g]olden reclining nudes of the desert" (126), refers as much to the dunes as to any sunning tourist. The body of the land becomes the land –as Mehring locates it, explores, explicitly compares its flesh to water in the desert, experiences the grain of the skin, guesses his location, and moves over the terrain, exploring the ridges of her anatomy. The airplane, an enclosed world outside time and place, veiled in sandstorms, allows Mehring to ignore social, sexual, and class taboos. The events are "happening nowhere" (129). Moreover, Mehring's colonialism extends to the whole of reality. The closed world of the airplane communicates an impression of consciousness operating in a void, dissociated from the world beneath, annihilating reality. Mehring's sexual fascism can be read in these lines through which we can say him a sexual colonialist:

> In the cozy dark of presences, in the intimacy like the loneliness of the crowd, the feel of flesh is experienced anew, as the taste of water is recognized anew in the desert. The finger went against the grain of fine down-yes, the flash admits that it belongs to the Latin races, often hairy-and reached the warmth of the two legs pressed together. The skin was tacky, almost damp. It clung to his fingers with a message of excitement and pleasure. He felt how she kept her head absolutely still and knew he was forbidden to look at her face. Tucked, sucked in

> between the neatly parallel thighs his finger stirred only slightly, just a murmur. (128-129)

Beneath him, the desert sand becomes “an infinite progression of petrified sound waves” (131), which he watches while caressing the girl, equally soundless, echoing back to him his own activity. Sexual activity is described as linguistic-as a monologue, as delicate phrasing, delicate questioning, and finally entry into the “soundless O of the little mouth” (130). The relationship goes on and on in an endless night of solipsistic communication which does not advance, merely making Mehring overaware of “the bounds of himself” (130), of his confinement within his own vision of reality. The erotic quality of the experience is fundamentally autoerotic, the girl utterly passive. The method of narration is infinitely oblique. The questions—“who spoke first? Was it at all sure that it was he? (127)—go unanswered, even unasked. The girl’s body “takes up the narrative” (128); Mehering’s hand “took up the thread of communication” (128) but without actual utterance. The two collaborate in a surreptitious relationship, never fully articulated, relying on the convention that they are utterly separate while enjoying a close intimacy. Their relation is “not without tenderness, but who is ever to know that is part of scandal” (132)—just as Mehring’s relationship to his land and his boys is not without tenderness but nonetheless a scandal. Sexual fantasy as a surrogate to colonial lusts is extended in ontological terms. As a white South African male, Mehring can give relation to women only as a form of slumming—even without crossing the race or class lines. His activity, then, can give him only his own image. The sterile desert beneath, “echoing itself since there was no organic renewal by which life could be measured” (131). Solipsism prevents change and renewal of the external world. Another culture beyond Mehring’s carries the burden of renewal and rebirth.

Mehring's activities on the airplane are presented as a flashback, framed by two images of fathers and sons—the Indians whose shop is near the farm, and the visit of Mehring's own son, Terry. The first episode takes place in an enclosed space, a circumscribed world like Mehring's airplane. The last one leaves the closed world for a desert of space. The Indian's shop is surrounded by dogs in a ring of savagery, behind a stockade which Bismillah continually repairs, a conservationist of a more defensive kind. The image of a culture deliberately walling itself in refusing to communicate across the lines drawn by apartheid, even collaborating with it, is also the image of a walled-of consciousness. When Dorcas's husband opens the stockade doors, the dogs do not escape, "as if for them the pattern of closed gates are still barred across their eyes" (125). Within the Indian's house, Dawood and his young bride are seen crammed into one room with her dowry furniture, a further space within a space, a space which Dawood sees as paradise. His father comments, "The boy will be happy anywhere he can be touching the first woman he has all to himself. Anywhere. The room is paradise" (118). In the shop, the closed world does not intersect in any meaningful way with the world of the customers. Bismillah, speaking in Gujerati with his father, enjoys total privacy. To the blacks, he employs "the semantics of the trade" (119), saying one thing to mean another, cagily unwilling to say more than the absolute minimum. The rhythm of their speech is like the rhythm of Mehring's conversation on the plane: "Demand. Response. Counterdemand. Statement" (119).

When Dorcas's husband challenges Bismillan, the latter deliberately distances him by communicating only through William, although Dorcas's husband is perfectly intelligible. The incident demonstrates how each closed culture mimics the one above it, absorbing and passing on the aggression. Bismillah is thinking aloud, at this point,

imagining Mehring's probable reaction to his business proposition: "And go to hell, and who you bloody think you are" (122). The words are directed at Dorcas's husband, who then tears up the paper receipts of the Christmas Club. The paper counters in a linguistic currency which merely exploits him. The episode dramatizes the lack of consensus in South Africa, the separate existence of different codes and circumscribed worlds which communicate only crudely, underhandedly, or violently. In a society, which is bound up by both apartheid and patriarchy, the condition of female is pathetic.

Mehring's separate peace is presented in the visit of his son, Terry, in another guise, that of exile. Terry's rucksack with its peace symbol looms large in the enclosed space of Mehring's car. The action again centers on problems of sexuality and communication. An ominous silence echoes beneath the text of the conservation. Father and son speak different languages: "Where they referring to the same things when they talked together?" (134). Neither is engaged with the real subject—Terry's impending military service. Indeed, the "real subject" is uncertain, existing only as a mysterious block to communication. The conversation begins beside a sign in three languages—"No throughfare. Geen Toegang. Akunandlela Lapha" (140)—and takes them to the point in the fields, where Mehring previously tore up a letter to Terry, a dead end.

At one point Mehring considers the use of the term "Namibia": "Why that and not another invention expressive of a certain attitude towards the place?" (138). Namibia is chosen as a neutral term, one which will not suggest that the land belongs to any of the tribes occupying it and will not conjure up jealousy. Language attempts to say nothing here, to be neutral—an impossible and pointless task. Moreover, the discussion of Namibia takes place not between Terry and Mehring but in the

Mehring's memory between him and his white mistress. For him Namibia does conjure up jealous visions—of his mistress and, as a result of Terry's disaffection, of his wife. The rhythm of the passage is continued attempt and failure to guess the unspoken thoughts of the other and to trap him into revelation. Mehring seizes on a book published by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality as a possible answer, a reality beneath their speech: "Could this be the subject?" (151). Whether or not Terry is homosexual remains uncertain, though in Mehring's terms he might be as well. Africa and woman are so identified that rejection of one implies rejection of the other.

The quotations themselves are already in a sense contaminated by their source—a missionary enterprise recording the prior and "mistaken" religious beliefs of the heathen. Gordimer reminds us of this source by including one of Callaway's more patronizing editorial glosses in the quotation she uses to introduce the Amatongo: "We cannot avoid believing that we have an intimation of an old faith in a Hades or Tartarus, which has become lost and is no longer understood" (Callaway 163). Ultimately, the world evoked by the quotations shares crucial similarities with Mehring's mental world: Callaway's informant's and the gods and spirits about whom they inform are equally and assertively male and might have been so even before receiving the additional imprint of Callaway's white, Christian and male God, a "deity" who survives in the novel—is allowed to survive—in the person of the irreligious white farmer himself. When Mehring and his son Terry meet a party of people making their way to the ceremony, they stop and acknowledge a greeting from one of the men: "[T]he women neither greet nor expect to be greeted, they do not see themselves at all in the eyes of the white man and white boy" (145). In this sense, the quotations reveal a world in which Mehring would have no great difficulty negotiating the terms of his own existence, a point again subtly suggested by the text:

immediately prior to the introduction of the Amatongo, when Mehring listens to the drumming and experiences a feeling of atonement to the farm, the narrative –once again equivocal about the pronoun referent—tells us that "he is at one with it as an ancestor at one with his own earth" (161). The condition in which women even cannot expect to give or receive greeting to the white colonizer, there is no hope of them getting any rights from this society, in which women are taken nothing more than a sexual object.

Mehring's "hankering to make contact with the land" is "bred of making money in industry" (22). This extract from Callaway stresses the difference between his and the blacks' claim to the land. He claims on the land to boast about it while blacks claim in the sense of their belongingness and continuity. Mehring takes the farm as an income tax advantage and a "good place to bring a woman"; in such a term his claim of conservation is nothing more than capitalist, sexual, and colonialist exploitation. Mehring sees women nothing more than a body, "women expect something then –a caress, an endearment—they often don't seem to know what. You were like the others, although you were going on about my 'historical destiny'" (176).In his conversation with Antonia, he says, "I could see your bright little female brain working as one can see the innards in the bodies" (178). From this sentence, we can say how he generalizes the females. He acts as if he knows each and every feminine aspect. Even being a lover of Antonia, he links each and everything with body. We can't find his relationship with anybody who is bound with love and selflessness, which can be observed in his monologue:

> Coming downstairs, she looks under her eyelids at her stomach; it is her moment of giving herself away. She watches herself. She flaunts early grey hairs but she fears, too–a slack belly. It is true that

> she is not flat, when you lie on her you do not feel, anymore, that ass's jawbone thrust forward down there. When you look down on her, there is no smooth concave pinned on either side by a hipbone, that charming reminder of a nakedness beyond nakedness, a nakedness so complete it goes beyond flesh right to the bone, that some young girl show in bikini, with cover over only the little padded beak that brings the female body to a point. She did not have a particularly beautiful body even then, five years ago, before she need really have begun to worry about what will happen to it, what happens to them all, around the waist. (103)

From these sentences, we can say how Mehring is sticking to female body. Once he even told Antonia that he rather liked to buy a woman now and then—to think, she's doing this because he has paid for her. All this shows Mehring's sexual fascism. For him female body is nothing more than a stuff which he can buy with his money and use at his own interest.

In *The Conservationist*, Nadine Gordimer shows the change in the society through the natural process. Mehring contemplates a plover. He thinks that "it's exquisitely neat black and white markings takes his eye into visual discipline" (79), but the landscape around is tonal, softened, as a result of the fire, which leaves particles of smoke in the air. Drought has a similar effect: "Dust has the effect on the distant hills of a pencil sketch over with a soft rubber" (108). The cyclone, dissolving the normal landscape, is associated with a social change. When the road is washed away, Mehring is separated from the farm, and the Africans have to cope without him—as though he were dead. Jacobus opens cupboards "as possessions must be sorted after a death, putting objects aside like words of a code, or symbols of a life

that will never be understood coherently, never explained now" (238). Gordimer offers a vision of Africa without the white man –and at the same time a different form of vision. Rain dissolves the normal paths and ways of society, washing out both social domination and a way of seeing: "The sense of perspective was changed" (233). When Mehring becomes subconsciously aware of the black corpse beneath his feet, the muddy surface of the third pasture becomes molten, almost sucking him under. He struggles to free himself from the "soft cold black hand" (228) of the mud, freeing himself less from a real threat than from his own projections. The black functions here as alter ego, so that Mehring feels "as if part of him is still buried" (227). The black as image of the subconscious is associated with the melting surface beneath him. A sexual vibration is also present in the corncob which Mehring tries, slicing through—"the tight bandage of ribbed leaves that escapes it like a mummy"—to penetrate: "The white nubs so young they are not quite solid, and their white milky substance flows under the nail" (227-28). When the car is washed away in the flood, Gordimer's own account - "It was seen to float a moment and then engage with some solid surface again—just as it was about to gain the rise something burst out there" (234) - is contrasted with the public rhetoric of the newspapers, with their nine-year-old photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Loftus Coetzee, vanished "without a trace before the horrified eyes of astonished witnesses" (235). The white rhetoric is washed away just as Witbooi's references from his white employers have been wiped out by the rain; the peace symbol on the water tower has been undermined and is about to collapse. The dependence of realism on materialism is undermined as matter flows and language changes. As a connecting medium the land of Africa is as unreliable as its language

Nowhere is reality more in question than in the final pages of the novel. We can grasp a tangible surface in the events occurring between Mehring and the anonymous woman. Mehring's mind appears to have lost its grip on reality shortly before his "death." After having coffee with a friend's daughter in Johannesburg, a girl he lusts after, news reaches him that she has been found gassed in his car, the result of a financial scandal. Mehring's reaction is obsessively guilty: "It's me. Drawn up he has been seized, he is going to be confronted at last!" (188). The expression "It's me" is the daughter's unspoken greeting, the expression of his arrested mistress on the telephone, and the horrid spectre of the Portuguese girl: "one immigrant girl in a city full of girls, she is there somewhere all the time" (194). The train of associations leads Mehring to confront the colonial guilt beneath the sexual, as the coffee he has just drunk turns to poison: "Some of them take poison. A dose of cyanide, it's quicker" (195). The phrase "It's me" refers also to Mehring, equally implicated in the financial scandal of South Africa, equally guilty. Cyanide, we remember, is "the stuff that is used in the most effective and cheapest process for extricating gold….It is what makes yellow the waste that is piled up …where the road first leaves the city" (195). The denouement situates Mehring in the same symbolic landscape—"a dirty place, an overgrown rubbish dump between mounds of cyanide waste" (258).

At last, Mehring's irony turns to himself. Formerly, Mehring expresses his separate peace as an ability to see the "joke" in South Africa, to convert, for example, the dead African into "a story to be told over drinks" (27). Mehring's irony is continually scoring points off the white South Africans, as well as the Boers and the blacks. Towards the close of the novel, however, he is unable to maintain his ironic detachment. The girl takes his cinema invitation as a joke. Jacobus sees the invitation

to see in the New Year as a joke. Mehring suffers a double rejection, by woman and black, and becomes a double prisoner, unable to communicate across the sexual and racial divide and unwilling to accept the mechanical surface communication of Johannesburg society. He is left enclosed in his room, paralyzed beside the telephone answering device, receiving its message but unable to respond: “The machine simply stops listing. Just as he gives no answer” (200). Mehring is hiding in his room to avoid his friend’s funeral. The psychological logic is clear. Mehring converts the dead black into a “story” to amuse white South Africa. The black is buried without honor. White South Africa then reads the newspaper story his friend’s death, and Mehring refuses to honor him. The events of the subplot boomerang back into the main plot. Mehring’s “story” is akin to the black burial without honor. He tidies up an awkward reality, which remains just beneath the surface ready to erupt again at any point. Mehring’s irony neutralizes the black, but the dead man comes back to plague him from the guilty depths of his own consciousness.

The scene of the ambiguous closing pages of the novel shows the car journey of the Mehring through a landscape which function as a mental topography. He is no longer responding to normal signs and has “an awful moment looking at a green light and not knowing what it means. Jeers of horns are prodding at him. Blank” (125). He clings to familiar landmarks in an attempt to hang on to his version of reality, picking out bus stops and beer cartons—“ticking off a familiar progression of objects can be used to restore concentration” (252). Although the woman is once again a representative of the land, she is not a paradise conserved but an ecological disaster. Her face is like a cyanide dump: “The grain of the skin is gigantic, muddy and coarse. A moon surface, 264) Grey-brown with layers of muck that don’t cover the blemishes” (260). In her person she sums up all the women of the book—she babbles

like a schoolgirl, reminds Mehring of his mistress, has an accent which suggests she is Afrikaans-speaking and "could be Portuguese" (262). She may even be black: "That hair's been straightened and that shallowness isn't sunburn" (261). Mehring's abandonment of her prefigures abandonment of Africa:

> He is going to leave her to them…he's going to make a dash for it, a leap, sell the place to the first offer…He's going to run, run and leave them to rape her and rob her. She'll be all right. They survive everything. Coloured or poor-white, whichever she is, their brothers or fathers take their virginity good and early. They can have it, the whole 400 acres. (264).

As Mehring is about to possess the woman, he becomes aware "as of a feature in a landscape not noticed before" (261) of a pair of male calves in the background. Two possibilities are entertained: the man is a thug in conspiracy with the girl to beat him up and rob him, or he is a member of the police enforcing the race laws. On the level of Mehring's subconscious, he is the Freudian censor, interrupting his sexual activities. On the political level, he recalls the police at the start of the novel, who bury the black gangster: "These are the bastards who shove ked him in as you might fling a handful of earth on the corpse of a rat. Dispose of the body and so you dump your rubbish on somebody's private property" (263). The black man, the body, the body of woman, and the rubbish dumps form one massive image of colonial guilt. Mehring is in the reverse position to that of Phineas' wife. Her unconscious life shapes her society. His unconscious life is formally shaped and repressed by his society. The final words of the chapter are those of other people inside Mehring's head: "Come and look, they're all saying. What is it? Who is it? It's Mehring. It's Mehring down there" (265). His society is repressive, not expressive.

A lack of normality, shared language, or vision is the problem posed by South Africa which is already bounded by apartheid. At the end of the novel, he picks up a hitchhiking girl and they travel down a side-road to a quiet place in the mine dumps. The scene at the clearing among the old mine-dumps is replete with Mehring's desperate, and futile, desire to escape the situation, embodied in symbolic refusals empty of meaning. "I don't want to sit," he says; nevertheless, "[h]e sits" (258). "What he desperately needs to convey is that she is presumptuous, that he is being held up on his way" (258), yet he is incapable of conveying it. His capacity to master his surroundings, his agency, is mortally eroded, and extends to the inability of his language to mean. Displaced from his farm, unhomed from the comfort of epistemological certainty, he finds himself in a no-man's land with a woman whose wants and intentions he cannot fathom in significant distinction to his former power and certitude. We later learn that Mehring has fled to "one of those countries white people go to "(266), thus adopting a new identity and establishing a new symbolic territory for himself.

IV. Conclusion

In *The Conservationist*, Nadine Gordimer tries to show how females are victimized by the white colonizers, patriarchal society and by their own custom and tradition in South Africa. In this text, she tries to reveal the sterility of culturally masculine attitudes amongst the white and black South Africans, which can be seen through the initiation led by Phineas's wife. This initiation also serves as a festival for Solomon's recovery. She has been touched by genuine visitations of the old faith- she calls herself the lizard that is a little woman, feels the amatongo in her shoulders, and dreams of snakes that are men. Nevertheless she is conceived as a poor creature, a nuisance to everyone, a woman to whom people laughed at privately. During her initiation dance, people get restless and begin to shift and talk. They can not concentrate themselves on her dance. Phineas's wife has no living children and is around the end of child bearing age and she no longer sleeps with her husband. In this condition, she has no option than to be a diviner. In Zulu culture, it is the only socially recognized way of escaping from the impasse of the family life and to win general social prestige. She wants to escape from the pressures imposed on her by the culture and her sex.

The initiation of Phineas's wife precedes the flood, which can be seen as a feminine revolution: one of those cyclones given the female names sweeps from the Mozambique Channel. The cult offers a therapy for social deprivation which is a catharsis for the Zulu woman in a subservient role. The initiation of Phineas' wife can be seen as her social struggle to be prestigious and independent. The female characters except her can't raise their voice against suppression and exploitation meted out to them. A young Portuguese girl is molested, Antonia is forced to flee and daughter-in- law and grand daughters of old De Beer are threatened.

Insertion of bodies into systems of utility-be they at the service of capitalism or patriarchy, develops on forms of power that are localized over the singular body, and that rely not on brute force but on quasi-voluntary acquiescence. Female bodies are the privileged target of all disciplinary practices, but also state-defined disability mirrors the phenomenological experience of women generally. Given that all women are positioned in relation to and measured against an inaccessible body ideal, in part determined by a universalized male body.

In *The Conservationist*, Gordimer has shown the relationship between land and woman. Mehring takes land as nothing more than his hobby and female nothing more than body. He only uses the resources of the Africa land but never thinks of using his capital to make the land more productive. Similarly, he seduces the female but never takes the responsibility of them. The ideal form of the relationship between woman and land occurs in the incident on board the airplane. Returning from the business trip, Mehring, during the night, is engaged in sexual play with his neighbour, a young Portuguese girl. The scene can be read as an example of Mehring's sexual fascism, thus he is a sexual colonialist. During his play he compares the female body with the land below him.

In a society which is bound up by colonialism and patriarchy, a woman thinks it's better to remain silent than to raise voice against such system, which can be seen in the activities of a Portuguese in airplane. When Mehring forwards his hands towards her body, the immigrant Portuguese girl remains indifference to the explorations of his finger. Her soundlessness confirms the extent of her victimization. At the end of the novel, Mehring seduces a woman, who is a poor white, South African parlance for an inferior member of the so called superior race. Mehring soon begins to worry that his lover may be coloured and, fearful of punishment under the

immoral acts. We later learn that Mehring has fled to one of those countries, where white people go, thus adopting a new identity and establishing a new symbolic territory for himself. At last, *The Conservationist* suggests that the whole cultural ethos must be changed as they project the female nothing more than the body. The role of the woman, as suggested by this culture, is to give pleasure to males and they should submit themselves to each and every norm of the society. Any society or nation as a whole, however, can progress only if women have freedom and equality of opportunity. This text, thus, undercuts the idea that freedom of any nation is not possible until and unless women are liberated.

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